

## Q & A with Boyd McCandless Awardee: Eddie Brummelman

Associate Professor, University of Amsterdam

### 1. *On what projects/studies are you currently working?*

My lab, KiDLAB, studies the developing self. We study the origins, nature, and consequences of children's self-views, such as narcissism and self-esteem.

The ability to conceive of ourselves is what separates us from other animals. This ability emerges early: From their youngest years, children form views of themselves, their abilities, and their overall worth as a person. These self-views have profound consequences. When self-views are robust and grounded in reality, they help children flourish. But when they are fragile and detached from reality, they prevent children from fulfilling their full potential.

I have become fascinated by the problem of achievement inequality: Why do children from disadvantaged backgrounds underperform in school, even when they are as talented as—or even more talented than—their peers? I see a critical role for children's self



-views. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds often receive denigrating messages about their potential, which can become ingrained in their self-views. My students and I are currently investigating this phenomenon in several projects.

My lab is also conducting citizen science projects, including Lil'Scientist—a program where we engage children from disadvantaged backgrounds as real scientists. As a first-generation student, I care deeply about using developmental science to improve equity.

### 2. *What advice would you give someone starting out in an academic position?*

When I started my academic position, I was so excited that I took on many new projects at once. People tend to regret things they didn't do, but I certainly regret projects I did do. Taking on too many projects distracted me from the projects that really mattered. I would therefore encourage those starting out in an academic position to be selective, so as to build a programmatic line of research, even when this means declining exciting opportunities.

### 3. *What advice would you give to current graduate students?*

I think the search for meaning is one of the most important drivers of academic work—one that can inform our research questions. I would encourage graduate students to pursue research questions that give them a sense of meaning. In graduate school, students receive extensive training in how

to design their research, but rarely in how to ask research questions that galvanize them for the years to come. Some students experience meaning when their work directly benefits the well-being and health of individuals or communities. Other students experience meaning when they delve deep: when they get to the bottom of a psychological phenomenon and understand its true workings. Such diversity in science and scientists is much needed.

#### **4. What are some ways that you strive for work-life balance?**

When I got this very same question a few weeks back, I said that I absolutely love my job, and that work feels like my life. But I think this answer obscures a problem in academia: We often see work-life balance

as our individual responsibility, but it's not; it's the responsibility of our employers and the academic community at large. Early career scholars are often expected to meet standards that can only be met if they sacrifice their personal lives, and this is not sustainable.

#### **5. What do you wish you had more time to do?**

I would read more literature across disciplines, because I am always inspired by the wide variety of research questions and methods that I encounter in fields like sociology, anthropology, and psychiatry.

#### **6. What activities do you do in your spare time?**

Working out, reading, and hanging out with my partner and daughter.

#### **7. What are the biggest problems/ challenges for the society that psychology should seek to solve right now?**

Society faces pressing problems, such as growing inequality, which disproportionately impact our youngest generations. As developmental psychologists, we are uniquely positioned to examine the consequences of these problems for child development and to generate novel solutions. What's more, these problems often require collaborations that cross disciplinary borders. I am convinced that these interdisciplinary collaborations will infuse developmental psychology with new theories and methods, which will greatly benefit our field.