

JOHN O'BRIEN
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ACADEMIC POSITIONS

2020-present Associate Professor of Sociology, NYU Abu Dhabi
Program Head, Social Research and Public Policy (AY 2020-21)

2013-2020 Assistant Professor of Sociology, NYU Abu Dhabi

2012-2013 Faculty Fellow, NYU Abu Dhabi

EDUCATION

2012 Ph.D. Sociology, University of California, Los Angeles

2010 M.A. Sociology, University of California, Los Angeles

1996 B.A. American Civilization, Brown University

RESEARCH AWARDS

2021 Distinguished Article Award, Religion Section of the American Sociological Association (for “Re-examining Restructuring”)

2021 Distinguished Article Award, Society for the Scientific Study of Religion (for “Re-examining Restructuring”)

2019 Distinguished Book Award, Religion Section of the American Sociological Association (for *Keeping It Halal*)

2012 Best Student Paper Award, Association for the Sociology of Religion (for “Muslim Youth and Secular Hip Hop”)

PUBLICATIONS

Books

In-progress *The Expat Compromise: Class, Race, and Cultural Change among West-to-East Migrants* (ethnographic book manuscript in preparation).

2017 *Keeping It Halal: The Everyday Lives of Muslim American Teenage Boys* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).
* Paperback edition published by Princeton Press 2019

Reviewed in: *Publishers Weekly*; *Foreword Reviews*; *New Statesman*; *Christian Century*; *Arab News (KSA)*; *Books and Ideas (College de France)*; *Mashriq-Mahjar: Journal of Middle East and North African Migration Studies*; *Sociology*

of Religion; Reading Religion (AAR); American Journal of Sociology; Journal of Global Analysis; Fieldwork in Religion.

Featured in: *Religious Dispatches; Political Theology; HEPPAS Books; Gulf News; Diffused Congruence; WFAN/WXRK (NYC); KPFA (CA); Keeping Democracy Alive (NY); Kansas Public Radio; KCBX (CA); WGVU (NPR, MI); KVON (CA); Jefferson Public Radio (OR); WUML (MA); Conversations Live!; Religion Watch (Baylor U); Publishers Weekly; Chronicle of Higher Education; Maydan Institute; Islam and Muslim Societies Journal; Annex Sociology Podcast.*

Panel Discussions: Author-Meets-Critics, Association for the Sociology of Religion Annual Meeting (Philadelphia, PA – Aug 12, 2018); Book Review Colloquium on Islamic & Middle East Studies (George Mason University – Oct 11, 2018); Author-Meets-Critics, Eastern Sociological Society Annual Meeting (Boston, MA – Mar 14, 2019).

Articles and Book Chapters

2021 Al-Dabbagh, May and John O'Brien. "Letter to a Young Ethnographer of the Global South: Key Considerations for Fieldwork and Theorizing." *Contexts* 20(1): 76-76. (special issue on "Ethnographies of the Global South," edited by Victoria Reyes and Marco Garrido).

2020 Abdelhadi, Eman and John O'Brien. "Perceived Group Deprivation and Intergroup Solidarity: Muslims' Attitudes towards other Minorities in the United States." *Religions* 11 (11): 1-30 (special issue on "The Complexity of Religious Inequality," edited by Melissa Wilde).

2020 O'Brien, John and Eman Abdelhadi. "Re-examining Restructuring: Racialization, Religious Conservatism, and Political Leanings in Contemporary American Life." *Social Forces* 99(2): 474-503.

2015 O'Brien, John. "Individualism as a Discursive Strategy of Action: Autonomy, Agency, and Reflexivity Among Religious Americans." *Sociological Theory* 33(2): 1-27.

2013 O'Brien, John. "Muslim Youth and Secular Hip Hop: Manifesting 'Cool Piety' Through Musical Practices." *Poetics* 41: 99-121.

2013 O'Brien, John and Besheer Mohamed. "Using Sociology to Counter Stereotypes: The Case of American Muslims" In *Sociologists in Action: Sociology, Social Change, and Social Justice, 2nd edition*, edited by Shelley White, Kathleen Odell Korgen, and Jonathan White. Pine Forge Press: Thousand Oaks, CA.

2011 O'Brien, John. "Spoiled Group Identities and Backstage Work: A Theory of Stigma Management Rehearsals." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 74(3): 291-309.

2011 Mohamed, Besheer and John O'Brien [equal co-authorship]. "Ground Zero of Misunderstanding: How (Not) to Talk about Islam in America." *Contexts* 10(1): 62-4.

Book Reviews

2018 O'Brien, John. Review of London Youth, Religion and Politics: Engagement and Activism from Brixton to Brick Lane, by Daniel Nilsson DeHanas. *Contemporary Sociology* 47 (5): 566-567.

2013 O'Brien, John. Review of The New Arab Man: Emergent Masculinities, Technologies, and Islam in the Middle East by Marcia Inhorn. *Sociology of Religion*, 74 (2): 286-288.

Works in Progress

O'Brien, John. "Comfortable, Critical, Charitable, and Concerned: Service Labor Consumption Styles among Western expatriates in the UAE."

O'Brien, John and Saba Karim Khan. "Ethnographic Methods in Pandemic Times: Rethinking Method and Theory in a Crisis."

O'Brien, John. "Learning to be Un-Democratic: Political Assimilation in an Illiberal Environment."

REFEREED CONFERENCE PAPERS

2019 "Superiors, Supervisors, Sympathizers, and Samaritans: Service Management Styles among Western expatriates in the UAE."
▪ American Sociological Association Annual Meeting (New York, NY).

2019 "'Working Hard or Free at Last?': Justifications of Domestic Worker Employment by Western Expatriates in the UAE," Mini-Conference on Globalization.
▪ Eastern Sociological Society Annual Meeting (Boston, MA).

2018 "Justifying Domestic Workers: Western Employers of Nannies in the United Arab Emirates," Mini-Conference on Class and Culture, organized by Annette Lareau.
▪ Eastern Sociological Society Annual Meeting (Baltimore, MD).

2018 "Critiques and Neutralizations of Extreme Inequality in Everyday Life: Western Expatriate Employers of Domestic Workers in the UAE."
▪ Presented at the American Sociological Association Annual Meeting (Philadelphia, PA).

2017 "Understanding the Social Position of Proximate Others: Dimensions of Inequality and Western Employers of Domestic Workers in the UAE."
▪ Presented at the Social Science History Association Annual Meeting (Montreal, QC).

2017 "Reassessing Theories of the Conservative-Liberal Religious Divide using the Case of American Muslims."

- Presented at the Association for the Sociology of Religion Annual Meeting (Montreal, QC).

2016 “American Abilities or Noble Vulnerability?: Divergent Methods for Responding to Harassment in an American Mosque”
▪ Presented at the American Sociological Association Annual Meeting (Seattle, WA).

2015 “Two Kinds of Muslim Dating: Managing Multiple Ethical Systems in Everyday Life.”
▪ Presented at the Comparative Ethnography Mini-Conference at the Eastern Sociological Association Annual Meeting (New York, NY)

2014 “Individualism as a Discursive Strategy of Action: Autonomy, Agency, and Reflexivity Among Religious Americans”
▪ Presented at the Yale Center for Cultural Sociology 10th Anniversary Conference (New Haven, CT) and the Annual Meeting for the American Sociological Association (San Francisco, CT)

2014 “Religious Individualism as Everyday Practice: Rethinking American Religion at the City Mosque”
▪ Presented at the First Annual NYU Abu Dhabi Research Conference (Abu Dhabi UAE).

2013 “‘Keeping it *Halal*’: Secret Dating at an American Mosque.”
▪ Presented at the Eastern Sociological Association Annual Meeting (Boston, MA), the American Sociological Association Annual Meeting (New York, NY), and the Association for the Sociology of Religion Annual Meeting (New York, NY).

2012 “Muslim Youth and Secular Hip Hop: Manifesting ‘Cool Piety’ Through Musical Practices.”
▪ Presented at the Association for the Sociology of Religion Annual Meeting (Denver, CO).

2011 “‘Keeping it *Halal*’: Muslim Dating and Everyday Cultural Experimentation.”
▪ Presented at the Association for the Sociology of Religion Annual Meeting (Las Vegas, NV).

2010 “The Everyday Navigation of Conflicting Cultural Systems: Musical Practices of Muslim American Youth.”
▪ Presented at the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion Annual Meeting (Baltimore, MD), the American Sociological Association Annual Meeting (Atlanta, GA), and the Association for the Sociology of Religion Annual Meeting (Atlanta, GA).

2008-9 “On the Management of Muslim Identity: Collective Stigma Response Work at an American Mosque.”
▪ Presented at the American Sociological Association Annual Meeting (San Francisco, CA), the Society for the Study of Social Problems Annual Meeting (San Francisco, CA), the Chicago Ethnography Conference (Chicago, IL), and the Stony Brook Ethnography Conference (New York, NY).

INVITED TALKS AND OTHER PRESENTATIONS

2021 Invited Speaker, “Theorizing Up,” in Theorizing the Gulf Working Group Session, Oct 28, 2021, NYUAD on Zoom.

2021 Invited Discussant, Author Meets Critics Session for *Studying Lived Religion* by Nancy Ammerman (NYU Press) (comments submitted on video)
▪ Society for the Scientific Study of Religion Annual Meeting (Portland, OR).

2021 Invited Discussant, Author Meets Critics Session for *Agents of God* by Jeff Guhin (Oxford University Press) (comments submitted on video)
▪ Society for the Scientific Study of Religion Annual Meeting (Portland, OR).

2019 Invited Panelist, Book Symposium for *The New Arab Urban: Gulf Cities of Wealth, Ambition, and Distress* eds. Harvey Molotch and Davide Ponzini (NYU Press, 2019).
▪ NYU Abu Dhabi Social Sciences Division (Abu Dhabi, UAE).

2019 Organizer and Panelist, “The Seductions of Servitude: Becoming Liberals with Nannies in the UAE,” Inaugural *Theorizing Gulf Cities Workshop* (co-organized with May Al-Dabbagh, guest speaker Harvey Molotch, NYU Sociology).
▪ NYU Abu Dhabi SRPP Program (Abu Dhabi, UAE).

2018 Invited Speaker, “Keeping It Halal: The Everyday Lives of Muslim American Teenage Boys,” Graduate Seminar on Social Research, Sorbonne Abu Dhabi.
▪ Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi (Abu Dhabi, UAE).

2018 Invited Panelist, Special Session on “American Fears: Islam’s Racialization and the Politics of Exclusion.”
▪ American Sociological Association Annual Meeting (Philadelphia, PA).

2018 Moderator, “Music and Islam: Possibilities and Frictions,” Visiting Artist and Audience Discussion.
▪ NYU Abu Dhabi Arts Center (Abu Dhabi, UAE).

2018 Invited Speaker, “From Humanists to Patrons: Interclass Relations and Elite Acculturation among Western migrants in the United Arab Emirates,” NYU Sociology of Culture Workshop, organized by Paul DiMaggio.
▪ NYU New York Dept of Sociology (New York, NY).

2018 Invited Speaker, “Keeping It Halal: The Everyday Lives of Muslim American Teenage Boys,” Brown University Public Humanities Lectures.
▪ Brown University Dept of American Studies (Abu Dhabi, UAE).

2018 Invited Speaker, “Keeping It Halal: The Everyday Lives of Muslim American Teenage Boys,” NYUAD Working Group on Identity Politics
▪ NYU Abu Dhabi Social Sciences Division (Abu Dhabi, UAE).

2017 Invited Panelist, Book Symposium for *Spanish Legacies: The Coming of Age of the Second Generation* by Alejandro Portes (UC Press, 2016).
▪ NYU Abu Dhabi (Abu Dhabi, UAE).

2017 “Keeping It Halal: The Everyday Lives of Muslim American Teenage Boys,” Book Release Talk.
▪ NYU Abu Dhabi Institute (Abu Dhabi, UAE).

2017 Organizer and Moderator, Special Session: “The Culture of Immigration: Understanding Migration Through (Non-Essentialist) Cultural Analysis.”
▪ American Sociological Association Annual Meeting (Montreal, QC).

2017 Invited Panelist, “Ethnography, Religion, and Reflexivity: A Panel Discussion.”
▪ Association for the Sociology of Religion Annual Meeting (Montreal, QC).

2017 Respondent, Author Meets Critics Session for *Corporate Islam* by Patricia Sloane-White (Oxford Press)
▪ Association for the Sociology of Religion Annual Meeting (Montreal, QC).

2017 Moderator, Panel: “Muslims Millennials Today: Identity and Religion.”
▪ NYUAD Institute (Abu Dhabi, UAE).

2017 Invited Speaker, “Religious Identity in a Changing Age: Insights from the USA to the UAE.”
▪ Tabah Foundation (Abu Dhabi, UAE).

2015 “Two Kinds of Muslim Dating: Managing Multiple Ethical Systems in Everyday Life”
▪ Presented at the NYU Abu Dhabi Social Research and Public Policy Department Seminar Series (Abu Dhabi, UAE)

2014 “Preventing Radicalism among Muslim American Youth”
▪ Invited Presentation at the International Peace Institute Meeting on “Islamism in the West” (Manama, Bahrain)

2011 “Growing Up Muslim: The Everyday Lives and Cultural Dilemmas of Muslim American Youth”
▪ Presented at the Department of Sociology, New York University (New York, NY)

2011 Respondent, panel on “Islam and gender in Europe: subjectivities, politics, and piety.” Comments presented at the American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting (San Francisco, CA).

2011 Respondent, panel on “Muslim Americans.” Comments presented at the American Sociological Association Annual Meeting (Las Vegas, NV).

2010 Respondent, panel on “Notions of Religion around the Globe: Defining Religion from the Ground Up.” Comments presented at the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion Annual Meeting (Baltimore, MD).

TEACHING AWARDS AND GRANTS

2010 UCLA Sociology Department Excellence in Teaching Award

2006-11 UCLA Graduate Fellowship

2009-10 UCLA Yearlong Graduate Research Mentorship Fellowship

2007 UCLA Summer Graduate Research Mentorship Fellowship

2007 Honorable mention, National Science Foundation graduate research fellowship

TEACHING

NYU Abu Dhabi (all newly developed courses)
Religion and Society
Islam and Society
Ethnographic Field Research
Senior Capstone Project Seminar

University of California – Los Angeles

Introduction to Sociology
Collective Behavior and Social Movements
Political Sociology
Sociology of Mass Communication
Contemporary Sociological Theory

COMMITTEE SERVICE

2019 - Member, Working Group on Global Academic Engagement

2018-2019 Member, SRPP Search Committee

2016-2019 Member, Undergraduate Curriculum Committee

2015-2016 Member, SRPP Search Committee

2014-2015 Member, Faculty Advisory Committee on Labor and Social Responsibility

2013-2015 Representative, Social Science Task Force for Research Priorities

2013-2014 Member, NYU Abu Dhabi Institutional Review Board

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Planning Program Committee Member

Eastern Sociological Society 2020 Meeting, Philadelphia, PA

Editorial Board Member

Sociology of Religion
American Sociological Review

Peer Reviewer

American Journal of Sociology
American Sociological Review
Qualitative Sociology
Social Psychology Quarterly
Poetics
Sociology of Religion
Journal for the Social Scientific Study of Religion
Religions

Panel Organizer

Special Session, “The ‘Culture,’ of Immigration: Understanding Migration Through (Non Essentialist) Cultural Analysis” – 2017 ASA Annual Meeting (Montreal, QC)

Paper Session, “Religion in the Broader Social World” – 2015 ASA Annual Meeting (Chicago, IL)

Regular Session, “Muslim Americans” (with Charles Kurzman) – 2011 ASA Annual Meeting (Las Vegas, NV).

Invited Panel, “Notions of Religion around the Globe: Defining Religion from the Ground Up” (with Alison Denton-Jones) – 2010 Society for the Scientific Study of Religion Annual Meeting (Baltimore, MD).

Member

American Sociological Association
Society for the Scientific Study of Religion
Association for the Sociology of Religion
Social Science History Association
Eastern Sociological Society
Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies Group
Sociology of Islam Research Network