How to Work with the Media (And Use Media to Promote Your Work)

Kim I. Mills, MA, Associate Executive Director, APA Public and Member Communications facilitated the discussion of working with the media and using the media to promote your work.

Ms. Mills began her discussion by providing the group with a presentation including videos of interviews that outlined examples of interactions with the media. Ms. Mills involved the group in a dialogue about particular actions and statements that lead an interview to a positive or negative outcome.

Diversity and Ethical Concerns
Participants felt that it is important when conducting an interview with the media, to take into account what population is being spoken to and the limitations of any research being presented. During an interview, stereotypes related to race or ethnicity may arise and it is important for the person being interviewed to stay composed and try to get to know as much as possible about the interviewer prior to the interview to avoid negative situations. Participants discussed creating a list of talking points prior to the interview and to bridge their responses to specific talking points if the interviewer's questions begin to move in an uncomfortable direction. Participants also discussed the ethical implications of disclosing private information (e.g. a client's identity) during an interview. Participants suggested communicating with the Public Relations Office of an interviewee's employer prior to the interview to ensure ethical boundaries are not crossed. Participants also discussed the importance of educating students about the possible ramifications of posting particular material on social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, etc.)

Preparing Future Psychologists
Participants discussed the importance of beginning to work with students while they are still in school to create boundaries and learn to broadcast themselves in a professional manner. It was suggested to begin teaching students at the undergraduate level how to explain and communicate their work to an audience that may not be familiar with the field. Participants also acknowledged the growing importance of social media, and to suggest students practice creating their own videos for broadcast. Participants noted the importance of passing along cautions of interview to students, along with topics to avoid, situations to be prepared to encounter, etc.

Implications for Psychologists at Varying Career Stages
Participants expressed that early career psychologists may not be given the opportunity to provide interviews as often as mid-career or senior psychologists and therefore may require more training and/or preparation prior to an interview. It was suggested that mid-career or senior psychologists become involved in a dialogue with early-career psychologists regarding ethics as it relates to new media. Participants noted that while social media is an important way to gain exposure, psychologists should be wary that anything they post on the internet could follow them throughout their career.

Promote Life-Long Learning
Participants agreed that the media can be used to promote life-long learning because it allows information to be circulated to the public. Media also allows psychologists to teach their knowledge to others and to stay connected with colleagues. Participants noted that media may also be used to connect across varying disciplines to discuss any hot issues.

Questions for the Plenary Session

1. What should a faculty member do if he/she sees an explicit photo of a graduate student on Facebook?
a. Confront the graduate student
b. Report it to the Chair and let the Chair handle it
c. Write an ethics protocol for Facebook behavior
d. All of the above
e. None of the above

2. Which of the following activities is most likely to contribute to life-long learning?
a. Blogging
b. Press interviews
c. Social websites (e.g. Facebook, etc.)
d. YouTube videos

3. Which of the following do you think presents the greatest ethical challenge to psychologists working with the media, including social media?
a. Checking your facts for accuracy
b. The blurring of private and professional identities
c. A psychologist's ability to competently use new technology
d. Limited ability to correct inaccurate information

4. Does your institution have a policy on social networking by staff with regard to its potential implications for the institution?
a. Yes
b. No
c. I don't know
d. A policy is not needed