

# THE AMPLIFIER

## MEDIA PSYCHOLOGY

DIVISION 46 OF THE AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION



SUMMER 2008

### PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

#### The Global Me, Cyber Psychoses, Net Noise, the Farley/Gresham Law, Monks, a "Citizen Citation Index," and the Better World

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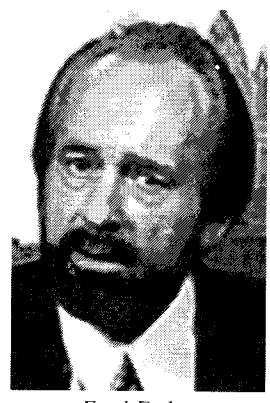
I wish to talk of several things here. Some things that pester my mind about the old and the new media, as well as the contributions of psychology to a better world.

But let me say firstly that I often wish I was just beginning my life in psychology. The Internet and the "new media" are so exciting, and so promising, and have such a fit to the things we psychologists are interested in that I'd like to be around for longer than the stats allow! I envy the beginning Internet-age psychologist.

However, as with Dickens, it is the best of times and it is the worst of times. There are the wonderful aspects of the Internet and new media world, and then there is its dark side. It all seems to mirror much of human nature. And this is in part due to its ubiquity, its extent in our lives, and its populist qualities. Everyone now has a planetary platform for their life's story, the "Global Me," the good, the bad, and the boring. Millions are blogging. From personal peccadilloes to every trip to the store, all gets recorded for posterity and the planet. But who is reading all this stuff? Is there any active shelf-life? If increasingly everyone is writing, who is reading? Does it follow the famed Farley/Gresham dictum that "The bad ideas drive out the good"? Is there a growing over-load, a cacophony of words that offer such extreme variety of views, opinions and solutions that old-style off-line diagnoses will need extensive on-line updating, with new categories of digital disorders emerging way beyond what we have seen already? Walden Pond and its quiet, simple, contemplative space are gone. Where will we find time for quietude, and thoughtful reflection? The new media and the old media are raising the mundane to mountainous moment in our lives. A small tragedy here, a mic in the face of grief over there, a minor slip of the tongue by some famed person, a passing facial expression of a politician, a relentless dissection and debate of everyday events elevated to absurd interpretation by fakirs called pundits. Endless personal reactions to transitory events or others reactions to those reactions through an increasingly bloated

blogosphere. What is solid? Who knows anything with certainty? What is an expert anymore in a wikiworld? Has the tower of babble been found? Yes, and it's the media in many of its current manifestations! And we are the media psychologists.

So what are we going to do about it? Do we have proven research-based psychological techniques to arm children, young people and others to navigate and survive the media muskeg confronting them? Do we have a plan? Do we even have a clue? And what proof do we have that any plan or clue is important and will actually work and will bring about change? This question brings me to my final concern here.



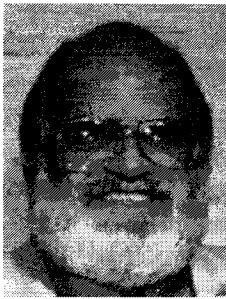
*Frank Farley*

Is psychological research making the world a better place? We've been around almost 130 years as a science. In APA we had enough members in our founding year to fill G. Stanley Hall's vestibule. Today we count almost 160,000. Have we seen a palpable reduction in horror and human misery in that time, less violence, better interpersonal relationships, fewer prisons and prisoners, fewer wars and terror, happier people, that can be said to be due in any clear way to our discipline? I think the answer is decidedly mixed. There is progress in some areas, but no progress and even regress in some others. And yet we have become a research leviathan, an academic wonder, an enormous discipline that pours out studies like Niagara. Do these many thousands, yes thousands, of studies per year actually change the world, or do they just feed our voracious journals and our conferences (the leisure of the theory class) and our crowded classrooms? Are our universities the new monasteries, where researchers do research primarily for the consumption (and the hoped-for scholarly citation) of other researchers who then repeat this process endlessly even onto retirement. We have no "citizen citation index" reflecting impact on the public. Galileo is reputed to have said that much science should be applied science whose goal is to "lighten the toil of everyday

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# President-Elect's Column

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Danny Wedding

I am continually amazed by how rapidly the world is shrinking, and I believe that Division 46 has to take the lead in representing the interests of all APA members who appreciate this phenomenon and who are trying to understand what these profound changes that are occurring in media and communication mean for clients, members of the public, and society.

I'm writing this column while waiting for a flight at Ronald Reagan National airport. This day—and almost every other day of my life—provides multiple examples of the ubiquity of the media. I started the day watching Division 46 member Judy Kuriansky being interviewed on the CBS “Early Show.” She was very articulate and seemed to be enjoying herself. I had spoken to Judy the day before while she was waiting to be interviewed on yet another national program, this time discussing the recent telephone threats made against Hulk Hogan and his family. Judy is producing a video for Division 52 (International Psychology) describing the division for prospective student members, and I sent Judy an email note about the project on a shuttle bus trip from my Alexandria hotel (where I had been reviewing grants for the Health Resources and Services Administration) to the airport. While waiting for a delayed flight (something I seem to be doing a lot these days), I downloaded YouTube clips that I'll use for an upcoming lecture for medical students at the American University of the Caribbean. I checked my email and looked up several Internet references to articles I had written and Internet references to the Missouri Institute of Mental Health, the research organization I direct; these references had been identified by my daily search of key terms on Google Searches. I used PsycNET and Scopus to see if other researchers had cited any of my work recently. I also used this time to search YouTube for a clip of our President, Frank Farley, being interviewed on ABC's “Good Morning America” earlier in the week, and I exchanged several “instant messages” with my son regarding his upcoming trip to Saint Louis. I also took time to update the blog I use in graduate seminar I teach in Mental Health Policy; my students love the fact that they no longer have to purchase a textbook for the class, and I love the fact that I can provide topical policy information literally the day it becomes relevant (e.g., changes in Medicare or Medicaid policy). Finally, I used Google Books to pull up a quotation from William James' book *Varieties of Religious Experience* that I needed to make a point in an upcoming lecture.

While in Virginia, I used Skype from the convenience of my hotel room to chat in real time with several friends around the world; this was done quickly and easily, and there was no charge for the service. I'll be attending the International Congress of Psychology in Berlin in July, and I learned that I'll be seeing many of the psychologists

## 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 also asked the Executive Director of Public and Member Communications in APA's Central Office, Rhea Farberman, to take us inside her office and efforts. The full Boston Convention Program is herein. 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. We thank our Consulting Editor V. Krishna Kumar for his great help with this issue.*

*Frank Farley, President; Lita L. Schwartz, Editor*

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I met at the last international congress held in Beijing in 2004, and at the International Association of Applied Psychology conference in Athens two years ago. Attending international gatherings of psychologists has become a routine event for many of us.

I'll be living in Seoul, Korea and teaching at Yonsei University with Fulbright program support from September of this year through June of 2009. During this time I'll have almost daily contact with my Administrative Assistant (via Skype), and I'll continue to edit *PsycCRITIQUES: Contemporary Psychology—APA Review of Books*; almost all of the work done on the journal is now done online using APA's Journal Back Office (JBO) software. My professional life in Korea will not be all that different from my current life—I'll simply be answering email in Seoul rather than in Saint Louis. I believe I can do a credible job as Division 46 President during the period when I'll be out of the country, despite the dramatic constraints of geography, all because of the wonders of technology.

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## Sightings

You may want to see an interesting April 2008 article by Phyllis Hanlon on the website of the *New England Psychologist* titled "Does Media Coverage Distort the Link Between Violence and Mental Illness?" The website is nePsy.com.

### Invitation to Early Career Psychologists at the Boston Convention

Town Hall Meeting: Membership and the Early Career Psychologists"

Your Chance for an Open Exchange with APA Leaders

Saturday, August 16, 5:00–5:30

Boston Convention & Exhibition Center, Meeting room 254A

Leaders: Sandra Tars, PhD, Chair of the APA Membership Committee; Shamin Ladhani, PsyD, Chair of the APA Committee on Early Career Psychologists

Invited Guests: Norman Anderson, PhD, APA Chief Executive Officer; Alan Kazdin, PhD, APA President; James Bray, PhD, APA President-Elect; Rhea Farberman, APR, APA Executive Director for Public and Member Communications

### Division 46 Book Series

Division 46 Book Series, *Psychology and the Media*, is expanding "...Volume 3...and *They Lived Happily Ever After...*" by Mary Gregerson, PhD, (Ed.) is now being readied for publication with Springer Science and Business Media Books Series Editor. Florence Kaslow, PhD, is pleased to announce this book will be published in late 2009 and that it looks extremely interesting. Florrie also

reminds members and others interested in Media Psychology that they can still purchase Vol. 1—*Perspectives on Psychology and the Media*—S. Kirshner & D.A. Kirshner (Eds.) and Vol. 2—*Psychology and the Media: A Second Look*—L.L. Schwartz (Ed) from Washington DC: APA Books.

### The Future of Children's Latest Publication

The Future of Children has released its latest publication, *Children and Electronic Media* (Vol. 18, No. 1). The volume focuses on how common forms of electronic media influences the wellbeing of children and adolescents. Accompanying the journal is an executive summary and a policy brief. The volume concludes that rather focusing on the type of technology children use, parents and policymakers should focus on what is being offered to children on the various media platforms. The fifteen leading scholars who contribute to the volume consider how exposure to different media forms are linked with school achievement, cognition, engagement in extracurricular activities, social interaction, aggression, fear and anxiety, risky behaviors, and lifestyle choices. Media technology can be a positive force in the lives of children and youth. Editors Jeanne Brooks-Gunn and Elisabeth Hirschhorn Donahue argue in the Introduction that while government's ability to regulate content is weak, educators and families can promote child wellbeing by ensuring that children engage in media in a positive way. The Future of Children is a co-production of the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton University and the Brookings Institution.

## Member News

**Dr. Edward Abramson** has recently been interviewed for articles in Redbook, Quick & Simple, and Prevention. He has also been traveling around the country (Pennsylvania, Minnesota, Missouri, etc.) presenting a continuing education workshop on "Obesity & Compulsive Eating." His CD, "Overcoming Emotional Eating" will be distributed by StopStress.com.

**Dr. Alma H. Bond** has a 13th book in press, titled Margaret Mahler: A Biography of the Psychoanalyst, McFarland Publishers. In 2007 she published two books, *Old Age is a Terminal Illness* and *Camille Claudel, a Novel*.

**Dr. Stuart Fischhoff** is doing a regular blog for *Psychology Today* online. The blog is entitled "The Media Zone." He covers subjects pertaining to the interface between the media and psychology. Recent blogs have included discussions of Grand Theft Auto IV and other violent media products, suicide reduction through reaching out online, and how media impacts all aspects of our social and psychological lives, including politics and war coverage and

analysis. Interview comments have appeared in the L.A. Times, Orlando Sentinel, Huffington Post, and ABCNews.com.

**Dr. Mary Gregerson**, APA Div 46 Member-at-Large, has joined the psychology undergraduate and graduate programs at the University of St. Mary. She has a chapter "A Quiet Soul Listens to Her: Women, Spirituality, and Psychology" in the book *WomanSoul* (2008, Praeger),

**Jerri Lynn Hogg** is a PhD student at Fielding Graduate University. She is presenting a paper "Impact of Culture, Personality, and Digital Media on the Virtual Classroom" in Berlin at the XXIX International Congress of Psychology in July. She is also teaching a Media Psychology course online that she created.

Div. 46 Fellows **Dr. Carole A. Rayburn** and **Dr. Lillian Comas-Diaz** co-edited and contributed to *WomanSoul: The Inner Life of Women's Spirituality* (2008, Praeger), dealing with the history of women's spiritual life, the healing power of spiritual expression,

women's individual journeys, and the application of women's spirituality to mental health practice. Div. 46 Fellow Marcella Bakur Weiner and member Dr. Aphrodite Clamar were also contributors to this work.

**Dr. Kimberly Young's** book, *Breaking Free of the Web: Catholics and Internet Addiction* was published by St. Anthony's Messenger

Press and focuses on faith-based recovery for helping clergy and pastoral counselors treat Internet addiction. She was quoted in the May issue of *U.S. News & World Report* in the article, "Addiction to Video Games a Growing Concern" and appeared in *Second Skin*, a documentary on the impact of virtual life in games such as *World of Warcraft* and *Second Life* that debuted at the Calgary, Boston, South by Southwest, Fantasia, and Hot Docs Film Festivals.

## Creative Writing 101: Writing and Publishing Psychological Novels and Short Stories

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There are really two reasons why we write psychological novels. Firstly, it is lots of fun. You can be a dilettante—spending a year learning about the Amazon, Washington, DC politics, or a San Francisco circus circa 1890—never to revisit the topic again. Secondly, you can heed the call of George Miller, who in his APA presidential address, exhorted psychologists to "give psychology away," by sharing its findings with the public. Recently, however, Janet Shibley Hyde (former President, APA's Division 35) complained that psychologists are losing the media war. Today, young people garner more "facts" about feminism, love, and sex from TV, movies, short stories, novels, Dr. Phil, and the Web, than in the classroom or from textbooks crammed with scholarly facts. There is no reason scholars, psychologists, and researchers can't get into the act and use their imaginations to enrich the cultural conversation.



*Elaine Hatfield & Richard L. Rapson*

Elaine has always been a creative writer. When she was 12, she was appointed poet laureate of the *Detroit Police Gazette—the Truborg*. She claims it has all been downhill from there. Nevertheless, when we started a serious creative writing career more than a decade ago, we were surprised to discover that creative writing and academic writing weren't all that different.

### Creative Writing 101

People always claim that "writers are born not made." That you "can't teach creative writing." That is ridiculous. What do critics think all those MFA programs, writers groups, and conferences are about? If you are interested in writing (and publishing) we would suggest you start with short stories. That way, you can master the techniques of character creation, plotting, building suspense, and wrapping up a story in a series of slow steps. Some people argue that (for ethical reasons) you should avoid writing about people or situations you know, but they do offer an unmatched starting point. Further, it is fairly easy to disguise the origins of our characters.

There are a slew of books that will tell you how to craft a really good short story or novel. You might try authors like Annie Lamott (1996),

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## To All Division 46 Student Members

In today's information hungry society, it's imperative that psychologists remain at the forefront of the information streamline. The media looks to our profession to provide them with accurate and sound information which can be understood by the public. As students in the profession, it is our responsibility to provide the profession of Psychology the tools and information necessary to provide a clear picture of important events the media will cover. Questions which cover violence through a variety of medium can be augmented with ideas on how to use the different modalities of media to improve grades in school, improve social skills, and reduce stigma and prejudice. Through participation in the student committee, we can share ideas, collaborate on research projects, extend our network of professionals and strengthen the partnership we have with other divisions in the American Psychological Association. Please join us in our venture to expand the division to include fresh ideas, networking opportunities, and a stronger sense of unity with the division of professionals dedicated to the advancement of Media Psychology. Please submit any questions or concerns to Diane at dianhern@nova.edu or Kathryn at kestamoulis@hotmail.com Thank you and we look forward to a fantastic and exciting year!

*Diane Hernandez & Kathryn Stamoulis, Co-Chairs, Student Committee*