



features



This is a screengrab of the interactive map of the PSA facilities located around the world. The Psychological Science Accelerator laboratories network has 183 laboratories on six continents. It can be found on maphub.net/chartierlab/PSA. SUBMITTED BY CHRIS CHARTIER

A path to better psychology research: PSA

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A recent scientific initiative is seeking to solve a long time problem in psychological science research: participants in psychology research.

Dr. Christopher Chartier, an associate professor of psychology at Ashland University, was thinking about how to solve the limitations of participants – and absence of non-diversity of races and social classes – in research done in psychology.

“Most of the famous published psychological science results come from the U.S. or Western Europe, with maybe like 100 white kids: which is probably not representative of fundamental, universal human psychology. Maybe it is in some cases, but the real idea is that the subject should be huge yet diverse, and representative of all

time on Earth, and how he needs to start working on the big ideas he has.

On Aug. 26, he wrote a post in his personal blog titled “Building a CERN for Psychological Science.” He put it there not knowing if anyone would care, but right away the post got shared around the world.

The idea received a lot of welcome feedback, which made it work seriously to be realized on the ground. “We want to build the ability to collect a huge amount of data for important psychology experiments from all around the world,” Chartier said. “Largely, we are kind of mimicking what researchers are doing in physics. They have for instance LIGO and CERN, two really big projects in physics, where they test the most exciting theories or hypotheses with a huge and central location and massive facility.”

For psychology, it does not make sense to build one facility in a spe-

standing network that is always ready to go, Chartier said.

The Psychological Science Accelerator laboratories network has 183 laboratories on six continents, and the number is increasing all the time.

Instead of publishing a psychological study with 100 people, they are going to have tens of thousands of participants for a more stable answer and a solid result, Chartier said.

Once the initiative starts collecting data, laboratories are asked to submit a video of them going through the procedure to make sure they are doing what is expected of them and achieving scientific honesty.

The data will be centrally housed to prevent data manipulation or fabrication.

Currently, there are four students that work with Chartier as research assistants: Emily Ledbet-



The Psychological Science Accelerator logo. SUBMITTED BY CHRIS CHARTIER

cool.”

For Awlia, she did not have any previous expectations because this is her first semester working with Chartier. “I’m really looking forward to the future of Psychology,” Awlia said. “I believe the Accelerator is a huge step forward to bettering psychological science research. I expect it to make more people think of psychology as a science and something really cool and awesome, because that’s what psychology is; it’s awesome.”

One of the challenges Chartier has collaborating with a massive number of laboratories worldwide is the different time zones.

He receives emails and feedback from laboratories around the clock. There is always a place where it is working hours when it’s bedtime here, and that makes it very difficult for him to keep up.

Funding is also an issue the Psychological Science Accelerator is trying to tackle. Although the project confronts a large science problem and seeks to revolutionize it, the project’s funding is quite limited.

“We don’t have any funding other than Ashland University funding us a little bit for me to spend some time working on it,” Chartier said. “But one of the most important things we are working on is to get large grants so that we can get some funding.”

The project is seeking large grants to support itself.

They will submit a grant application to the National Science Foundation in January, and they have been trying to make connections with some big foundations that support the sciences like the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative and the Laura and John Arnold Foundation.

To select research to work on in the accelerator, interested researchers submit their proposals to Chartier, then he forwards anonymized versions of submissions to a five-member selection committee. Promising proposals are then passed to other committees. The initial panel then makes the final call.

Since the start of the accelerator, two studies have been selected to work on.

The first proposal was suggested by psychologists Benedict Jones and Lisa DeBruine of the University of Glasgow in the United Kingdom.

The proposal aims to discover whether the research findings of Alexander Todorov, a psychologist at Princeton University, can be replicated on a global scale. Todorov’s finding was that people rank human faces on two components: valence-dominance.

“The original study was based on all white faces,” Chartier said. “So we wanted to see if we could get those findings generalized to a better set of bases and more people from all around the world.”

Curtis Phills, an assistant professor of the University of North Florida, submitted the proposal for the second selected study. The study is called “the gender nature of social category representation”, a study which attempts to determine if people naturally think of certain gender when they think of a certain social group.

The initiative is planning to conduct the two studies early 2018.

“I hope that students around the world see the opportunity to get involved with a lab and contribute to a movement that will go down in history,” Emily Ledbetter said.



(From left to right) Dr. Christopher Chartier, Nicholas Bloxsom, Emily Ledbetter, Savannah Lewis and Dana Awlia have their first PSA meeting. SUBMITTED BY CHRIS CHARTIER

humanity.”

The world of science, psychology specifically, is having a bit of a crisis right now. These are pretty famous findings, and when other people are trying to reproduce them, they just do not get the same results, Chartier explained. He wanted to figure out how to make studies replicable and reliable.

The Psychological Science Accelerator idea came to him when he was on a good bike ride in the Mohican State Park. The ride made him think about his limited

cific location, say in Europe or the United States, and conduct a study there because of the subject matter: humanity. All of humanity is not in one confined location. So, instead, Chartier thought to distribute a network with many labs all around the world.

Projects that seek the same goal exist, but they are dedicated to one research area, and once the work is completed the projects end the partnership between the laboratories. The idea with Psychological Science Accelerator is to have this

ter, Dana Awlia, Nicholas Bloxsom and Savannah Lewis.

All four students were unaware of the project when they applied to work with Chartier. One day he showed up to a meeting and told them that they would be starting a new task: collaborating all around the world.

“When he told me I was like ‘what do you mean that we are collaborating all around the world?’” Lewis said. “And then I realized that he would have single handedly done this and I was like wow, that’s