

Ed O'Brien

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Employment

July 2018-present Associate Professor of Behavioral Science
University of Chicago Booth School of Business
Charles E. Merrill Faculty Scholar

July 2014-July 2018 Assistant Professor of Behavioral Science
University of Chicago Booth School of Business
Willard Graham Faculty Scholar

Education

May 2009-May 2014 Ph.D., Social Psychology
University of Michigan
Committee: Phoebe Ellsworth, Norbert Schwarz, Dick Nisbett, Katherine Burson

May 2005-May 2009 B.S., Psychology
Saint Joseph's University
Summa cum laude
Only student in graduating class (university wide, > 1,000 students) named *University Scholar* ("Reserved for students of exceptional caliber, and who undertake independent research of unusual depth and breadth")

Honors and Awards

2020 Morrison Scholar Fellowship, UCLA Anderson School of Management

2019 Sage Young Scholar Award, Foundation for Personality and Social Psychology

2019 Fellow, Society of Experimental Social Psychology

2018 Top 40 under 40 Most Outstanding Business School Professors, Poets & Quants

2017 Early Career Award, International Social Cognition Network

2016 Rising Star Award, Association for Psychological Science

2016 Up-and-Comer, Psychology Today

2015 Top 30 Thinkers Under 30, Pacific Standard

- 2013 Philip Brickman Memorial Prize for Best Paper, University of Michigan
- 2012 Hillel Einhorn New Investigator Award (runner up), Society for Judgment and Decision Making
- 2012 Golden Walnut Award for Best Talk, Decision Consortium, University of Michigan
- 2011 Pat Gurin Distinguished Lecture Award for Best Research Program, University of Michigan
- 2010 Best Poster Award, Society for Personality and Social Psychology
- 2010 Travel Award, Society for Personality and Social Psychology
- 2010-2013 Graduate Research Fellowship, National Science Foundation

Journal Publications **supervisee

1. O'Brien, E. (in press). Piecemeal progress be damned? People lump and dismiss improvement efforts that fall short—despite improving. *Psychological Science*.
2. **Kardas, M., Schroeder, J., & O'Brien, E. (in press). Keep talking: (Mis)Understanding the hedonic trajectory of conversation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*.
3. O'Brien, E. (in press). The “next” effect: When a better future worsens the present. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*.
4. O'Brien, E. (2021). A mind stretched: The psychology of repeat consumption. *Consumer Psychology Review*, 4, 42-58.
5. O'Brien, E. (2020). When small signs of change add up: The psychology of tipping points. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 29, 55-62.
6. **Kristal, A. C., O'Brien, E., & Caruso, E. M. (2019). Yesterday’s news: A temporal discontinuity in the sting of inferiority. *Psychological Science*, 30, 643-656.
7. O'Brien, E. (2019). Enjoy it again: Repeat experiences are less repetitive than people think. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 116, 519-540.
8. O'Brien, E., & **Kassirer, S. (2019). People are slow to adapt to the warm glow of giving. *Psychological Science*, 30, 193-204.

9. O'Brien, E., & Smith, R. W. (2019). Unconventional consumption methods and enjoying things consumed: Recapturing the “first time” experience. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *45*, 67-80.
10. **Klein, N., & O'Brien, E. (2018). People use less information than they think to make up their minds. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *115*, 13222-13227.
11. **Kardas, M., & O'Brien, E. (2018). Easier seen than done: Merely watching others perform can foster an illusion of skill acquisition. *Psychological Science*, *29*, 521-536.
12. O'Brien, E., **Kristal, A. C., Ellsworth, P. C., & Schwarz, N. (2018). (Mis)imagining the good life and the bad life: Envy and pity as a function of the focusing illusion. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *75*, 41-53.
13. O'Brien, E., & **Roney, E. (2017). Worth the wait? Leisure can be just as enjoyable with work left undone. *Psychological Science*, *28*, 1000-1015.
14. **Klein, N., & O'Brien, E. (2017). The power and limits of personal change: When a bad past does (and does not) inspire in the present. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *113*, 210-229.
15. O'Brien, E., & **Klein, N. (2017). The tipping point of perceived change: Asymmetric thresholds in diagnosing improvement versus decline. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *112*, 161-185.
16. Chopik, W. J., O'Brien, E., & Konrath, S. (2017). Differences in empathic concern and perspective taking across 63 countries. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *48*, 23-38.
17. Chopik, W. J., & O'Brien, E. (2017). Happy you, healthy me? Having a happy partner is independently associated with better health in oneself. *Health Psychology*, *36*, 21-30.
18. O'Brien, E., & **Kardas, M. (2016). The implicit meaning of (my) change. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *111*, 882-894.
19. **Klein, N., & O'Brien, E. (2016). The tipping point of moral change: When do good and bad acts make good and bad actors? *Social Cognition*, *34*, 149-166.
20. O'Brien, E. (2015). Mapping out past versus future minds: The perceived trajectory of rationality versus emotionality over time. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, *144*, 624-628.

21. O'Brien, E. (2015). Feeling connected to younger versus older selves: The asymmetric impact of life stage orientation. *Cognition and Emotion*, 29, 678-686.
22. Chopik, W. J., O'Brien, E., Konrath, S., & Schwarz, N. (2015). MLK Day and attitude change: Liking the group more but its members less. *Political Psychology*, 36, 559-567.
23. Konrath, S., Chopik, W. J., Hsing, C., & O'Brien, E. (2014). Changes in adult attachment styles in American college students over time: A meta-analysis. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 18, 326-348.
24. Campbell, T., O'Brien, E., Van Boven, L., Schwarz, N., & Ubel, P. A. (2014). Too much experience: A desensitization bias in emotional perspective taking. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 106, 272-285.
Campbell, O'Brien share joint authorship
25. O'Brien, E., & Hagen, A. L. (2013). The thrill of (absolute) victory: Success among many enhances emotional payoffs. *Emotion*, 13, 366-374.
26. O'Brien, E. (2013). Easy to retrieve but hard to believe: Metacognitive discounting of the unpleasantly possible. *Psychological Science*, 24, 844-851.
27. O'Brien, E., Konrath, S., Grühn, D., & Hagen, A. L. (2013). Empathic concern and perspective taking: Linear and quadratic effects of age across the adult lifespan. *Journal of Gerontology: Psychological Sciences*, 68, 168-175.
28. O'Brien, E., Ellsworth, P. C., & Schwarz, N. (2012). Today's misery and yesterday's happiness: Differential effects of current life-events on perceptions of past wellbeing. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 48, 968-972.
29. O'Brien, E., & Ellsworth, P. C. (2012). More than skin deep: Visceral states are not projected onto dissimilar others. *Psychological Science*, 23, 391-396.
30. O'Brien, E., & Ellsworth, P.C. (2012). Saving the last for best: A positivity bias for end experiences. *Psychological Science*, 23, 163-165.
31. O'Brien, E., Anastasio, P. A., & Bushman, B. J. (2011). Time crawls when you're not having fun: Feeling entitled makes dull tasks drag on. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 37, 1287-1296.
32. Konrath, S., O'Brien, E., & Hsing, C. (2011). Changes in dispositional empathy in American college students over time: A meta-analysis. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 15, 180-198.
33. Anderson, M. J., Williams, S. A., & O'Brien, E. (2009). Individual differences in preferred neck-resting position of Caribbean flamingos (*Phoenicopterus ruber*). *Laterality: Asymmetries of Body, Brain and Cognition*, 14, 66-78.

Chapters/Invited Submissions **supervisee

1. O'Brien, E. (in press). Look back, not ahead? Time use and the value of revisiting past experiences. In C. Hoerl, T. McCormack, & A. Fernandes (Eds.), *Temporal asymmetries in philosophy and psychology*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
2. **Roberts, A., & O'Brien, E. (2019). Work well-being. In D. S. Dunn (Ed.), *Oxford Bibliographies in Psychology*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
3. O'Brien, E., & Ellsworth, P. C. (2012). Polar opposites: Empathy does not extend across the political aisle. *The Jury Expert*, 24, 25-39.
Invited lead article with peer commentary
4. Bushman, B. J., & O'Brien, E. (2011). Aggression. In V. S. Ramachandran (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Human Behavior*. New York, NY: Academic Press.

Selected Work in Progress **supervisee

1. Garcia-Rada, X., John, L. K., O'Brien, E., & Norton, M. I. (revise and resubmit). A preference for revision absent objective improvement.
2. **Li, X., Hsee, C. K., & O'Brien, E. (revise and resubmit). "It could be better" can make it worse: When and why people mistakenly communicate better counterfactual information.
3. **Winet, Y., & O'Brien, E. (revise and resubmit). Ending on a familiar note: Last chances motivate repeat consumption.
4. **Klein, N., & O'Brien, E. (under review). How many good or bad acts make good or bad actors? Moral change occurs sooner than people think.
5. **Wald, K., & O'Brien, E. (under review). Clueless critics: Repeated exposure to success fosters unfounded criticism of those who try (and fail).
6. **Yoon, J., Whillans, A. V., & O'Brien, E. (under review). Connecting the dots: Superordinate framing enhances the value of unimportant tasks.
7. Hagen, L., & O'Brien, E. (under review). The trap of the gap: People seek to salvage lost time by holding out for higher value.
8. O'Brien, E. (under review). Temporal reputation management.
9. **Roberts, A., **Baron, C., & O'Brien, E. (collecting data). Advice about how to spend time.

10. **Christensen, K., & O'Brien, E. (collecting data). The value of past connection.
11. **White, M., & O'Brien, E. (collecting data). Hurting by helping.

Chaired Symposia **supervisee

1. O'Brien, E. (2021). Pitfalls of progress: Unintended negative consequences of positive social change. *Society of Experimental Social Psychology*, Santa Barbara, CA.
2. O'Brien, E. (2021). Pitfalls of progress: Unintended negative consequences of positive social change. *Society for Personality and Social Psychology*, virtual.
3. **Winet, Y., & O'Brien, E. (2021). "When" matters: Exploiting time and timing to maximize well-being. *Society for Personality and Social Psychology*, virtual.
4. **Wald, K., & O'Brien, E. (2021). Adversity begets adversity: How failures create further negative consequences. *Society for Personality and Social Psychology*, virtual.
5. **Kardas, M., & O'Brien, E. (2017). New directions in empathy gaps: Insights for improving learning, social interactions, and wellbeing. *Association for Psychological Science*, Boston, MA.
6. O'Brien, E. (2016). Mistaken intuitions about hedonic experience: Unforeseen pleasures of the monotonous, the mundane, and the unknown. *Society of Experimental Social Psychology*, Santa Monica, CA.
7. **Molouki, S., & O'Brien, E. (2016). The trouble of believing in self-improvement. *Association for Psychological Science*, Chicago, IL.
8. **Steinmetz, J., & O'Brien, E. (2016). Impression (mis)management: The unforeseen social consequences of a positive self. *Society for Personality and Social Psychology*, San Diego, CA.
9. O'Brien, E., & Schwarz, N. (2012). Life goes on: Perceiving change in self and circumstances. *Society of Experimental Social Psychology*, Austin, TX.
10. O'Brien, E., & Ellsworth, P. C. (2012). Where have all the good times gone? Causes and consequences of perceiving a positive past. *Society for Personality and Social Psychology*, San Diego, CA.
11. O'Brien, E., & Ellsworth, P. C. (2011). Misperceptions in mental state inference. *Society of Experimental Social Psychology*, Washington, DC.

Conference Talks

- 2022 Society for Personality and Social Psychology
- 2021 Marketing Science
Society for Judgment and Decision Making
Society for Personality and Social Psychology
Society of Experimental Social Psychology
- 2020 Association for Consumer Research
Society for Judgment and Decision Making
Society for Personality and Social Psychology
- 2019 Academy of Management
Choice Symposium
Society for Judgment and Decision Making
- 2018 Behavioral Decision Research in Management
Society for Personality and Social Psychology
- 2017 Association for Consumer Research
Association for Psychological Science
Society for Judgment and Decision Making
Society of Experimental Social Psychology
- 2016 Association for Consumer Research
Association for Psychological Science
Society for Judgment and Decision Making
Society for Personality and Social Psychology
Society of Experimental Social Psychology
- 2015 Association for Consumer Research
Society for Judgment and Decision Making
Society for Personality and Social Psychology
- 2014 Association for Consumer Research
Behavioral Decision Research in Management
- 2013 Society for Consumer Psychology
Society for Personality and Social Psychology
- 2012 Association for Consumer Research
Society for Personality and Social Psychology
Society of Experimental Social Psychology
- 2011 Society for Judgment and Decision Making

Society of Experimental Social Psychology

- 2010 Society for Judgment and Decision Making
Society for the Advancement of Behavioral Economics

Invited Talks

- 2022 University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Gies College of Business (April)
2022 Yale University, School of Management (January)
2022 University of Pennsylvania, Wharton Decision Processes Colloquia (January)
2021 UC San Diego, Rady School of Management (March)
2021 Simon Fraser University, Beedie School of Business (March)
2020 Stanford University, Graduate School of Business (February)
2020 Stanford University, Graduate School of Business (February)
2019 UCLA, Behavioral Decision Making Brown Bag (December)
2019 UCLA, Anderson School of Management (November)
2019 University of Toronto, Rotman School of Management (April)
2019 Cornell University, Behavioral Economics & Decision Research Center (March)
2019 Duke University, Fuqua School of Business (March)
2019 UC Berkeley, Haas School of Business (February)
2019 UCLA, Anderson School of Management (February)
2019 Harvard Business School, Negotiation, Organizations & Markets (January)
2018 University of Michigan, Department of Psychology (November)
2017 Michigan State University, Department of Psychology (March)
2016 University of Chicago, Booth School of Business (November)
2016 University of Waterloo, Department of Psychology (February)
2015 University of Illinois at Chicago, Department of Psychology (November)
2015 Kellogg-Booth Student Symposium, Invited Faculty Speaker (April)
2014 University of Michigan, Department of Psychology (January)
2013 Stanford University, Graduate School of Business (December)
2013 New York University, Department of Psychology (December)
2013 University of Chicago, Booth School of Business (December)
2013 UCLA, Anderson School of Management (November)
2013 Cornell University, Johnson Graduate School of Management (November)
2013 Yale University, School of Management (October)
2013 Harvard University, Department of Psychology (October)
2013 University of Minnesota, Carlson School of Management (September)
2013 Indiana University, Department of Psychology (March)
2011 University of Michigan, Decision Consortium (October)
2011 University of Michigan, Pat Gurin Distinguished Lecture Series (February)
2010 University of Michigan, School of Education (October)

Teaching

- I. BUS 38001 "Managing in Organizations" (Chicago Booth)*
M.B.A., Summer 2022 (scheduled)

M.B.A., Winter 2021
M.B.A., Summer 2020
M.B.A., Summer 2019
M.B.A., Summer 2018
M.B.A., Summer 2017
M.B.A., Spring 2016
M.B.A., Winter 2015

Evaluations (809 respondents over 7 courses):

- “Conveys course material clearly?” (1 = not clear, 5 = very clear)
Mean = 4.9, Median = 5.0, Mode = 5.0
- “Conveys course material in an interesting way?” (1 = not interesting, 5 = very interesting)
Mean = 4.9, Median = 5.0, Mode = 5.0
- “Did you take away useful tools, concepts, and/or insights?” (1 = very few, 5 = a great many)
Mean = 4.7, Median = 5.0, Mode = 5.0
- “How much did you get out of this course?” (1 = very little, 5 = a great deal)
Mean = 4.6, Median = 5.0, Mode = 5.0
- “Would you recommend to other students?” (1 = definitely no, 5 = definitely yes)
Mean = 4.7, Median = 5.0, Mode = 5.0

II. BUS 38903 “Current Topics in Behavioral Science” (Chicago Booth)

Ph.D., Spring 2020
Ph.D., Winter 2018
Ph.D., Winter 2016

Evaluations (24 respondents over 3 courses):

- “Conveys course material clearly?” (1 = not clear, 5 = very clear)
Mean = 5.0, Median = 5.0, Mode = 5.0
- “Conveys course material in an interesting way?” (1 = not interesting, 5 = very interesting)
Mean = 4.9, Median = 5.0, Mode = 5.0
- “Did you take away useful tools, concepts, and/or insights?” (1 = very few, 5 = a great many)
Mean = 4.9, Median = 5.0, Mode = 5.0
- “How much did you get out of this course?” (1 = very little, 5 = a great deal)
Mean = 4.8, Median = 5.0, Mode = 5.0
- “Would you recommend to other students?” (1 = definitely no, 5 = definitely yes)
Mean = 4.9, Median = 5.0, Mode = 5.0

III. Graduate Student Instructor (University of Michigan)

Undergrad, Spring 2013, “Introduction to Social Psychology” (PSYCH 280)
Undergrad, Fall 2012, “Social Cognition: Thinking About Your Life” (PSYCH 487)
Undergrad, Spring 2012, “Introduction to Psychology” (PSYCH 111)

Popular Media **supervisee

Writing:

1. O'Brien, E. (2021). Humans are hard-wired to expect the worst. No wonder we can't let go of masks. *Washington Post*, May 24.
2. O'Brien, E. (2020). There's a psychological reason we won't return to normal right away after society reopens. *Los Angeles Times*, June 1.
3. **Yoon, J., Whillans, A. V., & O'Brien, E. (2019). How to make even the most mundane tasks more motivating. *Harvard Business Review*, July 24.
4. O'Brien, E. (2019). We use less information to make decisions than we think. *Harvard Business Review*, March 7.
5. Smith, R., & O'Brien, E. (2018). Why you should eat popcorn with chopsticks—and other psychological tricks to make life more enjoyable. *The Conversation*, June 6.
6. **Kardas, M., & O'Brien, E. (2018). Watching an expert do something makes you think you can do it too. *Harvard Business Review*, May 21.
7. O'Brien, E. (2017). Stop putting off fun for after you finish all your work. *Harvard Business Review*, July 7.
8. O'Brien, E., & **Klein, N. (2016). It's hard to shake a bad reputation. *Fortune*, July 7.
9. O'Brien, E. (2015). Thinking about people we'd rather not think about. *New America*, November 12.

Radio/Podcast:

1. O'Brien, E. (2021). How to make boring work feel new again. *Creative Conversation (Fast Company)*, October 21.
2. O'Brien, E. (2020). Finding joy in repeat experiences, even during a pandemic. *WPR Ideas Network*, November 23.
3. O'Brien, E. (2019). Confidence: Why it misleads us. *BBC The Why Factor*, May 22.
4. O'Brien, E. (2019). Close enough: The lure of living through others. *NPR Hidden Brain*, February 11.
5. O'Brien, E. (2018). YouTube isn't as good a teacher as you think. *Chicago Booth Review*, July 30.
6. O'Brien, E. (2017). It's getting worse! The science of negativity bias. *Canvas8*, March 24.

7. O'Brien, E. (2017). The medicinal effects of a happy spouse. *Chicago Booth Review*, March 2.
8. O'Brien, E., & Ellsworth, P. C. (2012). Why can't Republicans and Democrats empathize with each other? *Center For Building a Culture of Empathy*, April 12.
9. O'Brien, E. (2012). Why the best chocolate is the one you eat last. *NPR All Things Considered*, February 14.
10. Konrath, S., & O'Brien, E. (2010). Empathy. *WPR Ideas Network*, June 15.
11. Konrath, S., & O'Brien, E. (2010). Empathy. *Scientific American 60 Second Mind*, May 29.

Other Professional Activities

Lab director at Chicago Booth:

See website for current lab members. Some alumni placements:

Kate Christensen, Assistant Professor, Indiana University
Anne Derrenberger, Master's student, Boston University
Jonathan Fischell, Medical school, University of Maryland
Yara Ganem, Lab manager, Vanderbilt University
Curtis Grayer, Law school, University of Notre Dame
Mike Kardas, Post-doc, Northwestern University
Sami Kassirer, Ph.D. student, Northwestern University
Nadav Klein, Assistant Professor, INSEAD
Alex Kristal, Ph.D. student, London Business School
Lauren Lutzke, Ph.D. student, University of Michigan
Hannah Noah, Medical school, University of North Carolina
Ellen Roney, Master's student, University of Washington
Taylor Rothman, Law school, University of Chicago
Craig Sanders, Ph.D. student, Indiana University
Mike White, Ph.D. student, Columbia University
Jaewon Yoon, Ph.D. student, Harvard Business School
Xuan Zhao, Research scientist, Stanford University

Dissertation committee:

Mike Kardas, Behavioral Science, Chicago Booth
Xilin Li, Behavioral Science, Chicago Booth
Sarah Molouki, Behavioral Science, Chicago Booth
Natalie Wheeler, Behavioral Science, Chicago Booth

National Leadership Alliance advisor:

Cora Baron, visiting from Arizona State University

Curriculum paper advisor:

Melissa Beswick, Behavioral Science, Chicago Booth
Robert Hanrahan, Psychology, Indiana University
Xilin Li, Behavioral Science, Chicago Booth
Yuji Winet, Behavioral Science, Chicago Booth

Honors thesis advisor:

Yara Ganem, Psychology, University of Michigan
Hannah Noah, Psychology, University of Michigan
Ellen Roney, Psychology, University of Chicago
Taylor Rothman, Psychology, University of Michigan
Jaewon Yoon, Psychology, University of Chicago

Workshop organizer:

Center for Decision Research, Chicago Booth, Spring 2016
Center for Decision Research, Chicago Booth, Spring 2019

Professional affiliations:

American Association for the Advancement of Science
Association for Psychological Science
Society for Judgment and Decision Making
Society for Personality and Social Psychology
Society of Experimental Social Psychology

Grant/award reviewer:

Behavioral Decision Research and Management
National Science Foundation
Society for Personality and Social Psychology
Society for Consumer Psychology

Peer reviewer (recent examples):

Basic and Applied Social Psychology
Cognitive Science
Consciousness and Cognition
Developmental Psychology
Emotion
Journal of Behavioral Decision Making
Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied
Journal of Experimental Psychology: General
Journal of Experimental Social Psychology
Journal of Gerontology
Journal of Personality and Social Psychology
Nature Human Behaviour
Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes
Personality and Social Psychological Bulletin

Perspectives on Psychological Science
Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences
Psychological Science
Review of General Psychology
Self and Identity
Social Psychological and Personality Science

As a Ph.D. student (2009-2014):

Advisor for over 30 research assistants
Granted “Faculty Associate” status with a vote at faculty meetings, 2013
Elected to Faculty Executive Committee, 2013
Elected to Faculty Search Committee, 2013
Elected to Ph.D. Admissions Committee, 2013
Elected to Graduate Student Council, 2012
Organizer of “Mental Time Travel” campus event, 2012
Visiting scholar, Robert Zajonc Institute for Social Studies, Warsaw, Poland, 2011
University of Michigan fMRI Neuroscience Summer Training Course, 2011

As an undergraduate (2005-2009):

Erasmus Social Science Scholar (1 of 12 selected nationwide), University of Notre Dame
Research Assistant, University of Pennsylvania (Prof. Ayelet Meron Ruscio)
Research Assistant, Saint Joseph’s University (Prof.’s Phyllis Anastasio, Matt Anderson)
Senior Honors Thesis, Saint Joseph’s University (Prof. Phyllis Anastasio)
Summer Scholar Research Award, Saint Joseph’s University (every summer)