DBN Progress Report

February 2021

Overview

The Developing Belief Network has hit the ground running, with a leadership team composed of PIs Richert and Corriveau as well as four postdoctoral fellows, a graduate student researcher, and a project analyst. Our inaugural network is composed of 10 research teams, including 30 individual researchers working in at least 30 distinct cultural and religious communities in 18 countries. Represented in this network are many varieties of Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism, and a wide range of traditional/indigenous belief systems; as well as Jewish, Buddhist, and Druze faith communities. Across the network, network members are working with populations that vary dramatically in their exposure to Western-style formal education, political conflict, poverty, and industrialization. Our website is regularly updated, and it includes links to our Twitter (@DevBelief) and Facebook (@developingbeliefnetwork) accounts as well as our Google Group (@developingbelief), which has been the site of lively conversations among researchers and members of the general public. Working collaboratively and iteratively, the network has finalized research questions for our first wave of data collection and is currently focused on designing studies to address these questions.

Upcoming events

- Our next all-network meeting—focused on designing studies to address our first round of research questions—is scheduled for March 4-5, 2021.

- We are planning a (virtual) "post-conference" to be held on April 9, 2021, directly after the biennial meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD). This post-conference will showcase the work of research team PIs/co-PIs as well as our four postdoctoral fellows, and will serve to introduce the DBN to a broad audience of developmental psychologists and education scientists, with a special focus on including early-career scholars. This event will be open to the public, so please invite your students, collaborators, and friends!

Progress on ongoing projects

Building a measures database

A key preliminary goal of the DBN is to provide resources to scholars interested in the study of religious cognition and behavior, primarily through a database of prior empirical research and the measures used in this research. The postdoctoral fellows are collaborating to develop and streamline a process for systematic reviews of literature relevant to the research goals of the DBN. Their focus has been on developing technological infrastructure for summarizing individual studies and "coding" studies by topic of study, methodology, study population, etc.

Developing best practices for collaborative team science

The novelty of our research network has required the development of new practices for global, collaborative, team science. We focus our efforts around engaging all collaborators in all decisions to ensure all network members are able to make a genuine contribution to the research. Our first effort has been the collaborative development of research questions (see below). In addition, the leadership team has been reading resources for how to facilitate team science and is developing guidelines for authorship and data sharing, particularly through the storage, management, and sharing tools provided by **Databrary**, a key partner in the establishment of the DBN.

Designing studies and collecting data

Much of our focus during these first few months together has been on collaboratively developing, refining, and finalizing research questions for our first wave of data collection, through weekly (or more frequent!) meetings of the core leadership team (PIs, postdoctoral fellows, graduate fellow, and project analyst); monthly "check-ins" with individual research teams; ad-hoc meetings with subsets of the network to focus on particular research questions, including meetings devoted to designing cross-sectional and longitudinal studies (scheduled for February 2021); and quarterly meetings of the full network, including our virtual "kickoff" (November 14-15, 2020) and our virtual "methods workshop" (March 4-5, 2021). We anticipate collecting pilot data beginning in June 2021. Depending on the state of the pandemic-related travel restrictions, our earliest data collection might focus on remote work with parents and community leaders, as well as remote work with children in populations with reliable access and familiarity with video conferencing programs. We anticipate drafting manuscripts based on our first wave of data collection as early as Fall 2021.

Sustaining public outreach

Our website (**developingbelief.com**) went public in October 2020 and is frequently updated with the latest information about the network. The website features information about the core leadership team and about all research teams, including information about the field sites and research populations each team will be working with. The website also includes announcements about current (and previous) calls for proposals for subawards, press coverage, and links to our social media accounts. Between October 1-December 31, 2020, the website drew 1427 visits from 802 unique visitors located in 58 countries.

We also launched a Facebook page (**@developingbeliefnetwork**), which had 79 followers as of mid-January 2021; a Twitter account (**@DevBelief**), which had 105 followers; and Google Group (**@developingbelief**), which had 130 members. The Google Group has been especially successful, with 33 unique contributions to our initial conversation about beliefs about Santa Claus, contributed by a variety of well-known senior faculty members, early-career scholars, and several members of the general public.

Supporting early-career scholars

The DBN supports four postdoctoral fellows as part of the core leadership team: **Maliki Ghossainy**, **Kirsten Lesage**, **Bolivar Reyes-Jacquez**, and **Kara Weisman**. This winter, we also selected three recipients of postdoctoral subawards, each of whom is working on topics related to the DBN: **Jonathan Kominsky**, **Yian Xu**, and **Haleh Yazdi**. We are aware of at least 4 graduate students who are already affiliated with DBN research teams whose dissertations will include work supported by the DBN; given the timing of data collection (especially in the context of the pandemic), we anticipate that many of the dissertations to emerge from this work will be written by graduate students who are just entering PhD programs. In addition, we will be releasing a call for proposals for subawards to support dissertation research by graduate studies who are not currently affiliated with the DBN; we anticipate releasing this call in Spring/Summer 2021 for a September 2021 start date.

Pursuing funding to sustain and expand the DBN

We are engaged in ongoing conversations with the fundraising teams at the University of California, Riverside, and Boston University to pursue funding to expand the research of the DBN and for the "Broad Implementation Phase" of the DBN.