Psycho? Logical? Bulletin
April, 2006

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And more!
Department Shirt Poll

Now that we have a department logo (plaid brain), we have the opportunity to create a department shirt.

Just a reminder of what Plaid Brain looks like

Carnegie Mellon Psychology

Would you be interested in purchasing one of the following two shirts?

Plaid Brain: The T-shirt
Approximate price: $11

Plaid Brain: The Polo
Approximate price: $19

Due to the miracle of economies of scale, it’s likely that we could only order ONE of these shirts, rather than both of them. So here’s what I need to know from YOU:

A) Are you interested in purchasing a shirt?
B) If so, which one?
C) What size shirt would you wear?
D) Would you be willing to purchase the OTHER one?
   (e.g., if the t-shirt is your favorite, and we end up ordering the polo, would you buy the polo?)

E-mail your responses to CMUPLB@hotmail.com. Hurry, supplies are limited!*

*This is technically true. The PLB is not aware of any infinite source of shirts.
Authorship Scandal Roils PLB!

Professor Sheldon Cohen has accused the PLB of unauthorized attribution of a recent scientific article on Dog and Cat Behavior to him. “I was appalled to see my name attached to this article.” Cohen said. “Being kept by animals myself, I was also concerned that my cats might put me out on the street.”

When Cohen complained to the PLB editor, he received the following reply: “Given the authorship scandals that have been rocking the scientific world lately, this might be a bad time to rock the boat, Sheldon. After the stem-cell thing, if a bastion of journalistic integrity like the PLB were to be impugned, I’m afraid the public might never recover their faith in science.” Cohen has referred his complaint to the department committee on “unusual” behavior. When hearing of the formal complaint, Erik Thiessen, PLB editor said “It ain’t nothing to me. I eat ethics committees for breakfast.”

Moonlighting Faculty?

Has the loss of the magnificent salary associated with the position of PLB editor driven Lori Holt to car sales? The PLB’s crack team of investigative reporters have been UNABLE to obtain ANY photos of Lori Holt and “Lorianne” Holt together.
April 2-8
Professional and Graduate Student Appreciation Week

There will be a special university wide celebration on Wednesday, April 5th, in Kresge auditorium, starting at 5:30. The Graduate student teaching award will be presented, as will the Graduate Student Service award. Jorge Cham, the cartoonist of “Piled Higher and Deeper” (which is pretty funny: check it out at www.phdcomics.com) will give a talk.

The PLB Presents
Top 10 ways to celebrate Grad Student Appreciation Week

1) Make it a point to mention all the great things your TA does to make class better

2) If you’re watching The Simpsons, and the episode comes on where Bart pretends to be a graduate student, try not to laugh too hard

3) Leave a plate of food outside the grad student offices*

4) Appreciate a graduate student

5) Have a moment of silence for those graduate students who didn’t make it back from their dissertation defense

6) Ask a graduate student about their research

7) Mention the really interesting research a graduate student is doing to one of your friends

8) Go one week without exacting a terrible revenge against them for voting you off the island in Psychology Survivor. Don’t worry: there are plenty of other weeks

9) Leave a second plate of food. The first one is already finished

10) Try not to publish 10 item lists when you only have 9 items (this is a good tip for the other 51 weeks, too)

*Be sure you have an unobstructed escape route. Coming between grad students and food is like standing between a mother bear and her cub

Other April Events

**April 3rd**: John Bruer talk
“A Skeptical Theme and Variations”
4:30 PM-Giant Eagle

**April 6th**: Gates Building Forum
4:30 PM-McConomy

**April 10th**: Roxanne Thrush
“You are not a beautiful and unique snowflake”
Noon-336B

**April 11th**: Bacon Night
8 PM-Harris Grill
Sponsored by Lipitor

**April 24th**: Jessica Cicchino
“Baby See, Baby Do?”
Noon-College Conference Rm

**April 28th**: Yvonne Kao
Noon-336B
April’s Graduate Student of the Month is Jamie Jirout. Jamie is the department’s representative on the Graduate Student Assembly. So as you can imagine, when she got together with your Faculty Senator, the concentration of administrative power in the room was almost overwhelming!

PLB: Tell us a little bit about yourself. Where are you from? Where’d you go to school?

JJ: I’m from Port Charlotte Florida, which is on the west coast. But I went to school in Miami, at the University of Miami. I’ve lived in Florida my whole life, so this was my first winter. It wasn’t that bad... I just didn’t expect it to be so long. I’ve been trying to learn to snowboard.

PLB: Is this because you’re an extreme member of Generation-X, drinking Mountain Dew? While snowboarding. Possibly to the extreme?

JJ: It’s because skiing looked dangerous! The board stays on your feet! I always see people fall and their skies fly off. I’d be afraid of getting hit in the head or something. Or my legs doing a split, and me not being able to stop. Snowboard, it’s easy to stop.

PLB: Did you take any time off between Miami and graduate school?

JJ: I took the summer off.

PLB: Do anything wild and crazy with your last summer of freedom?

JJ: I was actually finishing up data analysis for my thesis. I looked at the implementation of early childhood science curriculum in Head Start centers in Miami Dade, and the effect it had on school readiness scores.

PLB: Is that sort of early intervention your primary research interest?

JJ: What I’m trying to do (at CMU) is related, but a little different. I think that teachers in Head Start focus a bit too much on the really measurable skills, like letter knowledge and number knowledge, since those are the things that people use to test school-readiness. But I think if they could focus on other areas, like different approaches to learning, then I think the effects will carry through throughout elementary and middle and high school, instead of falling out so quickly. So right now, I’m trying to develop a measure of curiosity, since that’s one approach to learning. I’m hoping to see that kids who have higher levels of curiosity will have future academic success, and then see if science programs can increase children’s curiosity.

PLB: So how does one measure curiosity? I’m curious!

JJ: I have a lot of video! I just have to figure out how to code it. I’m looking at exploratory behavior in children’s interaction with novel toys. We’re just trying to figure out if we can measure curiosity in observable behaviors. There’s not really an agreed-upon definition in the literature. We came up with this idea of presenting kids with new toys that they’ve never seen before, and have things about them that you can explore, that aren’t readily noticeable. So, they see something and when they pick it up, it lights up. So they might try to figure out how to make it light up again.

PLB: Sounds like you’ve had to invent your own measure, that’s ambitious!
JJ: I hope it works! I think we’re going to look at how long different kids play with the toys. I’m going to see if maybe kids who explore the things for more time learn more about it, and can show me and tell me more about it. Later, we’ll try to randomly assign a science curriculum and see if maybe the kids who are in that program will have higher levels of curiosity. There haven’t been too many direct measures of curiosity, mostly questionnaires. So we’re trying to move beyond that.

PLB: What are the toys?

JJ: One of the toys is a Slinky. There’s a fish puzzle, a gooey ball that turns inside out, and then it looks like a sea urchin. There’s a stick. It’s called a “yo.” But it’s sort of like a yo-yo. It lights up, and it has a retractable string, and it’s clear, so you can kind of see how it works.

PLB: Now I want to be in your experiments! Have you had children do something really interesting or unexpected yet?

JJ: I had one kid, I think most people would describe him as very curious, who looked at all of the toys as much as he could during the time limit. And then, when he realized that we were running out of time, he looked around really quick to see if there was anything new, and he saw the camera. So on the video, you actually see him run up and grab the camera. It was great. I also wasn’t expecting – I have them tell me about the toys, about what they’ve learned. I tell them that I have a friend, who hasn’t seen the toys, and she needs to learn about them. So I need them to show me and tell me all they can about the toys. And one of the kids asked me what my friend’s name was, and I wasn’t expecting that!

PLB: Seems like it’s a really good fit for the PIER program, which you’re in, right? Could you tell us a bit about that?

JJ: It’s a program that brings together people from all different areas, all different subjects. So we have Human Computer Interactions, Computer Science, Philosophy, all different subjects. And the program tries to help us to learn about how we can apply research to an education setting, and how to conduct research in educational settings. We talk about a lot of issues. Like, whose job is it to make the transition from the research article to classroom practice. Is it the teachers that should go and read the articles and implement it themselves, or are they too busy? Is it the researchers? Is there someone else who should have that job? We get into a lot of educational discussions.

PLB: What’s the group dynamic like?

JJ: It’s a good group of people. I definitely have friends that I wouldn’t have met if I wasn’t in PIER, so that’s nice. And sometimes the PIER graduate students get together for happy hours.

PLB: Speaking of leisure activities, what do you like to do in your spare time? Eat? Play? Watch TV?

JJ: Well, like I said, I like to snowboard. And I take my dog to the dog-park every Saturday. She’s a very cute dog. For food, sushi is one of my favorite things to go out and eat. But I’ve been kind of afraid to eat it here. I know they ship it in, but it’s still kind of scary when you see the rivers and think, “oh gosh, what if this fish came from there.” For television, I have difficulty watching TV without doing something else, so I miss a lot of shows. I watch The O.C., Desperate Housewives, and Sopranos.
PLB: Since you’re an O.C. fan, and in the Social Core, have you made the slip of the tongue where you call Sheldon Cohen “Seth Cohen?”

JJ: Not yet! But I think I can see the resemblance. Seth is the funniest guy on the show though, so that’s a compliment!

PLB: All right, now we’re going to try something new. A new segment in our interview, called “Tough Questions.” In which I ask you three tough questions, and you try to answer them.

JJ: That sounds tough.

PLB: Yes. So, the first tough question: What, for you, is the biggest question in psychology? What are you trying to answer? What would you like to know before you retire?

JJ: Wow, that is tough! I don’t know how specific I have to be. The very first question that made me interested in psychology is, how does learning occur? That’s pretty broad.

PLB: If you knew the answer to that when you retired, you would definitely have achieved something, so I think that’s a fine answer! OK, question number two: Nature... or Nurture?

JJ: (Laughs) That’s a silly question! My answer is: yes.

PLB. Good answer. Finally: Gordita... or Chalupa?

JJ: Chalupa.

PLB: That is correct!

JJ: It is?

PLB: Yes. According to Taco Bell, the Gordita and Chalupa are identical, except that the shell of the Chalupa is fried. So Chalupa is the correct answer. Very nice job!

JJ: You’re not going to put that in there, are you?

Recently, Theresa Kurutz was hit on the head by a huge icicle. On the same day, she received a free lunch from a friendly male stranger. This made the PLB wonder: what if what goes around really does come around? What if there is some sort of mysterious balance in the world, and time really is a wheel to which our souls are bound for eternity? If that were the case, what might some of our faculty members be reincarnated as in their next lives...
Lori Holt: could she be reincarnated as a Japanese speaking quail?

Domo Arigato, Mr. Roboto!

Might David Rakison achieve ultimate burliness in the next life?

We all know what Ken Kotovsky is going to come back as...

Do you have more reincarnation ideas and pictures? Submit them to CMUPLB@hotmail.com!
Internet Report
Submitted by Anna Fisher

Internet domain names with an unfortunately hilarious second interpretation

1) Who Represents?, a database for agencies to the rich and famous:
   http://www.whorepresents.com

2) Experts Exchange, a knowledge base where programmers can exchange advice and views:
   http://www.expertsexchange.com

3) Looking for a pen? Look no further than Pen Island:
   http://www.penislend.net

4) Need a therapist?
   http://www.therapistfinder.com

5) Mole Station Native Nursery, based in New South Wales:
   http://www.molestationnursery.com

6) New to Milan and you need electric light? Why not sign up on-line with Power-Gen?
   http://www.powergenitalia.com

The PLB needs your help!

Have you been to a good restaurant lately? Or a bad one? The PLB would like to know about it!

Submit your restaurant review to CMUPLB@hotmail.com

Some suggested (but not required!) details
   Your grade of the food- A, B, C, D, F?
   Price of a meal?
   Service?
   Ambience?
Alert readers have noted that the denizens of Middle Earth appear to be constructing some sort of beanstalk bridge that would finally allow them to invade the 3rd floor in force! Experts on 2nd-3rd floor relations speculate that this surprisingly aggressive maneuver may have been sparked by Nick Yeung’s desire to return from his exile to Middle Earth. Whatever the cause, representatives from the 3rd floor have issued a travel advisory, alerting citizens that it may be unsafe to visit the 2nd floor until this situation has been resolved.

Brooke C. Feeney: Security Threat?

The PLB has learned that supposedly “mild-mannered” department member Brooke Feeney was recently detained at the border between Canada and the United States. Feeney, travelling south from Canada, was detained by brave Homeland Security officers, who found her in possession of pepper spray. Dr. Feeney claims that she simply “forgot” she was carrying it.

The PLB, however, suspects that this was all part of a dastardly plan that we are fortunate to see foiled! Think about what we know about “Brooke Feeney.” She’s very nice -- the perfect cover! No one would ever suspect Brooke Feeney. And yet: perhaps they should! Brooke HAS been taking body-building classes to build muscle mass. AND she’s in possession of a fierce attack dog! Moreover, Brooke’s middle initial is “C.” That could stand for... CANADA!!!

The PLB believes that Brooke Canada Feeney may be the first wave of an army of Canadian agents attempting to slip into the country and overwhelm us with their pepper spray and attack dogs and huge, sculpted muscles. We advise everyone to be very wary around this known Homeland Security threat until further details can be obtained!
Lots of things were said at the most recent meeting of the faculty senate, relating primarily to 3 topics: the Alumni Association, CMU’s overseas programs, and HR177.

### Alumni Association

The Alumni Association would like to receive nominations for the “Alumni Service Award.” Any faculty member who does good things for alumni is eligible; all you need to do is nominate them.

Also, the Association has recently come into 20,000 dollars, and is looking to spend it on faculty-undergraduate pairs who could take a trip to visit a group of alums and discuss their research activities together. If you’re interested, let me know!

### Overseas Programs

Mark Kamlet discussed CMU’s efforts overseas. We learned many things:

1) Making money is key. All overseas programs are revenue-neutral or positive. Pittsburgh receives 3-4 million/year from them.

2) CMU is particularly interested in China

3) CMU is in discussion with Lisbon, Seoul, Delhi, Kuala Lampur, and many other sites.

### HR 177

HR 177 was passed by the Pennsylvania House to ensure that students are “graded based on academic merit,” rather than ideological views, and created a committee to ensure this. The CMU Faculty Senate resolved to express its disapproval of HR 177, largely because it seeks to transfer oversight of academic performance reviews from universities to the legislature.

The Senate passed a resolution reading, in part, “Be it resolved... that the Faculty Senate of Carnegie Mellon University... opposes HR 177 in the strongest possible terms as an attempt to inappropriately politicize hiring processes and professional review.” For best effect, pretend as though the resolution is being read by James Earl Jones.

At the April 11th Faculty Senate Meeting, we’ll be discussing FCEs! In particular, the electronic form: good or bad?

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**Scheier cancels Faculty Meeting**

Department Head Mike Scheier cancelled last week’s (March 29) Faculty Meeting because little progress had been made on key issues. Thus, there would be nothing to say.

Faculty throughout the department reacted with confusion. “We don’t have faculty meetings when we don’t have anything to say? It’s never stopped us before!” said one. “How far does this policy extend?” inquired another. “If we don’t say things when we have nothing to say, half of my classes are out the window.”
This week, our favorite critics review “Walk the Line!”

Overall, “Walk the Line” was worth my entertainment dollar. Literally: a dollar.... FYI, those movies at the UC aren’t just for the students, folks! For the first half of the movie, I was less focused on Johnny Cash and his developing career than on scrutinizing Joaquin Phoenix, the actor. This is not a good thing if you feel, as I do, that one important purpose of going to the movies is escapism.

Specifically, when I was supposed to be getting drawn into the story, growing an understanding of and compassion for Mr. Cash the budding musician, my attention instead kept getting drawn to tangential or unrelated things. This was out of my control. So I may as well be honest and list them here, in the name of full disclosure.

1. Did Joaquin Phoenix have a cleft lip as a child, or an unfortunate oral accident? What’s with the scar? I’m too lazy and unconcerned to Google whether, instead, Mr. Cash suffered from one of those afflictions, necessitating scarlike makeup applications to Mr. Phoenix.

2. More importantly for his credibility as an actor (and the audience’s quality of life) why did Mr. Phoenix act like such a rigid robot until the point in the movie (about halfway through) where his character took up substance abuse? Mr. Phoenix’s acting was most compelling and convincing when he was depicting Mr. Cash on a bender. Toward the beginning of the movie, I was wondering whether the near-complete immobility of Mr. Phoenix’s emotional facial expression was due to an overindulgence in Botox injections. Sometimes he behaved like he’d been lobotomized (even in critical scenes where at least some emotional expression would seem to be mandatory). I found myself thinking that Mr. Cash’s bass player (band members had comparatively tiny parts) was more substantive an actor than Mr. Phoenix, even in his total 30 seconds of screen time, which was often spent meaningfully gazing off into the distance at a point beyond the camera. I have to say it was almost a relief, rather than tragic, to watch Mr. Cash’s inebriation scenes.

3. What’s with Mr. Cash’s father and the tin cans? If you’re gonna throw items in anger at your young children, why hunt around exclusively for tin cans? It seemed a bit strange and perhaps contrived, in an attempt to tie it with a scene later in the movie, involving the adult Johnny Cash, his children and...you guessed it...more tin cans.

4. Relatedly, the best symbolism in movies is subtle. Only the lowest common denominator among us needs to be battered over the head with symbolism. For this reason, I really liked the use of animals to depict turning points in Mr. Cash’s life. If you rent this movie, watch for the crow (Folsom Prison); dog (Cash’s brother at the sawmill); and the buzzard circling overhead (Mr. Cash lying in a hammock in his backyard, unhappily hitched to Wife #1). I’ll bet a lot of people in the audience Friday night didn’t register the meaning. Black crow, black dog, black shirt...check it out.

5. Reese Witherspoon totally deserved the Best Actress award for her role as June Carter Cash. She and the other female actors propped up the film around Mr. Phoenix’s mediocrity, and helped me fight off my cinematic ADD symptoms as the (long) movie progressed.

6. I would have appreciated subtitles to navigate through those thick Southern accents. Particularly in a public theater, seated in front of that older couple who insisted on unwrapping an infinite number of plastic-wrapped bitesize snacks throughout the entire length of the show. (Grr...). I imagine if you rent it, your problems here are solved (the DVD is likely to have English subtitles in the menu, and you won’t have an obnoxious couple sitting next to you in the living room [unless they’re your inlaws, har har har]).

- Ellen Conser
Walk the Line was not only a good movie, but one of the best biopics in some time. I could go on, but why when you can see it for yourself? Instead I’ve included this comparison between Walk the Line and several other movies involving country legends. - Jill Roxberg.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movie</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Title Inspiration</th>
<th>Dramatic conflict</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walk the Line (2005)</td>
<td>Johnny Cash</td>
<td>From song Walk the Line, which is about Johnny Cash’s ability to walk in a straight line even when drunk.</td>
<td>Battle with substance abuse and tree branches. Also, must overcome fact dad doesn’t like him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coal Miner’s Daughter (1980)</td>
<td>Loretta Lynn</td>
<td>May be related to fact that Lynn’s father was a coal miner.</td>
<td>Lynn marries (at 13!), has children, hit songs and nervous breakdown, but remains proud of her history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweet Dreams (1985)</td>
<td>Patsy Cline</td>
<td>One of Patsy’s hit songs.</td>
<td>Patsy had hits, children, but not the best of marriage(s). Even more successful after death.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Gambler (1980)</td>
<td>A gambler</td>
<td>Kenny Rogers’ hit song (songs made into movies were an unfortunate trend in late 70s, as evidenced by movies such as Convoy*)</td>
<td>A veteran gambler teaches a rookie that he needs to “know when to hold ‘em, know when to fold ‘em”</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movie</th>
<th>Actor</th>
<th>Death</th>
<th>Important Lessons</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walk the Line (2005)</td>
<td>Joaquin Phoenix.</td>
<td>Johnny dies offscreen, a few months after June (both wife and month)</td>
<td>Hanging pictures of June in den may irritate current wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coal Miner’s Daughter (1980)</td>
<td>Sissy Spacek.</td>
<td>Not dead yet!</td>
<td>Marrying young to escape local fate works best if husband is somewhat supportive, and money isn’t an issue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweet Dreams (1985)</td>
<td>Jessica Lange</td>
<td>Plane crash in West Tennessee (scene filmed in Mojave desert)</td>
<td>Hollywood directors think the desert looks a lot like the South (see also: Dukes of Hazzard)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Gambler (1980)</td>
<td>Kenny Rogers is The Gambler.</td>
<td>The Gambler has lived to see several direct-to-video sequels.</td>
<td>“Every hand’s a winner, every hand’s a loser, and the best you can hope for is to die in your sleep.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*Editor’s Note: Convoy is actually a fantastic movie. It’s like a Western, but with trucks!
Movie Trivia!

Think you know movies? See if you can come up with the answer to these two brain teasers!
E-mail answers to CMUPLB@hotmail.com

Question 1:
This movie involves a sequence in which the lead actress pretends to be Russian. When asked to sing her favorite traditional Russian song, she comes up with “Back in the USSR.”

Question 2:
An alternate title for this movie might be “The walrus-like mammal that comes after six.”

PLB Shout-Out

This month’s PLB Shout-Out goes to Kim Murray. I can’t count the times over the past year that I’ve gotten an e-mail from Kim saying, “Erik, I need a receipt from you.” Some times I have the receipt. Some times, not so much. But Kim makes sure it always works out in the end. I’m certain that, left to my own devices, I would have had my Tartan Trust card revoked by now. So thank you, Kim, for all your hard work on helping to keep the finances of the department organized!