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What’s going on in David Klahr’s brain?

Special points of interest:

- Everything you ever wanted to know about David Klahr
- A first-ever look into the faculty yearbooks
- Ken Kotovsky and swearing
This month the PLB takes a close look at the life and work of child-scientist David Klahr

The 37th Carnegie Symposium on Cognition
October 9-11, 2009 ~ Carnegie Mellon University

From Child to Scientist: Mechanisms of Learning and Development
A Festschrift in honor of the scientific and educational contributions of David Klahr

Walter van Dyke Bingham Professor of Cognitive Development and Education Sciences
Carnegie Mellon University, Department of Psychology

Organizers:
- Sharon M. Carver (CMU Psychology Ph.D., 1986)
- Kevin N. Dunbar (CMU Post-Doc from 1985-88)
- Jeff Strayer (CMU Psychology Ph.D., 1985)
- Robert S. Siegler (Teresa Heinz Professor of Cognitive Psychology, CMU)

Sponsors:
- Department of Psychology, Carnegie Mellon University
- Carnegie Mellon's Program in Interdisciplinary Education Research (PIER), funded by the Institute for Education Sciences
- The American Psychological Association
- Private Donations

Overview  Attending  Schedule  Brochure

For more information on the Carnegie Symposium, please go to: http://www.psy.cmu.edu:16080/symposium37/

We hope to see you there!

- The PLB thanks Sharon Carver, Bob Siegler, David Rakison, and Erik Thiessen for their contributions to our Klahr section this month
Honoring Dr. David Klahr

On October 9-11, the Psychology Department will host a festschrift entitled, From Child to Scientist: Mechanisms of Learning and Development, to honor of the scientific and educational contributions of David Klahr on the occasion of his 70th birthday and 40th year at Carnegie Mellon. The symposium aims to connect leading researchers whose work bridges theory and practice to advance understanding of scientific and mathematical development and research regarding strategies for both formal and informal education. In scores of publications, David Klahr has pioneered research to strengthen the reciprocal contributions of cognitive development, scientific discovery and reasoning, and education. Throughout his career, David has mentored and inspired undergraduates, graduate trainees, post-doctoral fellows, and other leading researchers in the field, many of whom will participate in the symposium.

After joining the Graduate School of Industrial Administration (now the Tepper School) in 1969 as an Associate Professor, David Klahr became a Professor in the Psychology Department in 1976. He served as Department Head from 1983-1993. Children’s School staff and families applaud Dr. Klahr as the graduate school advisor of Dr. Sharon Carver and the head of the Psychology Department who hired her as the school’s director in 1993. David directed the “Literacy in Science Center” at Carnegie Mellon from 1988 to 1996. Since 2005, he has been the Training Director of the Program in Interdisciplinary Education Research (PIER) and an Executive Committee Member and the Education Director of the Pittsburgh Science of Learning Center (PSLC). He currently holds the Walter van Dyke Bingham professorship in Cognitive Development and Education Sciences.

Dr. Rena Subotnik, from the American Psychological Association, summarized her tribute by saying, “David Klahr is dependable, generous with his time, has innumerable contacts, makes creative suggestions, and is blessedly forthright when ideas get murky.” Colleague Dr. Brian MacWhinney commented, “David Klahr has been the person who has stated the core challenge facing developmentalists most clearly and consistently, while maintaining his firm and appropriate commitment to a mechanistic view of psychological processing.” After working with David on various advisory boards and National Research Council committees, Dr. Frank Keil “came to appreciate his incredible interdisciplinary breadth. David seemed better read and more insightful than just about anyone else and yet always seemed grounded in reality as well.” Keil summarizes David’s enduring impact, “After all these years, he continues to show an almost unbounded enthusiasm for scientific discovery both in how he does his work and in terms of what he studies. His clear joy in his work continues to inspire all of us in the field.”

Thank you, David, for being a model scientist, mentor, colleague, and friend!

- Submitted by Sharon Carver
Remembering Klahr: A father figure in the department

One of my favorite memories of David comes from a department retreat during the period when he was department head. David was an extremely vigorous and effective head during the 10 years that he served, helping to improve the department intellectually, physically, and financially. Then as now, though, department meetings typically included lots of contentious debate in which people expressed their views in no uncertain terms and often followed up the meetings with visits to the head’s office to further argue their positions.

At the retreat, David drew an analogy between being department head and being the father of a family of quarrelsome children. I thought the analogy was apt as well as witty, but not everyone agreed; the comment triggered a number of post-retreat visits to his office to complain about it. Although the “squabbling children” part of the comment probably evoked the immediate reactions, the analogy to the father role probably reflected David’s feelings more deeply. Both during and since his time as head, David has been a calm, reflective, reasonable, and incisive presence. No one always agrees with him, but everyone always respects him. He has leavened his wisdom with humor and love, and the department and university are better places for it.

- Bob Siegler

Klahr’s Impact: A transcription of what faculty meetings might be like if we decided to do them via group iPhone texting:

Motormycle: We’re SOT, so let’s start
IBSgrls: Sup?
Motormycle: Dept needs bux, any FBI?
CrescentFresh: Have peeps pay for PLB?
Trout: I would buy, j/k, n00b
RKl33tzky: Ask admin for moar $$?
Motormycle: That’s a WOMBAT.
IMHO, Central will KMWA b4 giving CKDundee: lol
BritD: IPN
Girlbil: OMGWTFBBQ! TMI, NSFW!
AKGB: ROFL
DKlahr: Perhaps we could alleviate some of our budget problems by submitting more training grants to fund graduate students.

— Submitted by Erik Thiessen
Klahr and Domain-Specific Memory

David is well known in the department - and outside it - for his knowledge of the field. When I need to find a reference for an obscure paper, I simply go to his office and ask him and he more or less instantly recalls it. Having said, when we have our semi-regular poker game at my house it’s a different story. Someone will state the game - 5 card draw, 3’s are wild, 2 changes of 2 cards - and within 10 seconds of receiving his cards David will ask again what the game is (Ken usually replies "poker"). This process repeats itself a few times and then David, who has been playing poker since before I was alive, will ask to see the cheat sheet that shows the order of the best hands. After all, who can remember if a flush beats a full-house?

I salute you David Klahr - a walking, talking demonstration of domain-specific memory effects. Oh, and for better or worse he stole my hairstyle for which I’m forever miffed about because it looks better on him than me!

-David Rakison

Snapshots: Klahr fashion through the years

David Klahr has always been a trendsetter. On the left, young David Klahr modeling his new fashion line. This line combines comfort (khaki shorts, untucked short-sleeve shirt) with sophisticated elegance (blue tie). On the right, Klahr’s transforms the game of golf with tie and slacks.
Grad Talk presents...

CHANGES IN TIME
A waltz through faculty yearbooks

Chess Club
the brodeo spent too much time on their hair to win a match
**One of these pictures is actually real.... Can you guess which one?**

John Anderson
Marlene Behrmann
Chante Cox Boyd
Patricia Carpenter
Sharon Carver

Sheldon Cohen
J. David Creswell
Brooke Feeney
Anna Fisher
Dick Hayes

Vicki Helgeson
Laurie Heller
Lori Holt
Marcel Just
Charles Kemp

David Klahr
Bobby Klatzky
Ken Koedinger
Ken Kotovsky
Marsha Lovett
Yearbook Staff

Editor in Chief David Creswell (don’t quit your day job)  Guest Editors Lindsay & Erika (the coolest girls in school)
Cutest Couples

Too Cool for School
John Anderson & Lynne Reder

New Kids on the Block
Mike Tarr & Laurie Heller

Most Likely to Model
Alan Jern & Charles Kemp

Prom King and Queen
David Plaut & Marlene Behrmann
Psychology Department Fantasy Football Update!

Here are the current standings for the Baker Hall Irregulars: (submitted by E. Thiessen)

1) **Startled Chipmunks, 3-0, 328.8 points**

2) **Monkeys with Crayons, 2-1, 303.4 points**

3) **Bite Me, 2-1, 284.6**
   Coach: Kathie and Ginger. Best player: Drew Brees. Biggest weakness: everyone is out to get the defending champs, and no one believes their "what position does a 'W' 'R' play" rookie act anymore.

4) **PFK, 2-1, 280.9**
   Coach: Jill Roxberg. Best player: Chris Johnson. Biggest weakness: lives with opposing coach who occasionally listens to her mutter about what players she wants to draft, and who then scoops them up ahead of her.

5) **The Bruisers, 2-1, 276.5**
   Coach: Lauren Lorenzi. Best player: Frank Gore. Biggest weakness: Frank Gore is putting an entire team of medical surgeons' families through college.

6) **Baker Hall Regular, 2-1, 236.5**

7) **Cavaliers, 1-2, 289.6**
   Coach: Brooke Feeney. Best player: DeSean Jackson. Biggest weakness: Players on her team heard Brooke was on sabbatical this year, so they all want semester off as well.

8) **Mine that Burg', 1-2, 236.2**
   Coach: Erin Donahoe. Best player: Brian Westbrook. Biggest weakness: Decision to draft entire Steelers team may not be such a good plan this year.

9) **Gimpers, 0-3, 227.9**

10) **Revenge of the Churs, 0-3, 214.8**
    Bryan Matlen, Emilie Rendulic. Best player: Peyton Manning. Biggest weakness: not clear that Emilie and Bryan are aware that the season has started.
Holy Sh*t! Ken Kotovsky might be on to something

This article appeared recently in Scientific American, and suggests that Ken may be swearing in order to deal with chronic pain…

Why the #$%! Do We Swear? For Pain Relief

By Frederik Joelving

Bad language could be good for you, a new study shows. For the first time, psychologists have found that swearing may serve an important function in relieving pain.

The study, published today in the journal NeuroReport, measured how long college students could keep their hands immersed in cold water. During the chilly exercise, they could repeat an expletive of their choice or chant a neutral word. When swearing, the 67 student volunteers reported less pain and on average endured about 40 seconds longer.

Although cursing is notoriously decried in the public debate, researchers are now beginning to question the idea that the phenomenon is all bad. "Swearing is such a common response to pain that there has to be an underlying reason why we do it," says psychologist Richard Stephens of Keele University in England, who led the study. And indeed, the findings point to one possible benefit: "I would advise people, if they hurt themselves, to swear," he adds.

How swearing achieves its physical effects is unclear, but the researchers speculate that brain circuitry linked to emotion is involved. Earlier studies have shown that unlike normal language, which relies on the outer few millimeters in the left hemisphere of the brain, expletives hinge on evolutionarily ancient structures buried deep inside the right half.

http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=why-do-we-swear

CMU Students Sue Internet

Students from Anna Fisher's Spring 09 Developmental Research Methods course are suing the internet for false advertising. They claim that the internet ad (right) misrepresented the emotions they would experience as a result of the course.
Department Head Michael Scheier held a welcome lecture and reception for everyone in the department on Monday September 14th. The PLB extends a warm welcome to all new faculty, post-docs, graduate students, and staff.

Grad Students Colleen Davy, Alan Jern, Dussy Yermolayeva, Sarah Schipul, and Erica Laing competed in the 10K Great Race on September 27th! Do you want to buy a plaid-brain t-shirt (or intimate apparel) and be part of the team? Go to: http://www.cafepress.com/CMUPsych

Grad Sarah Schipul just got engaged to Tepper School of Business PhD student Sam Swift! Congratulations Sarah!