An End to the PLB Drought!

Inside this Special Graduate Student Edition:
* Who is CMU’s Top Male Model(er)?
* Animals to Fear in Pittsburgh
* Faculty Member Spills the Beans on his Collegues

AND MUCH MUCH MORE!
Greetings fellow Psycho?logists!

Whilst the PLB continued its summer publication hiatus, it’s absence from the department has been increasingly missed. Where is everyone? Is the world still round? Are my children safe? I have children? Clearly, this train of thought could not continue and was in need of some proper (so to speak) guidance. Somehow, the clearly very twisted mind of the regular PLB editor thought that we might be up to the task, and we are happy to share with you the fruits of our labor: A special August 2008 edition of the critically acclaimed Psycho? Logical? Bulletin!

As guest editors of the PLB we were charged with a very important responsibility: To carry on the legacy of the PLB. But to take on this task, one must ask themselves what is the PLB’s legacy? And how does one carry it on? Over the years, the PLB has come to be known for its comic wit, overbearing sarcasm, and its plain all-around goofiness – proof that prestigious scientists also are capable of a sense of humor – indeed, many a time we have heard people remark, “When I was considering a job at CMU [psych], the PLB was a positive contribution to my decision, I felt the department had a light-hearted personality after reading it.” Consistent with this, the PLB has never failed to bring joy to our hearts.

Nevertheless, while many see the PLB as an optimistic addition to the department, the truth is that the PLB has served as a means for corruption, intimidation, and scandal for years. PLB editors have been known to blackmail department heads and other faculty, attaining social status through threats of nefarious articles in the names of their unwitting victims. Erik Thiessen and Lori Holt before him used the PLB as a way to sabotage all who dared to oppose them.

Keeping with this tradition, we have also sabotaged many and, in honor of the PLB heritage, we felt it was our duty to do so. Therefore, we find it appropriate that our misdeeds are forgiven and full amnesty be granted to us. With that, we guarantee this PLB will blow your mind in a fresh but familiar fashion. But don’t take our word for it - see for yourself. Plenty of reading and delightfully few empty pages disguised with random photos. We take our work seriously.

On a final note, we would like to thank you - the members of the department - for providing us with so much bulletinizable content, and for helping us generate the pages and collect the relevant information we needed to pull this issue together. It wouldn’t have happened without you. We’d also like to make a special shout-out to those-who-wish-to-remain-anonymous for their particularly juicy additions.

Your Guest Editors,

Bryan and Blair
The competition was fierce this year, and the contestants clearly pulled out all the stops for us at the PLB (what were the stops? Only editors can know...). Nevertheless, only one of the many meritorious candidates could be selected as CMU’s top Male Model\textsubscript{(er)}. Drumroll please!

The winner of the 2008 Top Male Model\textsubscript{(er)} award is:

CHARLES KEMP!!!
There were also some very impressive showings by several other modelers. Our runners up this year include John Anderson and David Klahr, who both tied for second place.

Further spicing up the competition was a last minute entrant who clawed his way onto the podium. Congratulations to David Hastelhoff who took the third place.

Congratulations to all of our winners!

Honorable mention: David Rakison
With Which Character Did You Relate Most in The Dark Knight?

ERIK THIESSEN SAYS:

“Deep down, I’m a Joker kind of guy. The joker is reminiscent of Nietzsche, in my opinion. They each call our attention to the importance of accepting chaos, and move us beyond immobilizing questions of good vs. evil. What is “good,” and what is “evil,” I ask you.

Personally, I’d like to see a little more chaos in the department. I’m looking forward to reclaiming my PLB editorship in September, and you can certainly count on me to insert some into the otherwise dull and drab academic realm.”

BROOKE FEENEY SAYS:

“I am just so torn between relating to Batman and relating to Harvey Dent. They both suffered greatly in the loss of their relationships with Rachel. The loss of an important attachment figure must be the most painful experience anyone could encounter.

Batman is a classic case of avoidant attachment, so it was so painful to watch him finally realize and admit how much he needed the relationship only to lose it. He was ready to let Rachel in, to become close to someone, and he lost it. Can he love again? I wish I could give him a puppy.

On the other hand, Harvey’s the guy we all want to be. He had it all: secure attachment, dashing good looks, and a loving relationship partner. Who wouldn’t want to relate to Harvey and have his life? Then suddenly all was lost. He had worked so long and so hard, making so many sacrifices for his career. The worst part about it was that no one could accept Harvey’s anger (which is totally understandable given his eternal separation from his attachment figure), so it just pushed him to become Two-Face out of spite. It’s tragic.”
Welcome Incoming Grads and Faculty!

With the onset of the new academic year, many new bright and talented people will be joining our department. The PLB gives you a fresh look at a few of the new faces you may see in the next few months! Please check out our new Faculty and Grads, and make sure to say hello when you see them! [Editor’s note: We tried to track down all of the new arrivals, but we didn’t give respondents much time to get back to us and may not have been exhaustive in our search. Sorry if we missed you... We still want you here all the same!]

David Creswell

Research interests: Broadly, my research consists of examining the effects of stress on health and disease, and in identifying ways of minimizing its harmful effects. In particular, my research focuses on identifying the underlying psychosocial, physiological, neural, and genetic mechanisms guiding stress reduction. My current work focuses on examining the stress reduction mechanisms of mindfulness meditation training and self-affirmation in various patient populations.

Where I grew up: Lincoln, Nebraska. (Go Huskers)

Hobbies: all things athletic: tennis, surfing, running, skiing.

Interesting fact: I spent two years living and working with the US Speedskating team in Colorado, and one famous member of this team can sometimes be found hanging around the psychology building.

Favorite TV character: I’m hooked on So You Think You Can Dance (I wish I could dance like that).

Christa Crittenden

Research Interests: Pediatric chronic illness, particularly asthma, and the development of certain psychopathologies.

Where you grew up: Honeoye Falls, a small rural suburb of Rochester, NY.

Hobbies: Kayaking, attempting to play tennis, reading, Scherenschnitte (the German art of paper cutting), watching too much TV.

Interesting Fact about yourself: Last August I had my head shaved in front of a large crowd of people to raise money for pediatric cancer research.

Your favorite fictional character (can be cartoon, tv, literary, etc) and a brief explanation as to why: Mr. Sparkle, because of how disrespectful he is to dirt. He has the power to ban the food particles on my dirty dishes to the land of wind and ghosts. Can you see I am serious!
Alan Jern

Research interests: Reasoning, categorization, memory

Where I grew up: Fresno, CA

Hobbies: playing Scrabble, watching TV (I’m not ashamed to call this a hobby), cooking, learning to play piano.

Interesting fact: I have met Peter Mayhew, the guy who played Chewbacca. He’s a jerk. [Editor’s note: “That’s impossible!” Said the way Luke does in Episode 5].

Favorite fictional character: Coincidentally, this is one of the security questions for accessing my bank account online. So I’m afraid I can’t answer this question without compromising my security. But I’ll give you a hint: it’s not Chewbacca.

Yevdokiya (Dussy) Yermolayeva

Research Interests: How infants learn about the world and how they categorize new information so as to eventually use this information to make inferences and aid further learning.

Where you grew up: Ages 1-9: Malaysia Ages 10-18: Singapore Ages 19-present: USA (But English IS my native language, albeit in a different accent)

Hobbies: Watching action/sci-fi movies, music (listening/playing), hanging out at cafes, driving, walking in parks.

Interesting Fact about yourself: I’m pretty obsessive with the things I like. If I’m into a song/movie, I’ll loop that song/movie the entire day... for days... at the expense of my roommate’s sanity. If I’m into a certain food, I’ll eat it everyday until I’m tired of it (unfortunately, this + awesome chocolate chip cookies = freshmen 20).

Your favorite fictional character (can be cartoon, tv, literary, etc) and a brief explanation as to why: Elizabeth Bennet from Pride and Prejudice because she is able to stand up for herself and is rather witty, using her cleverness to hide any weaknesses. Also I just really like the book.

Su Mei Lee

Research Interests: Brain imaging, autism, social cognition, connectivity, regulation and intervention.

Where you grew up: Moscow, Russia and Newton, Massachusetts. I moved to the US when I was 10.

Hobbies: painting, drawing, baking, running

Interesting Fact about yourself: I was on the lightweight crew team at Georgetown for four years

Your favorite fictional character (can be cartoon, tv, literary, etc) and a brief explanation as to why: House MD. Mr. Misunderstood just tugs at my heartstrings. Not to mention he’s ridiculously brilliant.
Lindsay Victoria

Research Interests: I am interested in memory and aging. Specifically, I am interested in why and how some aspects of memory decline with age, while others remain stable. I hope to study the cognitive process of memory, as well as the underlying neuromechanisms at work, during both normal aging and the pathogenesis of Alzheimer’s disease.

Where you grew up: West Chester, Pennsylvania and Mendham, New Jersey

Hobbies: knitting, tennis, reading, watching tv

Interesting Fact about yourself: I played hooker on the women’s rugby team during undergrad at the University of Richmond.

Your favorite fictional character (can be cartoon, tv, literary, etc) and a brief explanation as to why: My favorite fictional character is Scout Finch, from one of my favorite novels (and films), To Kill a Mockingbird. Even though she is young, she always knows how to hold her own against the grown-ups (and her older brother). She also has a unique way of looking at the world and interacting with others.

Colleen Davy

Where I grew up: Dublin, Ohio; it’s outside Columbus.

Hobbies: Reading, running, music, and Pittsburgh sports (I also love the Buckeyes, but I have to pretend I don’t).

Interesting fact about myself: This isn’t so much about me as about my hometown: Dublin, Ohio, in addition to being the home of Wendy’s, is also the home to notoriously strange artwork, the Field of Corn. Maybe 10 years ago, Dublin decided to celebrate their farming heritage by creating a field of 7 foot tall cement ears of corn. Seriously.

My favorite fictional character: The guy from the freecreditreport.com commercial. He plays the guitar and he’s a good singer, plus he’s had his identity stolen like me so I sympathize with him (except for in that one commercial where he married his dream girl but she never told him that her credit was bad, so now, instead of living in a pleasant suburb, he’s living in the basement at her mom and dad’s). Plus he looks good in a pirate costume.
Departmental Mysteries

It’s mysterious, daunting, glistens in the sun, and tantalizes those who desire to know its contents – that’s right – it’s David Plaut’s fanny pack. What are the contents of this intriguing piece of waist-wear?

To speculate about this question, the graduate students weighed in gameshow style:

RESULTS:

a) beef jerky: 27%
b) Keys, wallet, cell phone: 18%
c) another fanny pack: 18%
d) Pet chipmunk: 9%
e) other: 14% // bacon, swiss army knife, treats for Tuxedo
f) all of the above: 14%

Who knows what departmental mystery a graduate student poll may solve next...
The Mole

Now for the section you’ve all been waiting for! The PLB has secured an exclusive interview with an anonymous faculty member who has agreed to spill the beans on his colleagues. Find out what the faculty are really up to! It will both shock and amaze you.

Unlike the regular PLB, which would publicly name the interviewee in order to shame him/her and bring about the wrath of the department, we have gone to great lengths to protect our informant. To ensure his safety, we have obfuscated his name and we refer to him only as KIRE NESSEIHT so that he can feel safe in giving us the dirty low down on the secret operations of the department.

PLB: KIRE, thank you for agreeing to spill the beans on your fellow faculty. As agreed, we’re making sure that your name is obfuscated so that you don’t suffer any repercussions.

KIRE NESSEIHT Thank you…

PLB: Out of curiosity, if your real name were to leak, do you think there would be any repercussions? Who in particular might be inclined to “sniff out the rat”?

KN: Well, now, that depends. Obviously, if they saying were to “sniff out the squirrel,” it would be Ken Kotovsky I’d most have to worry about. But in terms of maintaining the decorum of the faculty and making sure that no one breaks rank, I think that the most menacing figure in the department is Lori Holt and her animal lab. If you cross her, she’s entirely willing to “release the hounds.” Of course, by “hounds,” she means “quail,” but it’s still somewhat menacing.

PLB: Don’t worry, we’re sure no one in the department will be able to figure it out, and the PLB editorial staff has personally assured your identity is protected. On to serious matters. The faculty are a mysterious organization. Cultish in some respects… What rituals go on behind your closed faculty doors? Hidden Nintendo tournaments? Poker games where you bet on grad students (either to acquire or dispense of?)?

TE: What many graduate students don’t realize is that the faculty meetings we stage for you guys – why do you think we invite grad student representatives to them? – are a sham. All the real decisions are made by a top-secret committee; even I don’t know all of the members, although I’ve confirmed that both department head Mike Scheier and a Magic 8 Ball are involved.

PLB: Amidst all that fun stuff, how is it that you still manage to get work done. Is it the same drive as when you were a graduate student?

TE: Like anything else, a lot of the trick is finding the right balance between work, family, and fun. And it helps when your work is fun. As for whether it’s the same motivation as when you’re a graduate student, I suppose that depends on what motivated you throughout grad school. I was motivated to become as rich as Croesus, so… I’m still working on that.

PLB: Speaking of the grad student to faculty transition, many students here will be graduating soon. Do you have any advice for them?

TE: I think most new faculty members feel, at one time or another, like they don’t really know anything. In some respects, this feeling is true: just because you’re very good at your own research doesn’t mean that you can see how it fits into the big picture. So one bit of advice would be to try and keep reading, both narrowly and broadly, because you never know enough. But the second bit of advice would be, try and remember that everyone feels a bit out at sea at some point. So try not to take at as too much of an
PLB: Now, back to the real questions, are there still cliques at the faculty level? Are there “cool kids” and “nerds?” Given that it’s CMU, have the traditional social hierarchies been reversed? Are the computational people finally on top?

TE: While it’s true that we do respect Charles Kemp, it’s at least as much due to his rock’n’roll lifestyle as his mad computational skillz. As for ‘cool kids,’ it’s often said that the Fonzies of the faculty hang out in the lunch group. My understanding is that Sheldon Cohen even has a leather jacket.

PLB: Why are some faculty members afraid of squirrels. Did something go wrong in a lab at some point? Should the graduate students live in fear as well?

TE: Graduate students should always live in fear; that’s just the natural order of things. But the squirrel thing is, well, a bit like cobras and mongoose... mongeese? Mongoose? Some things are just intended to be enemies, and that describes Kotovsky and the Squirrels (which would also be a great name for a band). It’s just the circle of life.

PLB: This PLB is full of many firsts… This is the first time we’ve had a faculty guest - albeit an anonymous one - as the main interviewee of the month. Other than yourself, who do you think the second best interviewee would have been? Who’s got the pizzazz to dazzle the PLB audience?

TE: You should always aim high. Go for the Big Kahuna next time, the man we call the Head Cheese, the Chief, El Guapo: Mike Scheier. In addition to pizzazz, if you were to take a picture, there is at least a 93% chance that his shirt would dazzle.

PLB: Now time for your Big 3 questions. The first, backed by tremendous reader demand, we simply must ask for your insights about Erik Thiessen. You seem to have avoided giving any real dirt on the guy throughout this interview. Is it true that he really is an international man of mystery? Are the rumors true that he saved an entire village in Qatar from a giant scorpion by wrestling it with his bare hands?

ET: Hmmm… Erik Thiessen… hmmm. Name doesn’t sound familiar. Oh, wait, are you referring to L.L. Cool E? Yes, yes, nice enough fellow. Although I think some of those stories are a bit exaggerated. I’m told that he was actually wearing thick wool gloves when he wrestled the scorpion.

PLB: Funny… We heard some rumors that he snuck off to Beijing to get some tips from the Olympic runners. Seems that despite being beaten by some graduate students on the treadmills this year, he’s still fearful of taking on the department’s top honcho: David “Klahrinator” Klahr. If you were Erik Thiessen, what would you say to this?

L. L. Cool E: BRING IT!!!

PLB: The final question: What is inside David Plaut’s fanny pack?

KN: A better question is, what ISN’T inside that fanny pack? You know how the Professor from Gilligan’s Island could construct a television using only coconuts and monkey fur? Or how MacGuyver could create a bomb using gum, rubber bands, and a soda can? That fanny pack contains the raw materials and gadgets to allow David to survive virtually any imaginable scenario; you should have seen the way he used it to sneak across the Canadian border during his escape from Toronto. I think he even brought a graduate student in it...
Can You Spot the Differences?

Can’t spot all five? Ask David Rakison for help... Those able to identify all five should contact the regular PLB editor for a cash reward

[Editors’ Note: We have tried to locate all five differences to no avail. Good luck to all participants! Also, the regular PLB editor may deny all knowledge of offering a cash reward...]
Department Announcements

Interested in Fantasy Football?

The official Department Fantasy Football League begins soon!
E-mail Erik Thiessen at thiessen@andrew.cmu.edu for details.

Beware, rumors have circulated that Brooke ‘juggernaut’ Feeney will be playing this year.

PsyCoke
Just like Willy Wonka, you can win a special prize if your can has a golden ticket affixed!
While supplies last. Act now!

Fortune! Fame! Fantasy!
Submit your content for the:

FIRST ANNUAL PLB SWIMSUIT EDITION

Contact Erik Thiessen for details!
Editor’s Note: Erik Thiessen may deny all knowledge of the creation of a swimsuit edition
Department Announcements -- Continued

The PLB wants you!

What have you been up to this summer? Send in your summer photos to Erik Thiessen at thiessen@andrew.cmu.edu to be featured in the next issue of the PLB!

Not sure what to pictures to send? See Bryan and Blair’s summer pics for some interesting ideas...

Sir Bryan vs. Red Dragon #27

Jedi Knight Blair vs. Connectionist-hating Sith

Clearly:

Sith / Dragons 0

Bryan/Blair 114159
PLB feedback form
Please return to Bryan or Blair’s mailbox

This issue of the PLB:
a) inspired me  b) blew my mind  c) made me a better person

One way to describe this issue would be:
a) delicious  b) life-changing  c) magical

I wish I were as amazing as Bryan and Blair:
a) most of the time  b) all the time  c) Yes

Thank you, and until next year! (?)