Psycho?Logical?Bulletin!

Department Survives Another Valentine’s Day, Barely

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Special points of interest:

- Why do some faculty in the department hate Valentine’s Day so much?
- Care to date a David?
- Thiessen is out of control. The PLB writes a letter to his parents.
- Ken Kotovsky wins the H&SS Teaching Award
Anti-Valentines Day Sentiment a Threat to Departmental Well-Being

Some faculty members in the department believe that Valentine’s Day isn’t a “real” holiday and shouldn’t be celebrated. For example, the social/personality/health area recently held their prospective grad student visits on the Friday and Monday of Valentine’s Day weekend, in a direct attempt to sabotage love and happiness for all involved. Where has the love gone in this department? What ever happened to the departmental love-ins of days past? Did we have those?

Some people in the department think Valentine’s Day is a holiday created by the greeting card industry. They are wrong. Valentine’s Day was created by the chocolate industry. What I’m trying to say is that it’s up to us to change the anti-valentine’s day sentiment around the department. For next Valentine’s Day, please be brave and ask that special someone out. If you’ve already found that special someone, make them dinner. Or maybe share a glass of wine while you read to them out of your favorite psychology journal.

- David Creswell

Department March Madness Basketball Pool

Would you like to root on your favorite basketball team to victory while winning the big bucks?! Well now you can with the Official Psychology March Madness Basketball pool. It will cost $5 to enter and you must either have a Yahoo account or create one in order to participate. All brackets are due by March 20 before the first game’s tip off. Please hand your money into me (Emilie) in 342C.

Click on the link below to complete your Psychology basketball bracket. Once there it will ask you for the password which is _**psych**_. If you have any questions or problems please don't hesitate to ask me. Friends and family are allowed to enter.

http://tournament.fantasysports.yahoo.com/t1/register/joinprivategroup_assign_team?GID=118641&P=psych

Thanks, Emilie & Erin

A T-shirt design to be worn during visiting weekend?

“What ever happened to the departmental love-ins of days past? Did we have those?

Will Pitt finally make it to the final four?

Competition from out west will be fierce
Win A Date With A David!

Be the first to e-mail correct responses to the following quiz to J. David Creswell (creswell@cmu.edu) and you’ll win a lunch date with your favorite David! Lunch graciously provided by the David of your choice.

1. Which David is excited to celebrate his 40th birthday this spring?
   - A
   - B
   - C

2. Which David played Sirius Black in a recent major motion picture simulation?
   - A
   - B
   - C

3. Which David was a Visiting Fulbright lecturer at the London School of Business?
   - A
   - B
   - C
   - Neither A nor B

4. Which David has 281 Facebook friends?
   - A
   - B
   - C

5. If you are the winner, which David would you like to have as your lunch date?
   - A
   - B
   - C
   - D
Dear Erik’s Parents,

As colleagues of your son, Erik, we feel there is some important information you should have about him. We have attempted to convey this information to you before, but our attempts have been thwarted by your son, who has refused to give us your phone number.

Please don’t think of this as “tattling” as much as “revealing truths.” As the senior junior faculty member of our department, Erik should be setting a good example for others. So, what we are asking is: Are these good examples for him to be setting? We’ll simply reveal the truths. Then you be the judge. Given page constraints, we’ll limit this letter to our top 10 concerns:

1. Erik wears short-sleeve shirts and shorts (and no coat!) when it’s freezing outside with snow and ice on the ground!
2. Erik drives cars into garage doors, and he plays bumper cars with unwilling participants on the freeway.
3. Erik doesn’t believe that altruism exists, and he indoctrinates his students in these beliefs as well.
4. Erik has revealed prejudices against the elderly, statues of ethnic minorities, sociology, and dogs.
5. Erik eats camel and goat’s brain! In fact, he doesn’t care what he eats as long as it’s meat! [Please note, Erik’s Mom: This means that Erik is skimping on the veggies.]
6. Word on the street is that Erik does a LOT of partying on the Southside. He’s the reason the roads sometimes get shut down there for “celebratory activities.”
7. Erik teases his colleagues mercilessly and makes up stories about them, which he subsequently publishes in outlets like the PLB.
8. Erik frequently deprives his colleagues of eating lunch outside on beautiful, warm summer days.
9. Erik instructs people who visit his home to park in tow-away zones.
10. Erik is so obsessed with football that he gets confused about what sport he is playing during student-faculty kickball tournaments. He tackles unsuspecting students, one of whom ended up in the emergency room last year.

Well, we could go on to tell you about how Erik always wins when playing video games and racquetball with his colleagues (we suspect by shady means), how he holds the freshmen class hostage for one hour each week to ponder “Big Questions” such as “Should bread pudding be warm or cold?,” how he has been involved in conspiracies that involve spilling hot chocolate on his colleagues, how he hangs around with people who are a bad influence on him, and how he occasionally does something that starts with an “s”. Unfortunately, we must save those revelations for another time.

We appreciate your time and consideration of our letter.

Sincerely,

Brooke Feeney and the rest of Erik’s Colleagues
The thing about orchestrating a reign of terror that most people forget is that it requires constant attention to detail, craftsmanship, and above all else, effort. If you’re not willing to give 110% day in and day out, then you just don’t have what it takes to rule with an iron fist. Maybe a sodium fist, or possibly even an aluminum fist, but definitely not iron.

Take my years in charge of the PLB. First, I had to wrest control from Lori Holt (if by ‘wrest control from’ you mean ‘get drafted by’), in a violent coup. Then I had to spend hours upon hours coming up with enough nicknames to keep things lively (classics like Señor Burly, El Jefe, Chip, Mr. Januhairy…), photoshops, and (possibly fake) news, and finally, I had to install a puppet dictator to run the PLB in my absence. Let me tell you: installing puppet governments isn’t as easy as CIA brochures make it sound. J. David kept screaming girlishly and running away whenever I tried to inaugurate him.

You can imagine why I wanted to take a vacation. I started by trying to spread joy to the children of the mid-Atlantic states. But that didn’t work so well, given that whenever I get near to children they all begin to cry for some mysterious reason².

Then I took a tropical getaway to the Bahamas, but was forced to leave after only 2 days when a cruise ship full of sociologists showed up with pitchforks at the ready³.

The great ones always know when to walk away. Michael Jordan, MC Hammer, Fidel Castro, Journey, Brett Favre… they all left at the top of their game. But sometimes I wonder whether I made the right decision. Then the nice issue extolling my virtues⁴ and reminiscing about the good old times made me miss the PLB even more.

Maybe one of these days, I’ll get a chance to come back. Especially if J. David keeps making crazy executive decisions like his 300 word article limit. Back in my day, 300 words barely got me started. That was just enough time for me to clear my throat before I

-Erik Thiessen

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1. A fun game to play at home: see if you can guess which nickname goes to which faculty member!
2. The child in the photo to the left was heavily bribed
3. My sources indicate that Brooke Feeney alerted them to my whereabouts
4. Using the term in a loosely defined manner
In a somewhat unexpected turn, Dr. Marcel Just recently used prime time TV to declare his unhappiness with hammers. Dr. Just was being interviewed on 60 minutes for his groundbreaking research on “mind reading” - or “thought identification”, whatever that means - but rather than use this time to promote his work he instead launched a scathing attack. The interviewer was aghast when Dr. Just, who was asked about the future of his research program, instead responded, “We’re not satisfied with hammer.” This statement seemed to come out of nowhere, but Dr. Just is obviously harboring a deep hatred for this innocuous man-made tool.

What spurred this comment? How have hammers responded? And how much therapy will Dr. Just need before he gets over his disgust of tools? This semi-investigative PLB journalist now has the answer to these questions, as well as why you never see the headline “Psychic Wins Lottery” and why is it called tourist season even though we can’t shoot them?

So, what are the origins of Dr. Just’s feelings about hammers? In the same TV interview, Dr. Just stated, “What if someone has a bad experience with hammers?” Idle speculation or self-revealing comment? Perhaps we will never know. However, discussion with Dr. Just’s colleagues revealed that they have noticed his bizarre behavior around tools. Erik Thissen, for example, told this reporter that, “Marcel is never happy at lunch when he has to use a fork or knife. He generally likes to use his hands to eat, even when he orders soup.” Similarly, Brooke Feeney noted that “Marcel started shaking once when I pulled out my Swiss army knife”, although knowing Dr. Feeney’s aggressive nature this was probably a reasonable reaction for anyone.

Not surprisingly, there has been widespread outrage from hammers worldwide in response to Dr. Just’s comments. Ball and claw hammers have marched on Washington - after watching Pink Floyd’s “The Wall” for the nth time – to affirm that they will no longer accept discrimination of any kind. One hammer, for instance, is quoted as saying “What did we ever do to him? We are starting a group called “Justice for Just!” And Mallets have issued a formal statement saying that “It’s not our fault if Dr. Just isn’t satisfied with hammers. We have two flat ends and although we are related to hammers leave us out of this debacle.” Even nails weighed in by stating that “We are aware of Dr. Just’s position; you don’t need to hit us over the head with it.” Even hammerhead sharks have weighed in on the issue with a spoke-shark stating that, “We don’t even look like hammers. Have you ever tried to put a picture on the wall with one of our heads?” But perhaps most shockingly, famous(ish) singer MC Hammer has come out in defense of his tool namesakes. “Any time is hammer time, at least in my view. If Dr. Just has a problem with that he can put on some baggy pants and come talk to me. School’s out.”

So, what can be done about Dr. Just’s dissatisfaction with hammers? A good place to start might be to talk to screwdrivers. Although these tools were part of Dr. Just’s research, he did not declare any problem with them. What did screwdrivers do so well that hammers did not? One obvious difference relates to screwing and banging, but this journalist is above making such a crude joke. Or perhaps the department could pool their resources to pay for Dr. Just to attend tool counseling, or as insiders like to call it “A DIY course.” Regardless, we all hope that this situation can quickly be remedied so that Dr. Just and hammers everywhere can co-exist in mutual harmony and satisfaction. In the meantime, hide the silverware and keep your Leatherman wherever it belongs whenever Dr. Just is around.

A PLB-exclusive investigative report from David Rakison!
David Creswell, PLB editor, interviewed Alan Jern this month.

DC: Where are you from, and what made you decide to come to CMU?

AJ: I’m originally from Fresno, California but I got my undergraduate degree in computer science from UCLA. I had been interested in cognitive science for a while, but I chose to stick with the computer science major because I thought the technical skills I acquired would be useful in any case, and I am particularly interested in computational models of cognition.

Aside from CMU’s strong reputation and the research interests I share with a number of the faculty here, one reason I chose CMU was simply that I liked the people I met when I visited. By contrast, at one unnamed university, the other prospective students struck me as totally lame. Also, Billy Gardell, star of some Domino’s Pizza commercials and a minor player on the TV series “Yes, Dear”, was on my flight to Pittsburgh for visiting weekend, which I took as a good omen.

DC: What do you study in your research?

AJ: I am interested in human reasoning. My current research is looking at how people imagine and generate new instances of a category – creating a new recipe or imagining a new species of bird – and whether people’s behavior in such situations conforms to a general probabilistic model.

DC: What types of things do you do in your free time?

AJ: Although you couldn’t tell from looking at me, I like to go to the gym pretty regularly. I also really enjoy cooking. And I unabashedly admit that I watch a lot of TV, recently aided by my acquisition of a TiVo. After living in the metropolis of Los Angeles, Pittsburgh is a nice change of pace – it’s big enough that there’s enough interesting things to do, but not so congested with people. And instead of celebrities, I see a lot of blind people.

DC: What was your favorite PLB article and why?

AJ: I don’t recall how I originally found this, but in a 2004 issue of the PLB, there’s a story about how Ken Kottovsky took a prospective student on a bike ride around the city, riding down active train tracks and hopping fences, after which the student proclaimed that it was the “strangest bike ride I have ever been on”. I was laughing about that for days.

DC: You are one of the first graduate students working with Charles Kemp, what is he like? Is it true that he is a slave driver during the week, and a party animal on the weekend?

AJ: Working with Charles is great. He lets me didgeri-do my own thing when I want, but I can boome-ring him up on the phone any time I need some advice. He may be hard to find, because his kangaroo room is located way out-back behind the main office, but you Vege-might want to make the trek over and say hello because his door is usually open.
Scandalous Behavior at PLB Headquarters

_A Grad-PLB Exclusive_

Less than a month into his tenure as PLB editor-in-chief, David Creswell is at the center of a scandal sure to shake the foundations of the department. Having secured funding for the purchase of a big-brother style video surveillance suite, Creswell attempted to employ his newfound position of power to extort department members to surrender their unused textbooks to conceal the expensive and attention-drawing equipment from his unwitting subjects. Reactions to this ploy were varied, with some faculty immediately surrendering crates of their as-yet unreleased textbooks to Creswell to avoid his spite, while others stocked their offices with years of non-perishable supplies intent on riding out another PLB editorship behind closed doors.

Realizing that graduate students represent an even weaker element of the department flock, he sent a second e-mail out to the psychology students requesting donations of graduate student clothes for use as rags for polishing camera lenses and the research sportscars he has secured for use in a study of coolness on stress. We are unaware of the number of graduate students who ceded to his veiled threat, but we intend to monitor the graduate student population for signs of frostburn in the near future due to lack of proper attire.

We attempted to secure comment from the past PLB editor Erik Thiessen as to how frequently such strong-armed tactics can be employed before editors wake up with severed squirrel heads in their beds, but he has apparently decided to seek sanctuary from the new editorship in tropical paradise, location unknown.

Vehicles planned for use in Creswell’s study, which consists of driving around Pittsburgh monitoring the effects of the cars on the wellbeing of the driver and those whom he passes. Due to budgetary cutbacks, the study is only being executed with the less expensive aqua-colored vehicle for the moment.
Despite CMU’s amazingness, however, Matlen and Armstrong note that there are some specific drawbacks associated with CMU which have only been studied on a phenomenological level. For instance, if you are a new student and are considering coming to CMU, there are some quirks about the faculty that you should be made aware of.

Mike ‘Boss-Man’ Scheier holding a racquet

Department Heads can never be trusted, particularly with racquetball racquets in their hands. Similar to encountering a cougar in the woods, the best action in such a situation is to try to look big (like a tenured faculty member) and back away slowly without any sudden moves.

David ‘Davey’ Rakison having a bad hair day

Students should be particularly cautious in this type of situation – we have found that avoiding in the hallways, looking down, and pretending you are reading something about animals without legs works best.

Erik Thiessen and David Creswell

The former PLB editor and the current one. Rumor has it, Erik still controls PLB operations, but uses a guise as retired editor to collect dirt on the department. These two are particularly dangerous when spotted together – we also have reason to believe they’ve installed hidden cameras throughout baker hall to catch the department in its ‘natural’ state for use in extortion and blackmail ‘experiments’.

Superhero Naming Contest Results!

Thanks to all who sent in potential superhero names for the members of the department. Surprisingly, all of our suggestions focused on the faculty. We present the names and possible powers separately from their secret identities to try to protect their friends from evil-doers. See if you can match them all!

Now and Zen - Can achieve a powerful meditative trance, or ‘nap,’ at will

Minesweeper - Detects hidden explosives. Also, comes pre-installed on nearly every version of Microsoft Windows

Professor X - Incredible Concentration. Leads a large team of scientists seemingly telepathically

Safe Haven - Power: unknown. But her secret lair is called the Secure Base

The Plaid Brain - Makes the brain light up in different colors

The Rhino(virus) - Infects evildoers with the common cold

Quaildude - Puts foes into a trance with soothing quail song, then unleases fearsome Hamster Attack

The Slacker - Power: Receive tenure and ditch old responsibilities onto a younger generation

The Klahirnator - Benchpresses small children while he studies how they reason

The Big Kahuna - Can force criminals to stop what they’re doing and have a committee meeting

(Fanny)Pac-Man - Like Batman, carries lots of handy gadgets. Also, can eat pellets

The Red Scare - Focuses children’s attention on moving objects, like jangling keys. Uses KGB style interrogation tactics if she doesn’t get the data she wants from them

Possible secret Aliases:

Erik Thiessen
Mike Scheier
David Klair
Brooke Feeneey
Marcel Just
David Creswell
John Anderson
David Plaut
Anna Fisher
Jim Staszewski
Sheldon Cohen
Lori Holt
It’s true. The economy is tanking, and we need to start thinking about ways of cutting costs in the department. What should we do?

Sheldon Cohen could donate 5% of his salary (creating a departmental surplus?). Ken Kotovsky could give his H&SS teaching award money to the department. There are lots of possibilities, and the PLB wants to know what you think should be done.

Please send me your thoughts on the best way(s) to cut costs in the department. I’ll include your recommendations in a PLB article next month!

- David Creswell (creswell@cmu.edu)

Ken Kotovsky Wins H&SS Teaching Award

Ken Kotovsky just won the Elliot Dunlop Smith Teaching Award! The Smith award is a prestigious award given out annually to the smartest and bestest teacher in H&SS.

Ken’s reaction upon receiving the award: “holy f—k, are you f—*ing serious? F$$K!”

Way to go Ken! We are all very proud of you!

John Lehoczky, Jay Devine, and many folks from the department surprised Ken with his award in class on Thursday Feb 26th.