It’s been tough times recently in the PLB office. Since Dr. Dresswell decided to call it a day as editor and focus instead on his pithy research, there’s been a lack of direction, focus, and leadership behind the scenes of the one-monthly magazine that Mike Tarr affectionately calls “a big waste of time.” Without an editor in the last few months, the PLB has become about as rare as a fun faculty meeting or a day that Rochelle Croom dresses casually. As Lori once remarked about her new son Matteo, “it’s time for a change.”

As some of you already may know, every day around 12.00 a number faculty set out from Baker Hall to make the arduous trek to the UC like salmon swimming upstream against wave after wave of undergraduates. What awaits them there is the underwhelming food at Schatz dining hall. I imagine that a number of you have speculated about what occurs during those lunchtimes....
Brilliant ideas about new research? In-depth discussion about how to improve the graduate program? Debate about whether it’s better to bake or deep fry squirrels? Well, not so much. Mostly, there is chat about the previous night’s TV, why the Steelers won or lost, and whether ice-skating really has a move called crotch-lifting (don’t ask me, ask Anna Fisher). Of course, there are other highlights that include:

1) David Creswell receiving a significantly larger lunch portion from the staff than anyone else. The faculty who are present typically gasp with dismay as David presents his plate – actually, usually it’s more like a mini-trough – at the table. How does he do it? Nobody knows. It could be his rugged yet approachable good looks, his calm stress-free demeanor, or the fact that he claims to be eating for two (he’ll say “my wife Kasey is on the way” but omits the fact that she won’t be arriving for another 10 months).

2) The hot chocolate machine not working. More-or-less every day, a few brave warriors try to find a hot, cocoa-based beverage after lunch. Inevitably, they fail.

3) Marcel is hilarious. Yes, you read that right.

4) Bobby appears around 12.30 for her second lunch. You wouldn’t know it to look at her, but Bobby Klatzky is a two-lunch a day woman. It must be her fast metabolism from her daily runs that lets her get away with it. To be honest, I wouldn’t be surprised if she also enjoys 11sies, a teatime snack, and the occasional midnight feast.

5) Brooke says “When I buy my house….” Enough said.

What’s any of this got to do with you? The lunch bunch—following a suggestion from a particularly enigmatic British developmental psychologist whose name must be withheld for legal reasons—made a group decision to produce the next issue of the high-impact yet rarely read journal they call Psycho? Logical? Bulletin. It wasn’t easy to make this happen. Favors were called in, hatchets were buried, arms were twisted, and Ken Kotovsky required a $3.50 advance for writing his segment. But we got there in the end, with an impressive group effort the like of which has not been seen since the animals decided to line up two-by-two to wait for their place on the Ark. So relax, sit back, and let us thrill, entertain, and possibly bore you for the next few minutes of your life.

-The lunch bunch

Let’s go to lunch! Nom nom nom...

We even made t-shirts!
FROM “I F@#KING LOVE SCIENCE” (CHECK IT OUT ON FACEBOOK)

Why you should date a scientist:

Wow...that was amazing...

But we'd better do a few more rounds, to be sure.

Why you shouldn't date a scientist:

Wow...that was amazing...

But I should try with a control boyfriend, to be sure.

There are two types of people in this world:

Those who can extrapolate from incomplete data

this is your brain on homework

Attention center suddenly finds even the most boring diversions interesting

Visual center directs eyes to glaze over

Motor skills force hands to keep checking phone in case someone texted

Emotions center is numb with boredom

Logic center rationalizes why the assignment can be put off until a later time

Instincts center triggers sudden need for a snack

Language center reads assignment, but doesn't understand it

Muscle center instructs legs to stand and flee room

If you choose an answer at random, what is your probability of being correct?

- A: 25%
- B: 50%
- C: 60%
- D: 25%

Psycho? Logical? Bulletin
Breaking News: Cohen Retires to Pursue Professional Golf Career

Sheldon Cohen, Robert E. Doherty Professor of Psychology has announced his plans to retire to pursue a career on the PGA Senior Tour. Cohen says he is “doing it for the big bucks”! After years of playing less than professional golf, Cohen has decided to take his social security and seriously embrace the game. It is rumored that Cohen has asked Assistant Professor of Psychology J. David Creswell to join him as his caddy. Creswell has been providing Cohen with expert advice on hitting the small ball with the long stick. Although Creswell’s teaching techniques are closely guarded, it is rumored that they involve meditation and steroids. Creswell who is currently paid $12/hr is reported to be excited about the possibility of making $20-$50/year more (depending on whether Cohen can win anything) carrying around Cohen’s golf bag. Creswell reports that Cohen’s dementia is not really a problem as long as he takes his drugs. On hearing of Cohen’s decision, Michael Scheier, head of the Psychology Department, was heard to say “good luck”…. Scheier, whose professional racket ball career has been stymied by constant injuries, gave Cohen’s his surgeon’s phone number as a going away present.

A younger Sheldon Cohen waves to the crowd at the 18th hole during his days as an amateur player. His oversized glasses helped him see the greens from a distance. That’s what glasses are for, after all.

Sheldon quotes Sheldon

“Not a lot of scientific discoveries happen while people are having a good time.”

Sheldon Cooper, PhD  The Big Bang

Will the real Sheldon please stand up?
What should a Psychology Department be called? It’s no secret that many departments have names other than “Psychology.” So important is the topic that it was a major focus in a recent issue of the Assn. for Psychological Science magazine, *The APS Observer*:


Given this massive trend, members of the department have begun to question whether Carnegie Mellon should follow suit. Of course, we approach the issue with rigorous analysis. To wit...

**Arguments often proposed against a name change are:**

1. We are the Department of Simon and Newell; what’s good enough for them...
2. Name change is a fad. They’ll be sorry, like people with tattoos.
3. We are purists; we honor our historical roots (but not enough to call ourselves Philosophy).
4. Think of the cost of signage, stationary, etc. that accompanies a name change.

**Arguments for the change are:**

1. People don’t know what “psychologists” actually do; now they wouldn’t know what people with our new departmental name actually do.
2. “Psychology” doesn’t sound science-y enough.
3. The current name doesn’t represent our collective interests and approaches – do we have any?
4. Maybe we could get some money for changing our name to someone else’s, i.e., a donor.

With this ardent debate clouding the faculty lunches, I decided to conduct research on what departments really are calling themselves. I obtained data regarding the contact affiliations volunteered by members of a large international organization. This led me to the following synthesis of names and corresponding numbers.

A few scientific notes are needed here: For these purposes I eliminated professional-training and clinical departments, person-named schools (they beat us to donors), obviously non-psychology departments (e.g., philosophy, political science), medical school departments that did not mention behavior, and names in foreign languages. In aggregating similar names, I ignored prefixes like “Center,” “Institute,” “Dept.,” etc. Finally, given departmental interests, I pruned names that have sizeable membership but don’t match our specialties, e.g., organizational psychology.

(drumroll) And the results are...

Bobby in happier days when Psychology departments were just that, Psychology departments.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>5603</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Science(s)</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological/Psychology &amp; Brain Sciences</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education &amp;/al Psychology or Psych &amp; Ed</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral Science(s)</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology &amp; Neuroscience</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Psychology / Social &amp; X Psychology</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Development</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Science(s)</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental Psychology</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Neuroscience</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Development &amp; Family Science/Studies</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology &amp; Social Behavior</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuroscience ( &amp; Psychology)</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social &amp; Behavioral Sciences</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brain &amp; Cognitive Sciences/Cognition</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Development</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Psychology &amp;) Special Education</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental Psychology</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linguistics</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral &amp; Social Sciences</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brain &amp; Mind /Mind &amp; Brain (Sciences)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied Psychology</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive, Linguistic &amp; Psychological Sciences</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology &amp; Human Development</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Psychology</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology &amp; Education</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral &amp; Brain Sciences</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical &amp; Social Sciences in Psychology</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive &amp; Learning Sciences</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuropsychology</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology, Neuroscience( &amp; Behaviour)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I notice a few trends.

(i) Psychology wins by a long shot.

(ii) Given a change, it’s popular to add science(s), brain, mind, or behavior to the department’s name.

(iii) Some subfields of psychology, like educational psych, tend to spawn specialized departments.

(iv) Of the remaining subfields, the social, neuroscience and developmental aspects of psychology seem to have generated a variety of names, which, in the aggregate, lead to a respectable N for the subfield as a whole.

(v) Some departments have tilted decidedly in the direction of specialization within psychology, to the point of multi-feature names.

What can we conclude about our own name from this study? Well, we could just stick with “Psychology”, but if we do decide to change, I offer:

Department of the Science of Human Mind as Embedded in Brain and Body and as Revealed by Behavior, along with its Change through Developmental Process and Learning, and its Implications for Application to Health, Education, and Welfare. Or, simply put, SHMEBBRRBCDPLIAHEW.

Or let’s find a donor.
Who the hell is Tim Verstynen?

He is a new faculty member in Psychology and the CNBC, that's who. He studies the brain, or as his website puts it, he “uses a combination of psychophysics, computational modeling and neuroimaging to explore how the architecture of brain connections and their dynamics regulate action planning and executive control.” Yawn. He's not exactly on the cutting edge is he? Or is he? This roving reporter went to interview to find out more – but Dr. Tim was out so I had to make up most of what follows.

The first thing you should know about our new faculty member is that he has interesting hobbies and memberships. He even has a blog on his website. According to his biography, he is part of the “Organization for Human Brian Mapping.” God only knows where Dr. MacWhinney fits into this “mapping”, whatever the hell that means. Furthermore, Tim’s webpage claims that since 2010 he has served as an advisory board member for the Zombie Research Society. Don’t believe me? Go to his office and you’ll see this:

But perhaps the most important thing to figure out is what we’re going to call our newest faculty addition. Obviously, Sheldon calls him “slave” and Marcel calls him “Tim” but I was hoping we could all agree on something a little more fun. Here are my four favorites:

1. The Verstynenator
2. Tim Versty of Nine
3. Nervy Mittens (an anagram of his name)
4. Dr. Phil (I just thought it would be fun to have someone with that name in the department.

Admittedly, not great choices but at least I’ve left room for improvement. In the meantime, say hello to the Verstynenator next time you see him roaming the corridors of Baker Hall. Don’t worry, he won't bite...or will he?
Sheldon Cohen can now add one more accolade to his impressive vita: he has figured out how to lose weight and keep it off. As many people know, weight loss programs (such as exercise and caloric restriction) do not seem to work, most studies find that people re-gain all the weight (or more) during follow-up periods. Sheldon Cohen, in all his public health wisdom, has discovered a new evidence-based solution.

Sheldon pitched his idea recently to his colleagues: "The solution is in your head, silly." His approach, based on cognitive neuroscience research, is to target weight loss by shrinking the size of your hippocampus. "If you stop trying to rely on memory and limit your learning opportunities, you can experience weight-reductions simply by reducing your hippocampal volumes" explained Cohen. "I mean, look at me, I've lost weight already-- and it's so easy! I simply implemented some new behavioral techniques-- I spend more time napping in my easy-chair, I avoid thinking, and I try to forget peoples' names on purpose now."

Sheldon's broader interests now focus on fostering new public health research on the benefits of not thinking for weight loss. He mentioned concerns about the work of new faculty member Tim Verstynen who has shown that physical exercise results in hippocampal weight gains. Cohen remarked under his breath in our interview, "can you believe Verstynen is making people fatter through exercise?!" Cohen now makes every effort to avoid exercise, for example, he always uses a cart when playing golf and he never tries to read the line of his putts.

Cohen leaves us with this insight: "I don't think it should be a surprise to folks that I'm moving my research interests in this direction. The reason why I became a stress researcher is because stress increase amygdala weight gain, and I was just tired of so many stressed-out overweight people. Now I'm trying to do something about it by shrinking peoples' hippocotamuses... wait, what's the name of that brain region again?"

Eminent viewpoints expressed in response to reporter queries:
(initials are used to protect anonymity) by

MJ, when asked to comment on the limitations of neural imaging methodologies:

" \\
"

DP, when asked to describe aspects of cognition that are not amenable to modeling by the PDP approach.

" \\
"

...and when asked in a followup question to list the major intellectual contributions of Steve Pinker and Gary Marcus.

" \\
"

ET, when asked to outline the limitations of statistical learning in language acquisition:

" \\
"

BF, when asked to list important behaviors that are not influenced by attachment:

" \\
"

SC, when asked to elucidate the beneficial aspects of stress:

" \\
"

DR, when asked to describe the limitations of evolutionary psychology:

" \\
"
MS, when asked to comment on the anticipated sizable increases in the budget for graduate funding:

"...

"...

( Editor’s note: KK, when asked to describe the content of his PLB article:

"...

&$!*ing

S*&@ hell

"

Gerbels allowed to drink again: join self-regulation study
By our furry correspondent, Sheldon Cohen

Long term readers of the PLB will recall that several years ago, gerbils living on the 4th floor (and working for Lori Holt) were caught sneaking out at night, drinking, and singing karaoke with Marcel Just in a Squirrel Hill bar. (See early PLB publications for background on this story). Since then, they have been in maximum security with their alcohol supply cut off. (Singing with Marcel was not however curtailed). There is good news for these little rodents. The NIH announced today that they have approved gerbil participation in a study of alcohol self-regulation to be conducted by Kasey Creswell, a new member of the psychology faculty. KC (as she will be called to avoid confusion with other Creswells) plans on randomly assigning the gerbils in a 2 X 4 design: to either a placebo (water and ice) or scotch on the rocks conditions and to drinking alone, with graduate students, with other gerbils, or with Marcel. The gerbils will then be asked how much fun they had. The hypotheses cannot be revealed here. However, we can tell you that those drinking alone will be OK as long as the karaoke machine is left on. The dean has also allocated support for 20 graduate students to run this experiment. [The large number is to take into account graduate student attrition for when they are bitten by the gerbils who do not get the real alcohol].

Don’t worry Ken, it’s a rodent that’s not a squirrel

Next month: Sheldon Cohen discovers a different kind of furry
The department has a new wiki for lists of readings that are meant to be useful for graduate students. You can access the wiki at http://kungfu.psy.cmu.edu/wiki/projects/psyclists/PsycLists.html, and because it's a wiki you can edit it, too! If you'd like to add some readings to the wiki, just click on the pencil at the upper right hand side of the webpage. That will get you two neat editing options: you can start typing, or add links to new wikis or external websites (see image below). I hope you'll all contribute and help turn this into the best set of reading lists on the internet!

Sheldon quotes a coffee mug (Yes, literally)

“Some men are born to cats. Others have cats thrust upon them.”

Editor note: No cats were hurt in the making of this PLB.
To date, no one has jumped in to edit or discuss the Psyclist wiki. However, one of the neat features of our wiki software is that we can start multiple wikis, which might help to get the department more into the habit of wiki-ing. So I’ve developed a set of potential wikis that might draw a more popular response, just to get the ball rolling.

Psychology @ CMUstache: A history of the great mustaches of the psychology department. Possible Entries include:

- "The Monolabial T(h)rill"
- "The Parallel Distributed Process-hair"
- "The Easy Mustache Rider"

Exploring the ExCP: A (necessarily speculative) list of the items inside David Plaut’s fanny pack.

The Uncivil War: Chronicles the longstanding conflict between Ken Kotovsky and squirrels. Possible Entries include “The trail of squirrel tears” (detailing the forced relocation of the squirrel population from their traditional territory in Squirrel Hill to the South Side) and “Operation Overhead” (describing the squirrel invasion of Kotovsky’s attic).

It Came from the Free Table: A discussion of the items on the Free Table, from the mundane (3/4 empty jar of fish oil pills) to the bizarre (Bill Walton voodoo doll).

The Wrath of Ken: Discussion of which psychology department members are most like various characters from Star Trek. Possible Entries include “Brooke Feeney and Deanna Troi”, “Mike Scheier: Kirk, Picard, or Sisko?”, and “Charles Kemp = Spock”.

"The Monolabial T(h)rill"
"The Parallel Distributed Process-hair"
"The Easy Mustache Rider"
MORE FROM “I F@#$KING LOVE SCIENCE"
(BECAUSE BROOKES CAN’T WRITE HER ARTICLE UNTIL SHE BUYS A HOUSE)

THE PLANS:

THE PLAN YOU TELL YOUR ADVISOR: "I'M GOING TO BE A PROFESSOR AT A MAJOR RESEARCH UNIVERSITY AFTER I GRADUATE."

THE REAL PLAN: LOOK FOR CAREER ALTERNATIVES.

THE SECRET PLAN: BECOME A BAKER/ROCKSTAR/WRITER.
GOODBYE SHELLIE!
AND THANKS FOR ALL THE FISH RENOVATIONS!

Rochelle Sherman retires but leaves her mark on the department. Below are images of the chaos during the latest – now completed - renovations to the 335 wing.