



You are a gay man, and you're also Christian – how is this possible? Homosecularism, religion and LGBTIQ+ asylum in the UK

Diego Garcia Rodriguez

To cite this article: Diego Garcia Rodriguez (07 Apr 2025): You are a gay man, and you're also Christian – how is this possible? Homosecularism, religion and LGBTIQ+ asylum in the UK, Ethnic and Racial Studies, DOI: [10.1080/01419870.2025.2484415](https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2025.2484415)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2025.2484415>



© 2025 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 07 Apr 2025.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 333



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

You are a gay man, and you're also Christian – how is this possible? Homosecularism, religion and LGBTIQ+ asylum in the UK

Diego Garcia Rodriguez 

School of Sociology and Social Policy, Law and Social Sciences, University of Nottingham, Nottingham, UK

ABSTRACT

This article explores how secular assumptions influence asylum-claim assessment for LGBTIQ+ claimants who identify with a religious faith. Drawing on fifty-one semi-structured interviews with LGBTIQ+ people seeking asylum in the UK, it develops the concept of homosecularism to analyse the biases that emerge when faith and queerness intersect. Despite guidance discouraging discriminatory attitudes, evidence suggests that asylum credibility assessments often misunderstand the coexistence of religious belief and diverse sexual and gender identities. This scepticism can result in intrusive questioning and emotional distress for claimants. However, LGBTIQ+ religious people seeking asylum challenge these assumptions by insisting that ultimate judgement belongs to God rather than to secular or state institutions. Through their experiences, this article reveals how homosecular discourses perpetuate Western-centric standards of “authentic” LGBTIQ+ identities. The findings highlight the need for alternative asylum assessment practices that account for the diversity of religious, gender, and sexual identities.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 26 November 2024
Accepted 20 March 2025

KEYWORDS

Asylum; LGBTIQ; refugees; credibility; secularism; religion

Introduction

Governmental institutions responsible for processing asylum claims in the Global North often undertake credibility assessments shaped by secular frameworks, which influence expectations around diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, expressions, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC). These normative approaches, informed by modern LGBTIQ+ identity categories emerging from the West, are embedded within broader processes occurring at both structural and micro levels, where secular values subtly inform how experiences are evaluated. This bias is rarely explicit at the policy level. In fact, official guidance generally emphasises non-discrimination regarding individuals' SOGIESC or religious beliefs (Simm 2020), and guidelines from organisations like UNHCR (2013) advocate sensitivity when assessing LGBTIQ+ asylum claims. The UK Home Office's *Asylum Policy Instruction: Sexual Orientation in Asylum Claims* (Version 6.0) explicitly states:

CONTACT Diego Garcia Rodriguez  diego.garciarodriguez@nottingham.ac.uk

© 2025 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

A claimant's religion is not a basis for rejecting their claim. LGB individuals may be adherents of religions that disapprove of homosexuality, preach against it, or indeed forbid it. Similarly, a person may have a political affiliation to a political grouping which is not pro-LGB. A person does not have to subscribe to every belief of a religion or views of a political group in order to be a member of it. Decision-makers should take care to avoid judgemental questioning that suggests that a person is rejected by his or her religion or that their behaviour would be seen as 'sinful'. (2016, 35)

Nonetheless, secular norms subtly influence institutional practices. As my research shows, their impact becomes apparent during interactions between asylum seekers and the officials assessing their claims. The officers' internalised biases might be consequential of broader societal influences, ranging from political discourses and media representations to cultural narratives that shape one's understanding of gender, sexuality and religion. Existing literature has explored these preconceptions demonstrating the widespread impact of subjective opinions on assessments (Emeriau 2023; Riedford 2020; Welch and Cressey 2024). As a result, these practices can lead to the denial that queer and religious identities can coexist, undermining asylum claims by questioning their "authenticity". For many LGBTIQ+ people seeking asylum, however, religion, faith, and/or spirituality can be central to their subjectivities.

By analysing the experiences of LGBTIQ+ religious people seeking asylum in the UK, this article contests the assumption that religion and queerness are incompatible, offering an alternative understanding of how faith shapes asylum journeys. While homonationalism critiques how nations use LGBTIQ+ rights to assert national and cultural superiority and marginalise others (Puar 2018), and queer secularity examines the expectation that authentic queer identities must reject religious norms (Burchardt 2022; Khan 2020; Page and Shipley 2020), I use "homosecularism" to explore how secular expectations influence asylum practices. How does homosecularism manifest within the British asylum assessment practices, and in what ways does it create challenges for LGBTIQ+ asylum seekers who hold religious identities? By engaging with these questions, this study contributes to academic debates on the tensions between secular norms and queer identities (Burchardt 2022; Khan 2020; Puar 2018) and explores the ways in which homosecularist biases are embedded in asylum adjudication. My analysis draws on empirical evidence to determine how these biases affect queer religious asylum seekers, a topic that remains under-examined within the existing literature on LGBTIQ+ asylum as my recent literature review demonstrates (García Rodríguez 2023).

In what comes next, I begin by exploring the British context. Following this, I introduce the theoretical debates informing my analysis and my methodology. Finally, I discuss my interlocutors' experiences.

The British environment

The British asylum system operates within a "hostile environment", designed to make life difficult for those seeking refuge (Webber 2019). This political scenario has introduced restrictions to "housing, healthcare, banking and legal representation, limited access to services, facilities, and employment by reference to immigration status and increased penalties for unauthorised working" (Donà 2021, 908). British legislation, such as the Nationality and Borders Act 2022 and the Illegal Migration Act 2023, has pushed "future asylum seekers to abscond from the process, only to encounter difficulties

accessing assistance at vulnerable moments later into settlement” (Donà 2021, 274). The Illegal Migration Act denies asylum seekers who arrive through “irregular” channels into the UK the right to have their claims considered, with the expectation that the Home Office¹ will find a third country to assess their claim. Amid this landscape, in July 2024, the Labour government cancelled the “Rwanda Plan”. However, this coincided with efforts to increase deportations to levels “not seen since 2018”, demonstrating persistent challenges (Brown 2024). In January 2025, the Border Security, Asylum, and Immigration Bill was presented to Parliament. This Bill retains provisions denying citizenship to refugees identified as having undertaken “dangerous journeys” to reach the UK (The Guardian 2025), and maintains indefinite detention periods, posing risks, particularly to LGBTIQ+ asylum seekers. Furthermore, the legislation upholds a list of purportedly “safe” countries, including India and Georgia, despite well-documented threats to the safety of LGBTIQ+ individuals.

In the UK, while the sexual orientation of claimants is recorded, gender identity is not. Home Office data (2024) reveals that claims based on persecution related to sexual orientation as lesbian, gay, or bisexual accounted for 2 per cent ($n = 1,377$) of all asylum claims in 2023. Unlike other people seeking asylum, these individuals face unique challenges due to, among other factors, intersectional stigma, limited support networks, fears of being outed leading to mental health challenges, and housing and detention risks. Given the unique challenges faced by this population, it is critical to examine their lived experiences.

Framing homosecularism

This section situates the concept of homosecularism within broader theoretical debates. First, I clarify the distinctions between secularism as an ideology – leading to the adjective “secularist” – and secularity as a socio-political condition – associated with the term “secular”. Secondly, I introduce homosecularism vis-à-vis queer secularity and homonationalism as an analytical tool.

Secularism and secularity

Liwak (2017, 177) explains that while secularity is “a socio-political condition”, secularisation is “a process”. Scharffs (2011) defines secularity as “an approach to religion-state relations that avoids identification of the state with any particular religion or ideology (including secularism itself)” to “provide a neutral framework capable of accommodating a broad range of religions and beliefs” (ibid, 110). In contrast, secularism represents “an ideological position that is committed to promoting a secular order” (ibid.). These concepts are not monolithic and can manifest differently depending on the context. Reflecting this, Cesari (2013, 107) distinguishes secularism as the “multiple ideological and cultural narratives that Western countries have built to justify separation of religion and politics”, whereas secularity is defined as the combination of the “political neutrality of the state vis-à-vis all religions and equality of all religions in public spaces”. Inspired by these debates, this article employs the term secularism to describe the ideology advocating for the separation of religion from state affairs, while secularity is used to refer to societal conditions where religious authority is reduced in public spaces, reflecting a shift toward non-religious practices.

How does secularism shape contemporary societies, and what are its implications for the relationship between religion and public life? Asad (2003) interrogates the connection between “the secular” as an epistemic category and “secularism” as a political doctrine, revealing how modern states navigate the linkages between religion and governance (Bangstad 2009). This leads him to argue that in modern Euro-American contexts, though less so in the case of the USA, secularism as a political doctrine has led to the compartmentalisation of religion from public life, rendering it a private matter (Asad 2003). In light of these practices, Taylor (2007) introduces the notion of living in a “secular age”, characterised by the separation of religion from public spaces and a decline in religious belief.

While these frameworks are valuable, even within the Global North, where the contrast between secular societies and a religion-saturated past is often emphasised, religion still exerts significant influence. In Europe, secularism often aligns with lower religious engagement (Casanova 2006; Molteni and Ferruccio 2023). In contrast, in the United States, where state and church are separated, high levels of religious belief and practice persist (Diamant 2019; Whitehead and Perry 2020). This is reflected in the vibrancy of the American “religious market” and political discourses as seen through the constant invocation of God in the 2024 presidential campaign by candidates from major political parties. Current debates around abortion and LGBTIQ+ rights, for instance, are still impacted by religious beliefs (Page and Lowe 2024; Schwartzman and Schragger 2022). Examples include the influence of religiously motivated anti-LGBTIQ+ advocacy groups shaping political and policy decisions in countries such as the USA, Russia, and Poland (Jones 2024; RESIST 2024). Furthermore, religious influence was central to Ireland’s near-total abortion ban, which remained in place until 2019 (Gordon 2025) and continues to guide restrictive abortion laws in Latin American countries such as Nicaragua and El Salvador (Cueva 2024; Kindblad 2022). Further instances illustrate the complexities of secularism. For example, India maintains a complex relationship with numerous religions while witnessing the increasing dominance of Hinduism over Islam (Embree 2024; Sarkar 2022). In Turkey, secularism has evolved, shifting from Kemalist secularism – characterised by state control over religious expression – to the reintroduction of religious influence into public life (Nor and Ibrahim 2023; Yavuz 2020). These scenarios reveal the diverse manifestations of secularism and secularity worldwide, highlighting the absence of a uniform pattern. Therefore, despite narratives emphasising secularisation, conservative religious interpretations remain a key force in many political arenas.

Queer secularity and homonationalism

Drawing upon the distinction between secularism and secularity, and to better situate my empirical themes, it is fundamental to explore how secular ideologies impact queer identities. It is here where the concept of homosecularism emerges as a critical analytical tool to examine the expectation that queer identities must inherently be secular, disregarding queer religious experiences. In this article, I use “homosecularism” to refer to a broader phenomenon where secular expectations are enforced upon LGBTIQ+ individuals, assuming irreconcilability between queerness and religion. Complementing this term, I use “homosecularist” to describe biases and intentional practices stemming from homosecularism (e.g. “homosecularist assessments”), while I employ “homosecular” as an adjective to describe frameworks and assumptions characterised by homosecularism without

necessarily attributing intent (e.g. “homosecular expectations”). The term homosecularism was originally introduced by Scherer (2017), who briefly defined it as the “homonormative expectation of belligerent secularism”, though without further theoretical elaboration. Building upon this initial usage, I seek to expand this concept as an analytical tool to examine how secularist ideologies within asylum systems can marginalise queer religious individuals. These principles guide how the state determines which queer subjects are deemed acceptable, both physically and symbolically, within its borders, aligned with discussions on homonationalism (Puar 2018), as I explore below.

Homosecularism highlights the paradox faced by LGBTIQ+ individuals seeking asylum: to be recognised as queer and deserving of protection, they are pressured to conform to secular narratives that regard religion as incompatible with their “liberation”. Puar’s concept of queer secularity provides valuable context:

Queer secularity demands a particular transgression of norms, religious norms that are understood to otherwise bind that subject to an especially egregious interdictory religious frame. The queer agential subject can only ever be fathomed outside the norming constrictions of religion, conflating agency and resistance. (Puar 2018, 13)

While both homosecularism and queer secularity critique the expectation that authentic queer identities must distance themselves from religious norms, they operate at different levels. Puar discusses queer secularity in relation to how the “observance of religious creed, participation in religious public spaces and rituals, devotion to faith-based or spiritual practices, and simply residence within an Islamic nation-state [act] as marks of subjugated and repressed sexuality void of agency” (Puar 2018, 13), operating at the individual and societal levels (i.e. guiding how queer subjects are expected to navigate their subjectivities within secular frameworks). Drawing from this critique, I employ homosecularism to examine the broader sociopolitical relationship between secularism and queerness, particularly focusing on how secular ideologies can influence state practices and institutional behaviours. Although homosecularist biases are not codified in policy frameworks, they manifest in everyday practices – for instance, in the conduct of asylum officers, as I will explore later.

Both concepts are connected to Puar’s homonationalism (2018), which is used to analyse how nations employ LGBTIQ+ rights as markers of their “progressive” status, positioning themselves in contrast to religious “others” perceived as inherently homophobic. By promoting secular narratives of progressiveness, Western nations frame religious societies, particularly Muslim ones, as backward or intolerant. In this context, the notion of homosecularism allows us to critique how LGBTIQ+ rights are co-opted by the state to reinforce secular ideologies. Similarly, queer secularity reveals how secularism constructs specific kinds of queer subjectivity, marginalising those who do not fit Western-centric secular definitions of “liberation”. Complementing such analysis, homosecularism critiques how secular ideals are enforced through everyday practices, particularly affecting those from the Global South in Western settings. Having explored these key debates, the next section examines how homosecularism operates within asylum systems.

Homosecularism and asylum

Secularism as a political doctrine extends beyond the simple detachment of religion from politics. It also erects metaphorical borders to isolate the religious from the non-religious.

In the British context, these boundaries manifest both literally and symbolically. Asylum seekers attempt to access British territory through various means, crossing the English Channel in small boats, flying into airports, or arriving through other precarious routes. The British coastline reflects physical barriers, but also a metaphorical “secular land”, where the state regulates the boundaries of inclusion based on its own (normative) definitions of identity. Resonating with Foucault’s concept of biopolitics (1977), the asylum system becomes a device through which the state exercises control over bodies, cataloguing who deserves refugee status according to one’s conformity to Euro-centric standards.

The dismissal of queer religious identities leads to disbelief during credibility assessments, reflecting deeper biases among some asylum decision-makers, who expect narratives centred on personal struggle where religion is portrayed as oppressive. As Dustin and Ferreira (2021, 341) explain, to focus almost entirely on “personal struggles and emotional development is to lose sight of the structural factors – including but not only homo- and transphobia, racism and inequality – that are universally prevalent and impact on all claimants”. Existing literature reveals the common assumption among asylum officials that being religious and LGBTIQ+ is incompatible across Italy (Prearo 2021), Germany (Dustin and Held 2021; Tschalaer 2020), Holland (Brennan 2020), Turkey (Yildiz 2022), and the UK (Garcia Rodriguez 2025; Greatrick 2023). As Zisakou (2023) explains based on her research in Greece, “a religious Muslim can be gay but this means [for asylum adjudicators] they have serious psychological issues and need therapy”. As she continues, “in cases of queer Muslim applicants, authorities expect an extra disassociation from applicants’ “oppressive” religion to believe their claims” (2023, 14). Tschalaer (2020) argues that immigration debates in Germany have led to the vilification of the non-Western “other” “through sexualised imageries that establish Muslim or Arab sexualities as a threat to national safety” by depicting the “oppressiveness of the Muslim state as contrasted with the liberal state” (1275). In fact, queer Muslims often have their claims rejected as implausible and “decision-makers have regularly dismissed the credibility of such applicants” (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2016, 217).

The contemporary enforcement of secular ideologies in asylum procedures is further complicated by colonial legacies of Christian morality, historically embedded in legislation. Many laws criminalising homosexuality in former colonies originated from European impositions such as the British Section 377 (Reilly 2020). These laws continue to be used as tools of control in postcolonial states, and similar dynamics are emerging in the Global North, where right-wing populist movements are instrumentalising anti-LGBTIQ+ discourses, often drawing upon conservative Christian rhetoric (Kuhar and Paternotte 2017). While homosecularism functions as a regulatory force within asylum systems, Western nations are not homogeneously secular. Rather, they actively contribute to the ongoing construction of queer exclusion through both secular and religious means. Homonationalist discourses often present Western states as universally progressive on LGBTIQ+ rights but increasing anti-LGBTIQ+ debates in countries such as Poland and Hungary complicate this narrative (Godzisz 2024). Conservative political leaders in these states have positioned queer subjects as threats to national and Christian values. Similarly, asylum seekers fleeing repression in countries such as Russia and Georgia are simultaneously racialised as Eastern European “others” and subject to suspicion regarding their claims of queer persecution (Novitskaya 2022). Thus, simplistic binaries that frame

Western states as progressive and the Global South as “backward” disregard transnational diverse patterns of queer repression.

Complementing the testimonies of my interlocutors in subsequent sections, homosecular bias in UK asylum decision-making is evident in legal proceedings and tribunal decisions. For example, the case of *FMS (Pakistan)* (2020) shows how asylum decision-makers expect queer claimants to display an internal struggle between their religious faith and their sexuality. In this case, the tribunal found it implausible that FMS, a gay Pakistani Muslim, could embrace his sexual identity without exhibiting extreme emotional turmoil, treating his sexuality as something akin to a religious belief that required “commitment” (*FMS v. SSHD* 2020). This expectation reveals the homosecular assumption that religious queers must visibly detach from their faith to be deemed credible. The Upper Tribunal overturned this decision, ruling that the original assessment was flawed. Similarly, in *OAQ (Nigeria)* (2021), the Home Office refusal letter cited the claimant’s religious background as a reason to doubt her account of same-sex relationships, arguing that it was unlikely that she could have engaged in sexual activity within a conservative Christian household. The Upper Tribunal later found that this reasoning was flawed and set aside the initial ruling (*OAQ v. SSHD* 2021). Homosecular practices are further evidenced in *S.A.C. v. United Kingdom* (ECtHR 2019), where a Bangladeshi Muslim claimant’s previous adherence to Islamic norms was cited as a reason to doubt his sexual orientation, despite clear evidence that living openly as a gay man in Bangladesh would expose him to violence. Similarly, in a 2018 case involving a Tanzanian asylum seeker (2019), the claimant’s past Islamic marriage was used to argue that he could not genuinely be gay, despite the well-documented phenomenon of LGBTIQ+ individuals entering heterosexual marriages due to cultural pressures (Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) 2017). While Christian claimants also face scepticism, their cases tend to be framed within narratives of internal conflict rather than outright disbelief. The expectation that Muslim claimants must exhibit explicit rejection of their religion to be considered credible aligns with homonationalist discourses that position Islam as incompatible with queer “liberation”. Further tribunal observations reflect this trend, with one judge expressing disbelief that a Muslim claimant could be openly gay without experiencing psychological distress (Rainbow Migration 2013). Beyond judicial rulings, Home Office interview practices further validate the argument that homosecularism shapes asylum decision-making. Reports from Rainbow Migration (2018) and MCC North London (2019) document examples where caseworkers questioned claimants on how they reconcile their faith with their sexuality. These examples include direct challenges such as “How can you be lesbian and Christian?” or “Why do you still practise Islam if homosexuality is forbidden in your faith?” (Rainbow Migration 2018), assuming that “authentic” queer identities must reject religious beliefs.

Methodology

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the University of Nottingham’s Research Ethics and Integrity Committee (Reference 95233). After securing approval, I contacted organisations and individuals that work with and support LGBTIQ+ people seeking asylum across England and Scotland, providing them with information about the study. This included materials such as the participant information sheet, consent form, and a

poster including a summary of the research, all approved by the Ethics and Integrity Committee. Some of the contacted organisations subsequently shared this information with their members, allowing them to decide whether they were interested in participating, and their identities were not disclosed to me without prior consent. In some cases, organisations invited me to explain the study by attending their activities or gatherings, after which I distributed participant information sheets and consent forms to those who wished to learn more about the research. This contributed to ensuring that participation was entirely voluntary and that all potential participants had access to as much information as possible before deciding whether to be involved. Participants were eligible if they identified as LGBTIQ+, were aged 18 or older, and were seeking asylum or had refugee status in the UK. They did not have to explicitly identify with a religious faith since, as part of the overall study, I was interested in exploring differences between individuals with religious and non-religious backgrounds.

Once participants agreed to take part having completed the consent form, we arranged a time and location that worked best for them, ensuring that interviews took place in safe spaces where they could speak openly. Prior to starting the interviews, verbal consent was sought to complement the written consent process through a double consent procedure. Interviews were conducted in a range of locations, including NGO offices, where we could speak in a private room, participants' accommodation when they felt more comfortable speaking in their own space, and other settings where we would not be overheard. This flexibility was important for me since I actively sought to accommodate the individual needs of each participant, ensuring their wellbeing and autonomy in choosing a space where they felt safe and comfortable. Our conversations were framed to avoid referencing traumatic events (e.g. asking broad questions such as "Please tell me what you feel comfortable sharing regarding your religious identity") allowing participants to control the depth of their narratives. Prior to conducting the interviews, support organisations were identified to which participants could be referred if they felt affected by their participation. However, none expressed this need. 51 interviews were conducted involving participants diverse in age, gender identity, sexual orientation, country of origin, and religious affiliation. Most interviews were conducted individually, apart from two with couples who were in established relationships (one with two gay men and one with two bisexual women). Interviews lasted between one and two hours on average. All participants were compensated for their time either with a £10 gift card or cash depending on their choice, and anonymisation was maintained throughout the study to protect their identities. The research took place across England and Scotland, in cities including, among others, Glasgow, Sheffield, Birmingham, York, Coventry, Derby, and London, between 2023 and 2024. Interviews were conducted in English, apart from the case of a participant who felt more comfortable speaking Arabic. A professional interpreter, who was an LGBTIQ+ ally, was identified to ensure accurate communication. Participants were sent their transcripts to review their words before I analysed the data. Four participants requested changes to sections that described detailed experiences they did not feel comfortable making public, which I deleted from the transcripts. I also made strategic decisions not to include certain information that could lead to their identification to ensure that their safety was prioritised. Data were analysed using thematic analysis (Christou 2022). Initial codes were created inductively (Riger and Sigurvinsdottir 2016), and patterns were identified to produce overarching themes.

My own identity as a gay man helped establish rapport with participants, as shared experiences of navigating our queerness created a sense of connection. While I do not share the experience of seeking asylum, living away from my country of origin as a migrant allowed for reflection on adapting to life in the UK, which facilitated conversations about belonging and shared identities despite fundamental differences in our experiences. My commitment to contributing to LGBTIQ+ asylum initiatives extended beyond academic inquiry – I actively volunteered, and continue to volunteer, with one of the organisations supporting LGBTIQ+ people seeking asylum, eventually becoming a trustee. Participatory ethical considerations were central to my study design, as I engaged in discussions with organisations to ensure that this research could benefit their work. This reciprocal approach involved pro bono assistance with fundraising, research support, and capacity-building, aligned with my conviction that academic research should be guided by and benefit the individuals it engages with.

Homosecularism in practice

This section explores the lived realities of LGBTIQ+ people seeking asylum in the UK to reveal the practical implications of homosecularist frameworks.

Homosecularism and credibility assessments

Credibility assessments are a central aspect of the asylum process, through which claims are evaluated to determine whether the claimant's story is authentic and reliable on the statements made to decide whether refugee status is deserved (Skrifvars 2024; Wikström and Johansson 2013). "Credibility" functions as a disciplinary mechanism that constructs the "real refugee" along normative borders (Perego 2021). Therefore, credibility assessments work as disciplinary mechanisms that impose rigid standards to define what a "real refugee" is based on normative expectations. Claimants are not simply judged on their gender identity and sexual orientation, but, I argue, also on their conformity to certain homonormative expectations. Aligned with Puar's (2018) work on the politicisation of Islam in Western discourses, LGBTIQ+ Muslim asylum seekers often encounter heightened scepticism compared to their Christian counterparts. In the UK, decision-makers have implicitly – or even explicitly – drawn on dominant stereotypes that frame Muslim religiosity as antithetical to "authentic" queer identities, thereby subjecting Muslim claimants to additional questioning to disassociate from their religion. While Christian claimants also experience homosecular bias, UK asylum practices tend to assume a closer alignment between secular norms and Christianity, perhaps because Christian identities are more culturally intelligible to local decision-makers. As a result, LGBTIQ+ Christian asylum seekers may face less intensive scrutiny.

LGBTIQ+ claimants are often expected to present a linear narrative of self-realisation and embrace rigid sexual and gender identity categories. This includes being in monogamous relationships and expressing "true love" towards their partners, while proving they want to live their identity openly where they are seeking asylum (Zisakou 2023, 17). Failure to meet these expectations, whether by expressing shame or not fully coming out, can result in claims being rejected, as authorities may interpret it as a lack of genuine fear of persecution, rather than understanding cultural or religious influences.

As I mentioned before, the British Home Office's official guidance states that "a claimant's religion is not a basis for rejecting their claim" (2016, 35). Despite these guidelines, religious backgrounds have been used against claimants seeking to prove the falsehood of their asylum claims, as I noted in the sections above. In fact, many of my interlocutors described how asylum officers struggled to accept that their faith and queerness could coexist, leading to prejudiced judgements about their authenticity. The following dialogue with Isaac, a 40-year-old West African Catholic gay man illustrates the attempt to explain his overlapping identities during his interview, while also revealing the scepticism from the interviewer.

Isaac: He [the interviewer] did say, 'You are a gay man, I see here you are also a Christian and you're going to the [Name of Inclusive Church]², how is this possible?' He did ask me. Because my solicitor had sent some documents supporting me from the [Name of Inclusive Church], so the interviewer saw them. And I said to him, 'Yes, I was born in a Christian family, I grew up in a Christian house and I've got these feelings, and my feelings are a personal thing. I can't throw my personal feelings away unless I finish my life. As long as I'm alive, I have to hold on to these feelings.' I was crying sometimes, it's difficult for me to make a decision, but I love my feelings.

Author: What did the interviewer say when you said this?

Isaac: He said, 'Thank you'. Anything I replied to him, he just said, 'Thank you.' The question was just like, 'I can see you're a gay man, and at the same time, you're attending church in the [Name of Inclusive Church].' I said, 'Yes, that church welcomes LGBT people, there's no discrimination. Everybody is safe there. There is no homophobia, there's nothing wrong there. I'm welcome there. We are all one family. There's no reason I can't go.'

Author: What was his reaction after your reply?

Isaac: He just said, 'Thank you.' I remember on his face he looked like I knew what I was saying. And yeah, I gave him some quotations from the Bible talking about this, and things about how Sodom and Gomorrah happened because they disobeyed God and not because of LGBT people.

As Gould (2019, 57) explains, the credibility assessment is "more problematic when religion is also brought into the asylum process, either formally or from the adjudicators own, Western, understanding of religion which may result in the opinion that being both a SOGI minority and religious is implausible". Gomez notes that adjudicators are "more likely to confront applicants with the formal doctrine of religion -or worse, the adjudicators' personal understanding of religious doctrine- and find that applicants are not credible if they practice a faith that condemns homosexuality without feeling ashamed" (2015, 497). In line with this, Isaac's testimony reveals the challenges faced by claimants navigating the scepticism embedded in the asylum process regarding their religious and queer identities when actively asked "how it is possible" to be a gay man, and a Christian attending a church. The interviewer's repetitive response ("Thank you") suggests a technical rather than compassionate engagement. Despite Isaac's detailed explanations employing biblical references, the interviewer's mechanical response indicates a lack of willingness to engage with narratives that fall outside homo-secular expectations. The type of scepticism illustrated by these questions may stem from the interviewer's internalised secularist bias rather than official regulations and guidelines. This example reflects broader patterns that are common in British society and mainstream

LGBTIQ+ activist circles, where religion and queerness are often perceived as mutually exclusive.

A further issue to consider here is how dialogues such as the one described by Isaac may impact claimants' mental health. In Isaac's case, the interviewer's mechanical replies left him feeling dismissed. As he told me, despite the emotional labour invested in explaining how his faith and sexuality coexist, the lack of empathetic engagement intensified his frustration. Many of my interlocutors referred to the psychological impact of interviews due to the interviewers' attitude. Paulina, a 34-year-old Latin American Wiccan transgender woman, explained how she felt "stressed" because "the people who conducted the interview were not very friendly". Reflecting on his screening interview, Jaime, a 27-year-old Latin American queer Christian, said that:

I feel that the person who interviewed me was very harsh, not empathetic, and somewhat arrogant. (...) I felt very scared, to be honest, far from feeling safe or calm, or feeling that it was something natural in some way, I felt something very ugly. It was like my life depended on it and, I mean, I don't know what the exact word would be, but it wasn't the best experience, it was very negative and based on that I'm very worried about my second interview, whether it will be the same or not.

Sohail, a 37-year-old West Asian gay man who converted to Christianity from Islam, explained how, "The second interviewer asked me about Christianity, and I proved that to him. He asked me some questions in the Bible to make sure whether I'm Christian or Muslim". In this case, Sohail addressed the specific questions raised by the asylum officer regarding his knowledge of religious sources instead of using scripture intentionally to prove his identity, which differs from Isaac's example. This case illustrates how LGBTIQ+ asylum seekers are expected to authenticate their identities in line with specific credibility standards. Such demands often entail exhibiting detailed scriptural knowledge irrespective of one's theological education. This approach disregards individual and diverse expressions of faith and spirituality that do not necessarily involve in-depth familiarity with canonical religious texts. Paul, a 34-year-old East African Christian bisexual man, explained how:

They asked me if I am a Christian, how is it that I'm bisexual too. That was a bit alarming for me because who's to say I cannot be? Who's to say that?

Paul's experience highlights the disbelief asylum officers often express when confronted with the coexistence of queerness and faith. His rhetorical response ("Who's to say I cannot be?") reflects the frustration that many of my interlocutors feel when forced to defend their dual identities. This encounter demonstrates the threat that the lack of understanding among asylum officials regarding intersectional identities and the asylum system's own reliance on rigid categories of identity present to fair credibility assessments, ultimately failing to engage with the fluid ways in which faith, gender and sexuality coexist. Lastly, 26-year-old Umar, a South Asian Muslim gay man, explained how:

Umar: They asked so many things during the interview about religion, if I practise my religion, and how I see my religion and my homosexuality, things like that. It's hard to answer that and to address that, but I tried to tell them everything so they could understand me and feel satisfied. Anything I felt uncomfortable about and shy, I still tried to say.

Author: What did they ask?

Umar: They said, “You’re a Muslim, how do you judge homosexuality from the perspective of your religion?”, so I said, “I’m Muslim, as well as I’m gay, so I don’t care about that”. I practise my Islam, and I’m gay, that’s my thinking and I don’t care about what other people say. So many people influence me and say that’s a sin, but I don’t care. When you don’t believe in your God, you feel more depressed, more distracted, but when you believe, you’ll get your mental peace and you’ll have someone to ask things from, otherwise you’re all alone.

Similarly to Paul, who was challenged on his bisexuality within a Christian framework, Umar had to defend his gay identity within the context of Islam. Umar’s assertion of his identity shows that, like Isaac and Paul, he refuses to abandon either aspect of himself to fit the homosecular expectations of the asylum system. Umar also touches on the emotional and mental health dimensions of believing in God. By positioning his faith as a source of comfort rather than conflict, he challenges homosecular assumptions, which fail to account for how faith can be intertwined with wellbeing. His words reflect a broader theme that cuts across many of these experiences: the role of faith as a form of emotional and psychological support.

The testimonies discussed in this theme highlight how credibility assessments grounded in homosecular frameworks fail to capture the diverse lived experiences of LGBTIQ+ people seeking asylum. By imposing rigid secularist expectations, asylum systems marginalise individuals who navigate intersecting queer and religious identities. Furthermore, this process mirrors broader critiques that highlight how Western identity frameworks are used to impose normative standards on gender and sexual identities, often disregarding more diverse or context-specific expressions that do not fit with normative understandings of “authentic” LGBTIQ+ identities (Powell 2020; Selim et al. 2025; Zisakou 2024). Having considered these issues, the next section examines how participants resist such homosecular judgement by invoking a higher, divine authority.

God as the ultimate judge

Responding to the often-sceptical credibility assessments discussed in the previous section, most of my interlocutors emphasised that ultimate judgement belongs not to secular institutions but solely to God. By invoking divine authority, they strategically reclaim agency over their identities, positioning their faith as a source of protection, comfort and validation against the burden of homosecular expectations. Addressing this scenario, this section explores how participants articulate and mobilise the belief in God as the ultimate arbiter of their identity. Isaac, whom I introduced before, directly challenged the right of human-made institutions to judge him:

Even in the Bible, God says that you’re not supposed to judge. A human being cannot judge another human being. So, what I can say is that they [asylum officers] need to stop judging us. Love is love. (...) Even the Bible says, “Love your neighbour as you love yourself”. You need to treat those around you like your brothers and sisters.

By elevating God as the ultimate judge, Isaac positions his faith as a source of authority and protection against the scrutiny of the asylum process. His emphasis on the biblical command to love one’s neighbour explains his view that this ethical duty should guide human interactions independently of secular validation. He invokes biblical teachings to assert that judgement belongs solely to God. Simultaneously, his words represent a

strategy to challenge the approach taken by some asylum officers when they attempt to assess the authenticity of claims through homosecular frameworks that disregard religious experiences. Drawing on Asad's (2003) critique of secularism, it becomes evident that the asylum system's authority to evaluate identities is not a neutral assessment exercise but rather a performance of secular power that can marginalise religious expression. Despite my focus on religion, other power structures must be acknowledged, including, to name a few, racialisation, colonial legacies, language hierarchies and the politics of translation, all of which influence the conditions under which people seeking asylum must substantiate their claims. Isaac's assertion that human institutions lack the authority to judge his identity was echoed by 44-year-old Destiny and 47-year-old Bella, a bisexual Christian couple from southern Africa. They articulated their perspective as follows:

Destiny: I know that when you read the Bible, God says, "Everybody come to me, everybody, you have to come to me and give your burdens to me". There is also one part where people wanted to throw stones to one lady who was a prostitute or something like that. And Jesus asked, "Among you, who is the sinless?"

Bella: Throw the first stone if you have never sinned.

Destiny: It's the big thing that motivates me ... To be like ... Jesus Himself must tell me that I'm doing the wrong thing. No one should be able to tell me if I'm wrong. I have to keep going the way that I want because it's not like I want to be this way, these are the feelings that are in me. I didn't make it. I didn't choose it. It's God who made it. When my mum was pregnant, she had to deliver me like this, if she has delivered me, it means that this was the right path. When I came to the UK, I felt like I was free, everything here ... In public, I can express myself freely. I'm free. I'm free from hiding my feelings. I have my partner, and we can go out together. We do everything, anything that we want. We can walk together. We can kiss each other in public. We can do what we want, we can marry even if you want to marry.

Bella: Yes, that's what the Bible is saying. Because so far there's nothing that is speaking about LGBT people. There's nothing even in my culture that will say being LGBT is wrong because it's just the culture and their belief, their way of believing. They're trying to make me divert from what I know is original. It's torture.

Destiny: It's discrimination.

Echoing Isaac's arguments above, Destiny and Bella strategically reappropriate biblical narratives to argue that their sexual orientation is not "chosen", but divinely ordained, to defy both conservative interpretations of religious sources and the homosecular frameworks that delegitimise queer religious identities. Portraying God as the creator of their sexuality allows them to sustain their identities without relying on external acceptance, challenging the homosecular assumption that religion and queerness are incompatible (Scherer 2017). This stance shifts the moral authority from secular institutions and societal norms to their personal relationship with the divine. While they find a sense of freedom in the UK to express their identities openly, their theological justification may not align with the expectations of asylum officers who anticipate narratives of oppression rooted in religious rejection. These expectations, as I have demonstrated in the preceding discussion, are not only evident in the testimonies of my interlocutors but also reflected in legal rulings and tribunal decisions that exemplify the systemic application of homosecular logic in asylum adjudication. Given the restricted access to asylum interview transcripts and decision-making processes, the voices of my interlocutors provide important

findings that extend beyond what we can gather from official documents. Their testimonies must therefore be taken seriously, as they have no incentive to misrepresent their experiences – particularly when their refugee status depends on truthfully articulating the realities of their asylum claims.

As we can see above, Destiny and Bella express their conviction in the idea that only God can judge them, resisting social and religious judgements from those that condemn their bisexuality. Destiny's references to a biblical story illustrate her belief that no one – other than God – has the right to cast moral judgement on her life. Her interpretation of this passage allows her to challenge both homosecular views and the religious, cultural and societal pressures that seek to delegitimise her identity. For Destiny, her bisexuality is not a choice, but something divinely appointed, emphasising that her existence is a result of God's will. This belief also enables her to resist the rejection of others, paradoxically finding validation in the UK, where she feels she can live openly as both queer and Christian without fear of persecution. Bella echoes this sentiment, rejecting beliefs that attempt to divert her from what she perceives as her "original" self. Her statement about her culture ("There's nothing even in my culture that will say being LGBT is wrong") reveals a sense of dissonance between her lived experience and the societal forces that seek to regulate her identity. Both consider the institutions that impose judgements on their queerness as forms of discrimination. By justifying their resistance to homosecular constraints through biblical teachings, their identities seem to exist beyond the reach of human evaluation. This aligns with research which, while not focusing on asylum, describes queer religious experiences where individuals invoke divine authority to defy human discrimination (Raynes 2024; Wester 2017; Meek and Meek 2015). In conclusion, this section has illustrated how my interlocutors assert God as the ultimate judge to challenge the legitimacy of secular institutions in assessing the authenticity of their identities.

Conclusions

This article has explored how homosecularist frameworks can shape the credibility assessments faced by religious LGBTIQ+ people seeking asylum in the UK. By exploring the experiences of these individuals, I have argued that homosecular assumptions, implicit within British asylum practices, can delegitimise claimants whose experiences do not align with Western-centric, secular expectations of LGBTIQ+ identities. These assessments often portray religion and queerness as fundamentally incompatible, subjecting LGBTIQ+ individuals to sceptical, intrusive questioning. For some of my interlocutors, this led to emotional distress, which can undermine their ability to successfully present their claims.

However, the findings reveal that religious LGBTIQ+ people seeking asylum resist these homosecularist constraints by invoking divine authority as the ultimate arbiter of their identities. They reclaim agency over their narratives by emphasising God's exclusive right to judge, which challenges the power dynamics inherent in these assessment practices. For those navigating the asylum system, religion – instead of constituting a contradiction to their queerness – can serve as a source of solace, moral authority, and belonging, as I have explored elsewhere (Garcia Rodriguez 2025). As Marcella Althaus-Reid reminds us, "the Queer God is the God who went into exile with God's people and remained there in exile with them" (2004, 146), resonating with the lived experiences

of those who have endured religious repudiation and institutional bias. Althaus-Reid's notion of the divine as fluid and aligned with the marginalised provides a counter-narrative to the homosecularist logic that structures asylum adjudication.

To conclude, the concept of homosecularism developed here thus provides a critical lens through which to interrogate and critique practices that implicitly perpetuate Euro-centric understandings of gender, sexuality and religion. In line with my findings, I want to conclude by advocating for alternative assessment practices that genuinely account for and respect the diverse lived experiences of LGBTIQ+ individuals. Such approaches must move beyond rigid homosecularist expectations and prioritise empathetic, personalised and contextually sensitive engagements that fully acknowledge the complex and fluid ways in which religious belief and queer identities coexist. The disjuncture between asylum practices and lived experiences demonstrates the importance of training asylum officers to recognise this intersectionality. While official guidelines discourage prejudicial attitudes towards claimants, the persistence of bias suggests that these guidelines have not fully dismantled normative assumptions. Ultimately, religion and queerness cannot be reduced to a binary language of contradiction or "reconciliation".

Notes

1. In the UK, the Home Office is "the lead government department for immigration and passports, drugs policy, crime, fire, counter-terrorism and police" (Home Office 2025).
2. The church's name has been anonymised to protect both the participant's and the religious organisation's anonymity.

Acknowledgements

I am deeply grateful to the LGBTIQ+ people seeking sanctuary who generously shared their time and experiences with me, as well as the NGOs that contributed to this project. I would also like to thank Professor Andrew Yip and colleagues for their generous feedback during the development of this article.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This work was supported by a Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship.

Statement of ethics

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the University of Nottingham's Research Ethics and Integrity Committee, under reference number 95233, dated 13th April 2023.

ORCID

Diego Garcia Rodriguez  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5520-7688>

References

- Althaus-Reid, M. 2004. *From Feminist Theology to Indecent Theology: Readings on Poverty, Sexual Identity and God*. London: SCM Press.
- Asad, T. 2003. *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Bangstad, S. 2009. "Contesting Secularism/s: Secularism and Islam in the Work of Talal Asad." *Anthropological Theory* 9 (2): 188–208. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1463499609105477>
- Brennan, S. F. 2020. *Shifting Selves: Queer Muslim Asylum Seekers in the Netherlands*. New York: Columbia University.
- Brown, S. 2024. "Labour announce 'major surge' in deportations of asylum seekers." *The National*. <https://www.thenational.scot/news/24532372.labour-announce-major-surge-deportations-asylum-seekers>.
- Burchardt, M. 2022. "Contesting Queer Secularity: The Spiritual and the Sexual after Secularization." *New Diversities* 24 (2): 89–102.
- Casanova, J. 2006. "Religion, European Secular Identities, and European Integration." In *Religion in an Expanding Europe*, edited by T. A. Byrnes and P. J. Katzenstein, 65–92. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cesari, J. 2013. *Why the West Fears Islam: An Exploration of Muslims in Liberal Democracy*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Christou, P. A. 2022. "How to use Thematic Analysis in Qualitative Research." *Journal of Qualitative Research in Tourism* 3 (2): 79–95. <https://doi.org/10.4337/jqrt.2023.0006>.
- Cueva, V. P. 2024. "Anti-ideology in El Salvador? Continuities and Discontinuities in a Radicalized and Environmentally Fragile Country." In *Ideology, Post-Ideology and Anti-Ideology in Latin America: Reflections from the Last Decade*, edited by P. Baisotti and F. Lagos Rojas, 157–178. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Diamant, J. 2019. *With High Levels of Prayer, U.S. is an Outlier among Wealthy Nations*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Centre.
- Donà, G. 2021. "Race, Immigration and Health: The Hostile Environment and Public Health Responses to Covid-19." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 44 (5): 906–918. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2021.1881578>.
- Dustin, M., and N. Ferreira. 2021. "Improving SOGI Asylum Adjudication: Putting Persecution Ahead of Identity." *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 40 (3): 315. <https://doi.org/10.1093/rsq/hdab005>.
- Dustin, M., and N. Held. 2021. "'They Sent me to the Mountain': The Role of Space, Faith and Support Groups for LGBTIQ+ Asylum Claimants." In *Queer Migration and Asylum in Europe*, edited by R. Mole, 184–215. London: UCL Press.
- ECtHR. 2019. S.A.C. v. United Kingdom, Application no. 31428/18, European Court of Human Rights (settled 2019). <https://laweuro.com/?p=5091>.
- Embree, Ainslie T. 2024. *Utopias in Conflict: Religion and Nationalism in Modern India*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Emeriau, M. 2023. "Learning to be Unbiased: Evidence from the French Asylum Office." *American Journal of Political Science* 67 (4): 1117–1133. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12720>.
- Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E. 2016. "The Faith-Gender-Asylum Nexus." In *The Refugee Crisis and Religion*, edited by L. Mavelli and E. K. Wilson. London: Rowman and Littlefield.
- FMS v. Secretary of State for the Home Department, UT (IAC) Appeal No. PA/05183/2019 (heard Nov 2019, promulgated Mar) 2020. <https://tribunalsdecisions.service.gov.uk/utiac/pa-05183-2019>.
- Foucault, M. 1977. *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976*. London: Macmillan.
- Garcia Rodriguez, D. 2025. "LGBTIQ+ Asylum and Religion: Individual Faith, Community Belonging, and Divine Advocacy." *Journal of Gender Studies* 42 (4): 518–541. <https://doi.org/10.1093/rsq/hdad018>.
- Godzisz, P. 2024. *State Responses to Anti-LGBT Violence: Poland in a European Context*. Cham: Palgrave.
- Gomez, E. 2015. "The Post-ABC Situation of LGB Refugees in Europe." *Emory Int'l L. Rev* 30:475.

- Gordon, K. 2025. "Toward Abortion Decriminalization: Irish Abortion Activism and the Power of Legal Ambivalence." *Irish Political Studies* 40 (1): 51–75. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07907184.2024.2375088>.
- Gould, A. 2019. "Queer? Prove it." Master's thesis, Université Libre de Bruxelles, MA in Human Rights and Democratisation.
- Greatrick, A. 2023. "LGBTQ+ Asylum and Transformative Accommodations Between Religion, Faith and Sexuality in the UK." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 46 (9): 1919–1939. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2022.2072175>.
- The Guardian. 2025. "The Guardian view on Labour and asylum." <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/feb/12/the-guardian-view-on-labour-and-asylum-in-retreat-from-decency#:~:text=Labour's%20alternative%20policy%20is%20contained,smuggling%20people%20across%20the%20Channel>.
- Home Office. 2016. "Asylum Policy Instruction: Sexual Orientation in Asylum Claims Version 6.0." <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a804b17ed915d74e622d9dc/Sexual-orientation-in-asylum-claims-v6.pdf>
- Home Office. 2024. "Asylum claims on the basis of sexual orientation 2023." <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-year-ending-june-2024/asylum-claims-on-the-basis-of-sexual-orientation-2023>.
- Home Office. 2025. "About the Home Office." <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/home-office/about>
- Jones, T. 2024. "United States of Hate: Mapping Backlash Bills against LGBTIQ+ Youth." *Sex Education* 24 (6): 816–835. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681811.2023.2241136>.
- Khan, A. 2020. "Queer Secularity." *lambda Nordica* 25 (1): 133–139. <https://doi.org/10.34041/ln.v25.626>.
- Kindblad, F. 2022. "The Catholic Church as a Global Political Player: The Transnational Political Impact of International pro-Life Organizations on the Public Space in Latin America." Master's thesis, Malmö University.
- Kuhar, R., and D. Paternotte, eds. 2017. *Anti-gender Campaigns in Europe*. London: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Liwak, A. 2017. "Secularisation and Church-State Relations: Towards a Typology." *Warszawskie Studia Teologiczne* 30:3–4.
- MCC North London. 2019. "LGBT+ Asylum Seekers and Faith: Challenges and Experiences in the UK Asylum System." <https://mccnorthlondon.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/LGBT-African-Asylum-Seeker-Research-Project-Report.pdf>.
- Meek, J. 2015. *Queer Voices in Post-war Scotland: Male Homosexuality, Religion and Society*. London: Springer.
- Molteni, F., and B. Ferruccio. 2023. "Religious Decline as a Population Dynamic: Generational Replacement and Religious Attendance in Europe." *Social Forces* 101 (4): 2034–2058.
- Nor, M. R. M., and M. K. Ibrahim. 2023. "From Separation Between State and Religion to Religion-Freeing State: The Changing Faces of Secularism in Turkey." *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 13 (1): 85–114.
- Novitskaya, A. 2022. "New Queer Dissidents: Politics and Geopolitics of Post-Soviet LGBTQ Migration and Asylum." Doctoral dissertation, State University of New York at Stony Brook.
- OAO v. Secretary of State for the Home Department. 2021. UKUT 02394 (IAC), United Kingdom: Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber). <https://tribunalsdecisions.service.gov.uk/utiac/pa-02394-2020>.
- Page, S. J., and P. Lowe. 2024. *Abortion and Catholicism in Britain: Attitudes, Lived Religion and Complexity*. London: Springer Nature.
- Page, Sarah-Jane, and Heather Shipley. 2020. *Religion and Sexualities: Theories, Themes, and Methodologies*. Routledge.
- Perego, A. 2021. "(Des)Haciendo Fronteras: Latin American LGBTIQ Asylum Seekers in Spain in the Process of Credibility Assessment." In *Queer Migration and Asylum in Europe*, edited by R. Mole, 132–161. London: UCL Press.

- Powell, A. 2020. "Normative Understandings: Sexual Identity, Stereotypes, and Asylum Seeking." In *Research Handbook on Gender, Sexuality and the Law*, edited by C. Ashford and A. Maine, 149–163. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Prearo, M. 2021. "The Moral Politics of LGBTI Asylum: How the State Deals with the SOGI Framework." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 34 (2): 1454–1476.
- Puar, J. K. 2018. *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Rainbow Migration. 2013. "Missing the Mark: Decision Making on Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Asylum Claims."
- Rainbow Migration. 2018. "Still Falling Short: The Standard of Home Office Decision-Making in Asylum Claims Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity."
- Raynes, K. S. 2024. "For the Love of God: A Look at Religious Students' Beliefs on LGBTQ+ Issues." Undergraduate thesis, University of Pittsburgh.
- Reilly, J. 2020. "Hiding in the Shadows: The Legacy of Colonial Sodomy Laws and Strategies for Their Repeal." *J. Int'l & Comp. L* 7:541.
- RESIST. 2024. "Effects of and Resistances to 'Anti-Gender' Mobilisations Across Europe." https://napier-repository.worktribe.com/preview/3898598/RESIST-Listen_Report-on-the-effects-and-everyday-resistances-to-anti-gender-mobilisations_English.pdf.
- Riedford, E. 2020. "Who do you Think I am? A Qualitative Study on how Professional and Cultural Experience of Adjudicators Affects Perception of Asylum Seekers." Doctoral thesis, Northeastern University.
- Riger, S., and R. Sigurvinsdottir. 2016. "Thematic Analysis." In *Handbook of Methodological Approaches to Community-Based Research*, edited by L. A. Jason and D. S. Glenwick, 33–41. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sarkar, T. 2022. *Hindu Nationalism in India*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Scharffs, B. G. 2011. "Four Views of the Citadel: The Consequential Distinction Between Secularity and Secularism." *Religion & Human Rights* 6 (2): 109–126. <https://doi.org/10.1163/187103211X576062>.
- Scherer, B. 2017. "Queerthinking Religion: Queering Religious Paradigms." *The Scholar and Feminist Online* 14 (2): 1–2.
- Schwartzman, M., and R. Schragger. 2022. "Religious Freedom and Abortion." *Iowa L. Rev* 108 (2299): 2299–2340.
- Selim, H., P. Lindblad, J. Vanto, J. Skrifvars, A. Alvesalo-Kuusi, J. Korkman, E. Pirjatanniemi, and J. Antfolk. 2025. "(In)Credibly Queer? Assessments of Asylum Claims Based on Sexual Orientation." *Legal and Criminological Psychology* 30 (1): 159–182.
- Simm, G. 2020. "Queering CEDAW?" *Griffith Law Review* 29 (3): 374–400.
- Skrifvars, J., et al. 2024. "Psychological Assumptions Underlying Credibility Assessments in Finnish Asylum Determinations." *Nordic Psychology* 76:1.
- Taylor, C. 2007. *A Secular age*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Tschalaer, M. 2020. "Between Queer Liberalisms and Muslim Masculinities: LGBTQI+ Muslim Asylum Assessment in Germany." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 43 (7): 1265–1283.
- UNHCR. 2013. "Resettlement assessment tool: LGBTI Refugees." <https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/legacy-pdf/51de6e5f9.pdf>
- Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber). 2017. AA/00043/2015, hearing date: 23 August 2017, promulgation date: 22 September 2017. <https://tribunalsdecisions.service.gov.uk/utiac/aa-00043-2015#:~:text=4,involved%20in%20a%20gay%20relationship>.
- Webber, F. 2019. "On the Creation of the UK's 'Hostile Environment'." *Race & Class* 60 (4): 76–87.
- Welch, A. R., and S. P. Cressey. 2024. "Dropping the Veil." *Loyola of Los Angeles Law Review* 57:1–52.
- Wester, E. 2017. "Between Allah and me: God is the Judge." Master's thesis, Uppsala University, Department of Theology.
- Whitehead, A. L., and S. L. Perry. 2020. *Taking America Back for God*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wikström, H., and T. Johansson. 2013. "Credibility Assessments as 'Normative Leakage': Asylum Applications, Gender and Class." *Social Inclusion* 1 (2): 92–101. <https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v1i2.115>.

- Yavuz, M. H. 2020. "Understanding Turkish Secularism in the 21st Century." In *Islam, Populism and Regime Change in Turkey*, edited by M. H. Yavuz and A. E. Öztürk, 54–77. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Yildiz, E. 2022. "Migrant Sexualities, Queer Travelers: Iranian Bears and the Asylum of Translation in Turkey." *Differences* 33 (1): 119–147.
- Zisakou, S. 2023. "Proving Gender and Sexuality in the (Homo)nationalist Greek Asylum System: Credibility, Sexual Citizenship and the 'Bogus' Sexual Other." *Sexualities*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13634607231208043>.
- Zisakou, S. 2024. "Feeling Queer, Feeling Real: Affective Economies of Truth in Queer Asylum Politics." *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2024.2374897>.