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Too Muslim to Be Homosexual or Too Homosexual to Be Muslim: Belonging Experiences of British Homosexual Muslims

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Abstract

This article shows that British homosexual Muslims face rejection and identity conflict between their homosexuality and their Muslimness. The opposition between Islam and homosexuality has created a feeling of exclusion, illustrating the assumed incompatibility between being Muslim and being homosexual. Homosexual Muslims face religiously motivated homophobia rooted in the heteronormative precepts of Islam. In parallel, they face Islamophobic attitudes in which Islam is now used as a form of civilisational opposition to the British values of tolerance and inclusion and the wider homosexual community see it as a threat to their very existence. Nevertheless, the results show that the hostility of Muslims toward homosexuality is evolving, and the heteronormative discourses are now coexisting with more neutral and even homo-friendly approaches. A new bicultural belonging among homosexual Muslims is being constructed to address individual strategies of managing both identities and is fostering new interpretations of acceptance of different sexualities within Islam.

Keywords

Islam – Muslim – homosexual – homonationalism – homophobia – Islamophobia – intersectionality

1 Introduction

Recent decades have seen an increasing number of liberal and progressive mosques around the world, otherwise referred to as “inclusive” mosques, seeking to include traditionally marginalised or outcast groups such as LGB people.¹ Such changes have shed light upon new activism and new actors in the Muslim sphere in Europe, where the questions of religious practice, belonging, norms and values have been reshaped, adjusted or readdressed (Shah, 2021). The particular case of LGB Muslims, long regarded as *personae non-grata* in Islam, has seen a change in terms of perception and visibility so that new groups and organisations are claiming more recognition and integration within the Muslim community and Islam (Koc et al., 2022; Rahman, 2014; Habib, 2010). For instance, Germany’s Ibn Rushd-Goethe Mosque, created in 2017, welcomes LGB Muslims and boasts a female imam (Baer, 2020). An inclusive mosque initiative in the UK has been created and aims “to create a family-friendly place of worship that welcomes people regardless of their religious belief, their race, gender, disability, sexuality or immigration status” (Iqbal, 2018). Lawyer El-Farouk Khaki, religious studies scholar Laury Silvers, and Muslim gay-rights activist Troy Jackson founded El-Tawhid Juma Circle Unity Mosques in Toronto in 2009 (Worthington, 2016). The Mariam Mosque in Denmark founded by Sherin Khankhan is considered the first female-led mosque in Scandinavia (Petersen, 2019). Ludovic-Mohamed Zahed, an Islamic scholar, married to a man, founded Homosexual Muslims of France in 2012, the first gay-friendly worship place in France (Zahed, 2019).

The emergence of polarised attitudes to religion and homosexuality in Western societies has stimulated scholarship in various disciplines, such as sociology, cultural and religious studies, anthropology, gender studies, politics and law. In particular, questions related to belonging have been addressed as

1 This article considers the position of lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB/ homosexual) Muslims. Within Islam, gender identity is considered separately from sexuality, posing different challenges that are beyond the scope of this study. Those interviewed identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual only. “LGBT” and “LGBTQ+” will be used where it is relevant or when referring to one identifying as such.

they put forward the visibility of new social identifications and the factors contributing to their creation as well as to the upsurge of new social pressures and new radicalities (Peek, 2005). Religious and political radicalisms have today created a paradoxical situation within liberal societies, in which equality and inclusivity have considerably progressed but where fragmentation and intra-community divisions have increased. In this context, the analysis of intersectional identities between religion and sexual orientation can bring important elements of debate to the understanding of contemporary political and social dynamics in British society. Beyond the cleavages between conservatives and liberals in Islam, the history of homosexuality has been presented a hybrid landscape including both approaches.

This article will analyse the identity belonging experiences of British homosexuals by focusing on their articulations of both forms of belonging and by shedding light upon their struggles within the Muslim and homosexual communities. To do so, we shall first present two perspectives of homosexuality in Islam: The Islamic traditional and the liberal perspective. Second, we shall explore identity theories and their application to the experiences of homosexual Muslims. Third we shall introduce our empirical strategy and the results of the qualitative fieldwork. The final section will summarise the main results and expose the limitations for future research.

2 Homosexuality in Islam: Two Perspectives

Research on Islam and homosexuality presents two perspectives. From a theological perspective, homosexuality has been traditionally understood as a sin, while from a liberal perspective, elements of the Qur'an that are predominantly relied upon to condemn homosexuality are re-interpreted and the Qur'an's general essence and overall intention are understood differently.

Whilst the Qur'an does not explicitly use the word homosexuality, it is often associated with the "the people of Lut" and has long been interpreted as a sin in Islamic thought (Jamal, 2001). The condemnation of homosexuality is drawn from the fate reserved for the people of Lut, and the Qur'an's reference to sexual desire for men as a "gross indecency": "a gross indecency such as none in the world committed before you: Indeed, you come with desire unto men instead of women" (Q 8:80–1) (Brown, 2017). Conversely, some Qur'anic verses that describe the Islamic paradise refer to young boys and girls, described as *wildan*, *ghilman* and *hur* (Rustomji, 2017), with the implication that sexual relations with them is to be enjoyed in the afterlife (Rowson, 2004).

2.1 *Traditional Islamic Views*

The prohibition of homosexuality is rooted in the theological jurisprudence of medieval Islam (Kligerman, 2007; Kugle, 2010). Islam attaches an important role to the heterosexual norm as the only licit behaviour in terms of marital status, family and reproduction (Rehman and Polymenopoulou, 2013). While there are no references to homosexuality in the hadith collections of Bukhari and Muslim, and no hadiths at all that report an occasion when the Prophet dealt with it explicitly, the other “canonical” collections do record, in various forms, his condemnation of the “act of the people of Lut”, usually in the form of a command to “Kill both the active and passive partner”.

Al-Nuwayri (1272–1332) suggested in his *Nihaya* that Muhammad said that what he feared most for his community were the practices of the people of Lut (Bosworth, 1986). The Prophet also commented that, “No man should look at the private parts of another man, and no woman should look at the private parts of another woman, and no two men sleep under one cover, and no two women sleep under one cover” (Duran, 1993). In his Farewell Sermon, the Prophet Muhammad said: “Whoever has intercourse with a woman and penetrates her rectum, or with a man, or with a boy, will appear on the Last Day stinking worse than a corpse; people will find him unbearable until he enters hell fire, and God will cancel all his good deeds” (ibid.).

The Quran contains several allusions to homosexual activity, which have produced extensive theological interpretations over the centuries. The subject is most clearly addressed in the story of Sodom (people of Lut) after the men of the city demand to have sex with the male messengers sent by God to the prophet Lut (Zahed, 2019; Rehman and Polymenopoulou, 2013; Hendricks, 2010). The destruction of the people of Lut is often attributed to their sexual practices, although there is no explicit reference in the Qur’an to precisely what those were.

And (We sent) Lut when he said to his people: What! Do you commit an indecency which anyone in the world has not done before you? Most surely you come to males in lust besides females; nay you are an extravagant people. And the answer of his people was no other than that they said: Turn them out of your town, surely, they are a people who seek to purify (themselves). So, we delivered him and his followers, except his wife; she was of those who remained behind. And we rained upon them a rain; consider then what was the end of the guilty. (Q 7:80–4)

The destruction of the “people of Lut” is argued by those who hold a traditional view to be explicitly associated with their sexual practices. There was

general agreement that the “lewdness” alluded to by the Qur’anic passages was attempted sodomy between men. Sodomy is understood by many to be banned in the Qur’an not only for homosexuals but also for heterosexuals under the name of *zina*, which can be translated as illicit sexual intercourse (Jamal, 2001). The Islamic historian Ibn al-Jawzi (1114–1200) claimed that Muhammad cursed “sodomites” in several hadiths and recommended the death penalty for both the active and passive partners in homosexual acts (Wafer, 1997). It was narrated that Ibn ‘Abbas said: “cursed is the one who has intercourse with an animal, cursed is the one who does the action of the people of Lut” (Yusof et al., 2015). Ahmad narrated from Ibn ‘Abbas that the Prophet Muhammad said: “May Allah curse the one who does the action of the people of Lut, may Allah curse the one who does the action of the people of Lut, three times” (Khuluq, 2020, P 15). Al-Tirmidhi (884) wrote that Muhammad had indeed prescribed the death penalty for both the active and passive partners: narrated by ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abbas: “The Prophet said: ‘If you find anyone doing as Lut’s people did, kill the one who does it, and the one to whom it is done” (Power and Ridell, 2019). Narrated Abdullah ibn Abba: “If a man who is not married is seized committing sodomy he will be stoned to death.” (Hamdi, Lachheb, and Anderson, 2018).

Nevertheless, the traditional views on homosexuality are increasingly challenged by new schools of thought that identify as liberal and aim to contextualise the teachings and readings of the Qur’an within the contemporary world.

2.2 *Liberal Islamic Views*

Liberal Islamic views have focused on alternative interpretations of divine texts and developed their potential to reinforce an understanding of the Qur’an as promoting messages of inclusivity and equality, proposing a more contextualised and tolerant approach toward homosexuality in Islam by adopting philosophical and epistemological perspectives. The motivating arguments rely on the principle of destiny; that homosexual Muslims are born as such and therefore it is a choice of God. Samar Habib (2010) argues that homosexuality is a form of “innate nature” (*fitra* in Arabic). Accordingly, homosexual behaviour is a divine creation and should not be regarded as a sin.

Scott Kugle (2010) explores the notion of *fitra* to understand sexual orientation from an Islamic perspective as well as to reassess the extent of the implications of the narrative about the people of Lut. He argues that sexuality in the Qur’an consists of multifaceted interactions between four levels: genetic pattern (*tabi’a*), upbringing (*shakila*), outward appearance (*sura*) and innate nature (*fitra*). Kugle explains that recent evidence from various scientific and social perspectives suggests that homosexuality is linked to either inheritance

or early childhood experience and shows that homosexuality is the outcome of a divine will. Accordingly, homosexuals have no rational choice in their internal disposition about being attracted to same-sex relations (Kugle, 2010, p 14).

Another liberal Islamic perspective has focused on the question of diversity and the principle of tolerance in Islam. Khaled Abou El Fadl (2002) defends the idea that Qur'anic verses can be adduced to support values of diversity and tolerance, which has remained undermined in Islamic theology. For example, Q 49: 13 ("O mankind, indeed, we have created you from male and female and made your diverse nations and tribes that you may come to know each other. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you") and Q 11: 118–19 ("And if your Lord had willed, He could have made humankind into a single nation; but they will not cease to be diverse ... and for this God created them ...") promote diverse nations and communities and can be interpreted as inclusive of sexual minorities in Islam.

With this in mind, it is argued that the Qur'an accepts different ways of redemption, promotes diversity and calls Muslims to accept and encourage this (Abou El Fadl, 2002). Kugle (2010) suggests that, in Islam, no Muslim is better than another because of any ascriptive criteria such as race, ethnicity, gender, economic status or even sexual orientation.

Finally, the Qur'an also seems to have nothing at all to say about female homosexual behaviour (Habib, 2012). This can be explained by reference to patriarchal and hierarchized views of masculinity and femininity. Islamic law is almost exclusively patriarchal in influence and interpretation where normative masculinity has shaped how Muslim men perceive themselves and how they perceive femininity.

Some scholars and imams, including Dr Junaid Jahangir and Imam Muhsin Hendricks focus heavily on the story of Lut, giving it a meaning different from that understood by the traditionalists (Jahangir and Abdullatif, 2016; Hendricks, 2010). By looking at the biblical story, the Talmud and the Qur'an and also at the physical history of Sodom and Gomorrah in this time period, some scholars have concluded that the sins discussed in the Abrahamic faith were not heavily concerned with homosexuality. Hendricks (2010) argues that the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah were less concerned about homosexuality per se, but rather with other atrocities and extravagancy. James White and Jeffrey Niell (2002) contend that the people of Lut were condemned for their collective unbridled lust and greed rather than for anachronistic same-sex relationships; they base this argument on the references made to the people of Lut in the Bible (Ezekiel 16:49–50 and Mathew 10:14–15) and Talmud and their selfishness, greed, inhospitality (Friedman and Lynch, 2012).

These two perspectives have deeply shaped the identity formation of homosexual Muslims and the strategies they mobilise in order to articulate their religion and their sexual orientation.

3 Muslim Homosexual Identity

Homosexual Muslims may belong to different groups and identify with multiple identities. Such identifications are motivated by a desire to maintain their group memberships (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). The process of identity formation is often the outcome of a variety of influences that shape both the individual and the collective belonging of homosexual Muslims. The construction of individual identities may be derived from individual or collective factors linked to history, geography, biology, memory, personal preferences and religious values (Castells, 2011). The construction of collective identities is a process of active production that occurs through nourishing interactions with others in the identity group (Della Porta and Diani, 2006), but this collective identity is not always a guarantee of full belonging and can produce a contradictory sense of marginalisation and exclusion, in particular for Muslims (Mustafa, 2016).

Accordingly, the coexistence of collective Muslim and individual homosexual identities is not always easy, particularly where homosexuality and Islam appear to be incompatible (Jaspal and Cinnirella, 2010). Muslim identity is a form of identification that relies on Islamic religious values and norms as references with regard to belonging, behaviours and social relations. For British Muslims, its construction can be determined by several factors. First, multiculturalism, globalisation and contemporary politics are determinant in shaping the sense of belonging of a transnational Muslim community (Duderija, 2007). Islam has become an increasingly important federative factor in shaping the sense of belonging of a diverse and plural Muslim community that used to identify with an ethnic, national or socioeconomic background. Second, the Westernisation of the Muslim question has created a special framework for Muslim identity in which the questions of state – religion relations, the place of minorities within Western liberal societies and the socioeconomic disadvantages they face have become key factors in explaining Muslim identity (Cesari, 2007).

Homosexual identity refers to an individual's sense of personal and social belonging based on sexual attractions and behaviours. It reflects the individual's sexual self-concept and its integration within the overall sense of belonging that embodies a multidimensional construction of identity (Luyckx

et al., 2011). Therefore, multiple identities allow individuals to develop various frameworks regarding the coexistence of their belongings (Koc et al., 2022). Frameworks on identity conflict and hybrid identity (Phinney et al., 2006; Kulich et al., 2017) are used to understand how one comes to form and manage one's multifaceted belongings.

Identity conflict arises when individuals feel "caught" between two contrasting identities (Somers, 1994; Benet-Martínez et al., 2002). This is particularly true of homosexual Muslims who face oppositions that are more challenging because of Islam's hostility to homosexuality (Yip, 2004). Identity conflict is also exacerbated by the coming-out experiences of homosexual Muslims, who feel ashamed and even humiliated by making their sexual identity public (Yip, 2004; Jaspal and Cinnirella, 2014). In addition, the nature of this conflict depends on the content of those identities and the social situation in which homosexual Muslims live (Koc et al., 2022). Finally, this dilemma may lead to social stigma and risks of self-exclusion (Hamdi et al., 2017) or reduce the benefits for homosexual Muslims of these social identities (Koc and Vignoles, 2016).

Studies have shown that the experiences of homosexual individuals are often exacerbated by their religious identities (Coyle and Rafalin, 2001; Yip, 2004; Minwalla et al., 2005; Jaspal and Cinnirella, 2010). Muslim homosexuals face feelings of shame within their Muslim communities and an opposition between their Muslim values and their homosexuality. A hybrid identity is constructed by homosexual Muslims to challenge this apparent opposition. A number of studies have analysed strategies of cultural and social adaptations made by European Muslims in constructing hybrid identities (Tibi, 2010; Roy, 2013). This hybridity relies, for homosexual Muslims, on a form of intersectionality that allows them to create the coexistence of two identities located within a matrix of domination and constructed at the intersection of several social hierarchies (Collins, 2000). This is because the new flexible identity enables a plural and overlapped belonging influenced by the principles of equality and diversity of Western societies (Rahman, 2010). Hybridity questions the components of belonging but does not exclude or conflictualise. Muslim homosexual hybridity is the mixing process between two separate identities and suggests that there is no standard, and the identity has no border at all (Smith and Leavy, 2008). In addition, identifying with multiple groups can provide increased protection from exclusion or marginalisation (Jetten et al., 2017) and, furthermore, hybrid belonging is likely to make both coming out and public socialisation easier for homosexual Muslims.

In both patterns, the identity formation of homosexual Muslims brings to the fore their willingness to face and fight the discrimination and oppression they face by creating a compromise between their two forms of belonging

or by conflictualising them. The emergence of new support groups in many Western countries is a coping strategy that may facilitate the acceptance of this new identity. It is important to confront these theoretical arguments with a qualitative fieldwork in order to see how both sides of homosexual Muslim identities can be articulated. This also enables a better understanding of their experiences and their relationship to both Islam and homosexuality. Our fieldwork has particularly addressed the homosexual Muslim identity by asking specific questions regarding the compatibility and the conflictuality of the two forms of belonging. In what follows, we analyse the results of the qualitative interviews carried out.

4 Methodology and Empirical Results

4.1 *Methodology and Fieldwork*

This study employs qualitative methods to explore the identification experience of British homosexual Muslims. Data were collected primarily from online and in-depth interviews of 17 self-identified homosexual Muslims who live in the United Kingdom. All participants were initially approached online through the networks of the many British homosexual societies.

Following a brief announcement of the study on social networks, participants were contacted to be interviewed. Formal participation consent was obtained prior to the interview and the interviews were undertaken following strict respect of privacy guidelines, either online or in a face-to-face format. Of the 17 homosexual Muslims interviewed for this study, ten were men and seven were women. All were resident in Great Britain at the time of the interview and spoke English. Study participants ranged in age from 18 to 48. Fourteen were born and raised in the United Kingdom while three were born outside of the UK but were British citizens and all the interviewees self-identified as Muslims. For details of the respondents, see Table 1. The interviews were driven by a semi-structured questionnaire of 25 questions. Some of the questions were about the respondents' socio-demographic and economic characteristics, while others needed in-depth answers. The interviews started with questions regarding self-description and identity, followed by more specific questions on the respondents' own social lives as homosexuals, their relations with other homosexuals, and feelings and emotions evoked when they thought about interpersonal relations within their various social circles. Surveys and interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. They were digitally recorded by the interviewer and transcribed verbatim and each participant was assured of confidentiality and given a pseudonym chosen by the participant in order to

TABLE 1 Respondents' socio-demographic characteristics

| Pseudonym | Gender | Age | City | Ethnic origin | Occupation |
|-----------|--------|-----|------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| Kareem | Male | 36 | Coventry | Indian | Social worker |
| Ahmed | Male | 41 | Brighton | Pakistani | Teacher |
| Sameer | Male | 31 | Plymouth | Turkish | Student |
| Waleed | Male | 27 | Newcastle | Indian | Freelancer |
| Ameenah | Female | 35 | Bristol | Albanian | Teacher |
| Zahraa | Female | 29 | Birmingham | Bangladeshi | Foundation manager |
| Layla | female | 24 | London | Libyan | Student |
| Aneessa | Female | 28 | Canterbury | Pakistani | Assistant manager |
| Mohammad | Male | 39 | Leeds | Iranian | Actor |
| Khalid | Male | 32 | Exeter | Egyptian | HR manager |
| Rokaya | female | 30 | Reading | Nigerian | Financial adviser |
| Salem | Male | 27 | London | Indian | Social worker |
| Wafa | Female | 26 | Brighton | Somali | Student |
| Majid | Male | 36 | Bath | British/Pakistani | Accountant |
| Younous | Male | 38 | London | Bangladeshi | Artist (painter) |
| Nazeeha | Female | 24 | Oxford | Iraqi | Nurse |
| Rafeek | Male | 33 | London | Nigerian | Marketing technician |

allow more privacy and to comply with the ethics standards recommended by the British Sociological Association (2017).

When fieldwork is conducted concerning the experiences of homosexual (LGB) Muslims, the common label of LGBTQ+ is often used, but one needs to consider each part of the LGBTQ+ combination, which includes both sexual orientations (the LGB) and gender identity (T or Q or +). While the first three letters refer to sexual orientation, and to persons who are only, primarily Lesbian, Gay or also Bisexual. The fourth letter (Trans) refers to gender identity and refers to persons whose gender-identity is different from the one they were assigned at birth. A trans woman, for example, is a person who was assigned the male gender at birth, but who identifies as female, while a cis person is someone whose gender identity matches the gender they were assigned at birth. Some persons are non-binary, i.e., they do not identify as male or female and reject the binary opposition, and mutually exclusive existence, of the two gender categories. For the purposes of the present article, the focus is on homosexual identity and the question of gender is not explored in depth. Indeed, Islam views trans identities as different from sexuality, creating

discussion beyond the scope of this article. Respondents were free to choose their self-identified gender and all opted for the binary categories, either male or female. The interviews were structured to explore four topics: (1) belongings and identity formation, (2) experiences as a homosexual (3) experiences as a Muslim (4) engagement and support. These topics were examined using the following questions or statements: Do you identify as Lesbian, Gay, bisexual and/or as Muslim? Does the homosexual Muslim community face negative treatment from the non-Muslim community for being Muslim or for being homosexual? These open-ended questions allowed each participant to actively direct the interview, which enhanced the content of the interview and involved a maximum of freedom for the participants to describe their experiences, struggles and strategies.

4.2 *Empirical Analysis*

The analysis of the interviews shows that the narratives of British homosexual Muslims put showed common characteristics regarding their identification. All the respondents identified as Muslim or cultural Muslim rather than ex-Muslim. British homosexual Muslims are from diverse ethnic, social and economic backgrounds, which reflects the diversity of the homosexual group and a particular form of acceptance and inclusion in many economic and social sectors.

The qualitative work revealed the complexities in identity construction and integration experienced by British homosexual Muslims. Identifying as Muslims implies that they regard religious identity as a key element in their identification within the self-concept (Jaspal and Cinnirella, 2010). The Muslim identity is often perceived in terms of cultural belonging, which is deeply associated with minority group identifications. This reflects the social position of this religious and ethnic minority in British society, where being Muslim is not only a socio-cultural and religious specificity, but also a structural position of British Muslims (Yip, 2004). At the same time, British Muslim homosexuals identify with the homosexual community, which suggests flexible experiences of being “out” or public in their sexual orientation identity. British Muslim homosexuals seem to assimilate their “coming out” totally or partially with negotiating their relationships with their communities and their own selves (Mitha et al., 2021). This is made particularly clear by the absence of homosexual Muslims who identified as ex-Muslims.

But this identity construction also revealed certain difficulties and struggles. The sexual identity of the respondents was situated within their socio-cultural context, and they often mixed religion with culture. In particular, the coexistence of Islam and homosexuality is a major issue for British homosexual

Muslims and both conflict between and the coexistence of the two identities was apparent. Similarly, the othering of homosexuals by Muslims and of Muslims by non-Muslims are strong points of cleavage for them.

4.2.1 Islam or Homosexuality

The interviews revealed a clear perceived contradiction between homosexuality and Islam, a dilemma that is explained by both religious and social considerations. The respondents highlighted the difficulties they faced within the Muslim community regarding the acceptance of homosexuality. For instance, Kareem stated that the Muslim community was hostile towards homosexuals because of a misinterpretation of the religious texts. “The British Muslim community has a real problem with homosexuality. Their wrong reading of the Quran makes them hostile and even violent towards homosexuals” (Kareem, 22 years old, London).

Similarly, Ahmed suggested that the hostility of Muslims towards homosexual Muslims is particularly prevalent among the underprivileged Muslims, even though violence is decreasing. “Anti LGBT violence is decreasing but the hostility is real especially among the poor neighbourhood. I think educated Muslims are a bit more tolerant” (Ahmed, 41 years old, Plymouth).

The participants reported that homosexuality was widely perceived as contradictory to Islam and Muslim values. In fact, the dominant discourse on homosexuality is inextricably linked to the religious/ethnic minority social position of Muslims. This constructs homosexuality as an appendage of the permissive and immoral Western “other” society. Islam seems to be a barrier to the acceptance of homosexual Muslims by other Muslims. Religion and religiosity are shown to be associated with negative attitudes toward homosexuality (Janssen and Scheepers, 2019; Watt and Elliot, 2019; Adamczyk et al., 2021). Religiosity seems to be particularly associated with homonegativity since individuals’ religious and moral values and attitudes are constructed through their socialisation within families or environments deeply exposed to religion. Even if monotheist religions promote respect and tolerance, they also tend to categorise homosexuality as impure and unnatural. For Muslims, the consequences are particularly severe. For example, Ali (2022) shows that Muslim men are generally more religious than Muslim women and tend to express homonegativity more strongly; while those from higher-income households are more likely to accept homosexuality. Antje Röder and Niels Spierings (2022) show that Muslims who grew up in Western Europe show negative attitudes toward homosexuality if they attend mosques frequently and also that perceived anti-Muslim discrimination increases the maintenance of negative attitudes toward homosexuality. Similarly, using a two-wave panel data

on 18,058 students in 867 classrooms in England, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden, Wuestenenk et al. (2022) show that Muslim students in European countries hold much more conservative attitudes towards homosexuality than do non-Muslims. Asifa Siraj (2009) shows that British Muslims express both homonegative and heterosexist opinions ranging from disgust and a sense that homosexuality is unnatural to moderate attitudes of tolerance and acceptance of homosexuals.

Nevertheless, the conflict between Islam and homosexuality is not always perceived as insurmountable. Some Muslim homosexuals think that the situation is changing and that attitudes in Islam and among Muslims are evolving regarding this matter. For example, Islam is for Sameer in a transition period, but it is still anti homosexuality and Muslims reject homosexuality.

I feel that Islam and Muslims are facing a transition period now since few years, where violence against homosexuals is decreasing but Muslims still reject homosexual Muslims. I hope things will change because we should make our Islam more inclusive and more tolerant towards minorities like homosexuals. (Sameer, 31 years old, Plymouth)

In part, the hostility of Islam and Muslims toward homosexuality is evolving and heteronormative discourses are now coexisting with more neutral and even homo-friendly approaches. Levi Eidhamar (2014) suggests that the Islamic views regarding homosexuality can be summarised by reference to six stances that describe the tensions between the divine and the good: rejecting all kinds of non-hetero identities, feelings and practices; accepting feelings and identity, but rejecting practice; unsuccessful efforts to reject practice; accepting identity and practice within an *ijtihad* framework; accepting non-hetero practices without considering religious prescription; accepting non-hetero identity and practices combined with rejecting the Islamic view on homosexuality. Similarly, Saskia Glas and Niels Spierings (2021) show that, although Muslims in Arab countries reject both homosexuality *and* homosexuals, one in five reject homosexuality but do not object to having homosexual neighbours. They describe this substantial minority of Arab Muslims as those who “hate the sin but love the sinner”. Mehrdad Alipoor (2017) calls for other Islamic theological methodologies and concepts to address the question of homosexuality using alternative approaches that take into account diversity and human dignity. In addition, the political discourse in the UK concerning homosexual Muslims has been dominated by online media such as *5 Pillars*, which claims to be a Muslim news platform and dictates that being Muslim is antithetical to being homosexual (*5 Pillars*, 2014). The same news group has been seen to

launch campaigns against two Muslims who openly identify as homosexuals.² Similarly, Muslim leaders such as the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) have been accused of being silent or indifferent regarding homophobia among the British Muslim community (Hidayah, 2021). This narrative has been pushed by political commentators on channels such as *GB News*:

Pride month isn't celebrated by Muslims. LGBTQ ideology does not align with Islamic teachings & there is nothing homophobic about it. In 2010 many Muslim organisations raised concerns about where this minority group was heading with children & trans. Now look. It's being force fed. (Sheikh, 2023)

Such opinions have led to increasingly radical positions on homosexuality; according to recent polls, 52% of British Muslims think that homosexuality should be illegal (Perraudin, 2016). They hold more conservative attitudes on social issues such as abortion, gender relations and homosexuality, and seem more conservative than Christians on these questions (Siraj, 2009; Kashyap and Lewis, 2013). This conflictual relationship between Islam and homosexuality illustrates what we may call a "bad Islam" in which religiosity increases rejection of homosexuality. The use of religion to frame both the understanding and recognition of Muslim homosexuality is deeply affected by a traditional religious doctrine inspired by religious sources from Qur'an and Hadith and the influence of conservative interpretations of Islam in Britain. As a result, homosexual Muslims dealing with their identity construction have faced a contradiction between their homosexuality and their religion, which has created among them a feeling of identity conflict such that being Muslim and being homosexual are not compatible in any way. This conflict can be interpreted as a confrontation between two systems of values and norms that cannot coexist. In particular, the Islamic view of homosexuality may accept homosexuals but refuse to recognise homosexual identity (Hamdi, Lachheb, and Anderson, 2018). This is not typically the case with regard only to Islam, as the other monotheistic religions also frame homosexuality as a sin and therefore refuse to accept that it can be a part of individual belonging. This result is corroborated by studies of Christian, Jewish and Muslim populations, which show that there is a complex relationship between the various components of

2 See <https://5pillarsuk.com/2023/03/23/birmingham-school-causes-outrage-by-inviting-gay-muslim-to-address-pupils/>; <https://5pillarsuk.com/2023/03/22/report-heavily-criticises-wood-green-academy-over-gay-muslim-lesson/>.

homosexual belongings (Levy and Reeves, 2011; Jaspal, 2014; Avishai, 2020). The struggle between conservative values and sexual orientation can lead to feelings of shame, guilt and even exclusion. However as highlighted by Rusi Jaspal (2014), homosexual Muslims still show some affiliation with Islam, which can be explained by the hegemonic sense that Muslim identity has for them.

Like the other religions, Islam is being crossed by a cleavage between the conservative and progressive views. Although Islamic traditional approaches to homosexuality are still dominant, there is an emerging call for a new paradigm that can bring together Islam and homosexuality without setting them in opposition.

4.2.2 Islam and Homosexuality

Some Muslims living in Britain have undertaken a new process of reconciling their conflicting religious/cultural and sexual identities not by dismissing Islam altogether but by contesting the rigidity of the view that heterosexuality is the only acceptable sexuality in Islam (Siraj, 2009; Minwalla et al., 2005). A recent report by the Pew Research Centre has shown that American Muslims are more accepting of homosexuality than white evangelical Protestants and that their rate of acceptance is increasing faster than that of Protestants (Pew, 2017).

Social acceptance seems important for homosexual Muslims, who look for a better integration of their Muslimness with their homosexuality. Some of our respondents endorsed this compromising strategy, particularly within liberal and tolerant Western societies. Waleed suggested that he felt like a multicultural homosexual Muslim. "I am homosexual and I am Muslim, I am a mix between multicultural, religious and secular identity. I practise religion and even if I don't claim it in the mosque, I have not a stereotyped image of the gay man (Waleed, 27 years old, Newcastle)

The same position was endorsed by Aminah, who identified as both female, Muslim and homosexual British.

I am female homosexual Muslim and I construct this hybrid identity every day with the support of my Muslim and non-Muslim friends. This requires some adjustments and some sacrifices. For instance, I don't go to the mosque and I practise my religion either alone or with Imaan and Hidayah friends. (Ameenah, 35 years old, Bristol)

For Salem, a social worker from London, it is possible to articulate Islam and homosexuality under certain adjustments and family acceptance.

I don't feel any issue with assuming my homosexuality and my religion. I can practise my religion and pray and fast Ramadan, but I avoid talking about homosexuality now. In the beginning my outing has created more violent reactions in my family. But now, they accepted my choice and they do their best to make me feel happy. It is all a question of acceptance. (Salem, 27 years old, London)

This bicultural belonging is constructed to address individual strategies for managing both identities. As suggested by Que-Lam Huynh, Angela MinhTu Nguyen, and Verónica Benet-Martínez (2011), this dual identity framework enables individuals to incorporate two identifications by allowing a hybridity that captures both similarities and divergences. Hybrid Muslim homosexual identity considers and questions all the different compartments of this belonging, without exclusion or hierarchy. It presents a flexible identity construction that mixes two compartments by assuming that there is no standard or boundary for this new form of belonging (Smith and Leavy, 2008). The main feature of this hybridity is that it relies on something common to produce something new. A third space is thus created that allows easier interactions and negotiations between two contested experiences. Homosexual Muslims with hybrid identity have sought to reconcile and secularise their religious identity. Hybridity was also manifested in behaviours, with participants demonstrating more liberal values, as well as variegated cultural or religious practices. Moreover, in negotiating inclusion and belonging, some respondents argued for their rights to express these plural identities but were not able to display them in public, where some barriers are still too high to be overcome. In addition, the recent emergence of new homosexual Muslim groups and more liberal interpretations of Islam regarding the question of homosexuality has contributed to facilitating such new hybrid identifications. The original works of Siraj (2006), Samar Habib (2010), Hendricks (2010) and Kugle (2010) have unlocked a long paradox between Islam and homosexuality and formulated a theory for a new approach to the acceptance of homosexual Muslims. Principles of equity, equality and freedom are introduced, in which the values of diversity and tolerance without judgement are now perceived as a part of the Muslim corpus (Hendricks, 2010).

Participants also put forward their own interpretation of how homosexuality should be understood in Islam. They constructed their own strategy to manage the risks of putting their homosexuality and their Islamic faith in conflict, which has enabled the emergence of what we can call a "good Islam" that relies on a mixture of Western and universal values associated with Islamic ones. This new Islamic approach has created a rupture with more traditional views

regarding homosexuality, feminism and inclusion and embraced what we called earlier the liberal views on homosexuality. This framework is supported by the anti-discrimination laws in the United Kingdom and the inclusivity of multicultural British society regarding homosexuals. In addition, liberal Western societies have induced among many Muslims a movement of secularisation of their own religious values and behaviours. Although Islam still condemns homosexuality theologically, the level of acceptance of homosexuals is improving under the double influence of both liberal Western values and progressive Islamic initiatives. This is illustrated in the emergence of new forms of visible mobilisation of homosexual Muslims as well as new homosexual Muslim structures in British society. The TV soap opera *Eastenders* has featured a gay Muslim, and Muslims have been included in anthologies of queer voices (Shannahan, 2010). Channel 4 has broadcast a documentary titled *Muslim Drag Queens* and the BBC reality series *Muslims Like Us* featured debate about homosexuality and Islam. In 2018, Iman Qureshi directed a play that examines Islamic attitudes to same-sex relationships with grace and dignity (Billington, 2018). In April 2022, the UK's first museum of homosexuality opened and included many representations of the British homosexual Muslim community (Jones, 2022). In addition, the growth of Muslim homosexual networks has contributed to the institutionalisation and the visibility of sexual minorities within the Muslim community. They include groups such as Imaan, Hidayah and London Queer Muslims, and institutions such as the Inclusive Mosque Initiative. Such initiatives have improved the integration of homosexual Muslims by anchoring the principle that homosexual and Muslim identities are compatible. For Rusi Jaspal and Marco Cinnirella (2012), this allows individuals to acquire a social and psychological shield that protects them from negative social representations and the positive representation of homosexuality promoted by these new movements has undoubtedly contributed to the balance between homosexual and Muslim identities. Shah (2021) advocates that the experiences of new homosexual Muslim movements such as Imaan and Hidayah can help explain Muslim attitudes towards sexual diversity. He shows that Imaan has introduced new perspectives on Islamic teachings and encouraged progressive views, including those on homosexuality. Such organisations have offered new voices to homosexual Muslims and allowed them to embrace their dual identification.

Overall, the perception of Muslim homosexuality is evolving and allowing the emergence of new forms of recognition of this hybrid identification, but these new identities are still often the subject of exclusion and even rejection among Muslims.

4.2.3 Islamic Homophobia

Another key question faced by British homosexual Muslims is the rejection they face from their Muslim communities. This exclusion is a particular form of homophobia that affects them, their lives and identities. Homophobia can be defined as “a psychologized fear or hatred of non-normative sexualities” (Ibrahim, 2016) or “hatred and violence faced by people who engage in same-sex sexuality” (Meyer, 2015).

Many studies have examined the individual factors that explain the rejection of homosexuality and have shown that religiosity is among the most influential determinants of homophobic attitudes (Rowatt et al., 2006; Adamczyk and Pitt, 2009; Adamczyk, 2017; Janssen and Scheepers, 2019). The Islamic variant of Islamophobia refers to the way Muslims express homophobic attitudes motivated by their own cultural values or their interpretation of Islam (Ibrahim, 2016). The annual report of the International LGBTI Association (2013) shows that 31 out of a total 47 Muslim majority countries criminalise homosexual acts (Rahman, 2015) and the countries that continue to apply death penalty for homosexual acts are all Muslim (Iran, Mauritania, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Yemen). Beckers (2010) uses data from the World Values Survey and shows a high level of rejection of homosexuality in Muslim countries. Given the limited number of Muslim countries that are included, however, he makes the point that it may not be possible to generalise these results. Intolerance of homosexuality among Muslims is also evident in Britain and, despite its growing social and cultural acceptance, British Muslims continue to regard it as morally unacceptable (Siraj, 2009). In particular, those who identify as more religious are more likely to be negative toward homosexuality as religious conservatism has fuelled opposition toward it (Page and Shipley, 2021).

The respondents narrated their experiences of homophobia among Muslim communities and highlighted the hostility they had faced. Waleed thought that Islamic homophobia is widespread because of the inaction of local and national authorities. “Yes, Islamic homophobia exists because of conservative Islamic view. And its proliferation is because both local and national government are not acting against Muslim homophobia. (Waleed, 27 years old, Newcastle). For Younous there is a weak commitment from the Muslim community to preventing and fighting homophobia. “There is a real problem with homophobia within the Muslim community nearly totally indifferent to this hatred. One thing that could be done is that Muslim homophobia could be publicly condemned, and the Muslim LGBT community could be publicly supported” (Younous, 38 years old, London).

These negative attitudes towards homosexuality among British Muslims can be explained by two main factors. On the one hand, British Muslims may

be more influenced by conservative interpretations of Islam with regard to the perpetuation of heteronormativity and even homophobia (Siraj, 2009). These interpretations are usually transmitted through religious or community institutions without any nuances or contextualisation. On the other hand, Muslim communities often live in self-segregated neighbourhoods without any contact with homosexual communities. This situation has created a form of aversion and even animosity toward the latter and involved opposition between the two minorities.

Participants had faced homophobia from fellow Muslims who perceive homosexuality as Islamically prohibited and culturally immoral. Moreover, a significant number of participants had been denied even their Muslimness and had been subject to exclusion and even violence. Muslim homosexuals' experiences of homophobia and exclusion suggest that these attitudes are formulated and cultivated in a social environment characterised by social interactions and religious interpretations that reflect symbolic boundaries of the Muslim heteronormative culture (Page and Shipley, 2021). For homophobic Muslims, homosexuality is not only *haram* (banned by Islam) but also incompatible with the dominant family and gender role models proposed by the Qur'an and the Sunna. It is perceived as subversion of Muslim sexual and gender norms as depicted by marriage and parenthood.

Some high-profile Muslim voices have demonstrated an intolerance towards same-sex sexuality. For example, in 2006, the general secretary of the MCB, Sir Iqbal Sacranie, was investigated by police for his comments in a radio interview, where he stated that homosexuality is harmful and unacceptable according to Islamic structures (Yip, 2008). Similarly, Yusuf-al-Qaradawi, a world Islamic scholar, stated during a TV interview that homosexuality is a threat to the natural order and is pushed by the West for its own project of cultural imperialism (Kugle and Hunt, 2012).

Unsurprisingly, Islamic homophobia is the outcome not only of rigorous interpretations of religious texts regarding homosexual questions, but also of rigid cultural norms associated with countries of origin where the heterosexual and masculine models have never been challenged by alternative social models. Nevertheless, homosexual British Muslims may also face rejection because of their religion, and this is what we refer to as British Islamophobia.

4.2.4 British Islamophobia

In recent years, Western nations have seen a rise in both populist and religious movements (Jennings and Ralph-Morrow, 2020; Dhoest, 2020; Foster and Kirke, 2023). This surge is a multifaceted mutation in which religiously motivated groups, predominantly opposed to homosexuality, are set against

politically motivated groups, predominantly opposed to Islam. This landscape has seen the emergence of new forms of inclusion and exclusion within Western societies.

Foster and Kirke (2023) examine the discourse of radical right-wing groups concerning Islam and homosexual issues in the United Kingdom and show a change of paradigm in the populist discourse such that the inclusion of homosexuals and their safety is directly associated with the risks of uncontrolled immigration and the spread of Islam. This new rhetoric relies on the so-called the defence of native culture and values as well as the protection of homosexual groups from Muslim outsiders (Spierings, 2021). This ideological shift is a strategic approach that consists in supporting the rights of women, homosexuals and Jews, in order to gain public support and split with the old far right views associated with racism and nationalism (Jennings and Ralph-Morrow, 2020). Homosexuals and freedom of sexual identity are now incorporated into ideas of nationhood, while ethnic and religious minorities are othered and depicted as hostile to homosexuality and its associated values (Puar, 2007). This situation is particularly complex for homosexual Muslims, who may face a paradoxical posture in which their multidimensional belonging can be subject to both acceptance and rejection (Rahman, 2010).

Homonationalism has then added a further layer of challenge to the homosexual Muslim identity. It refers to the idea that homosexual activism is a veiled and at times an explicit form of Islamophobia, where “gay-friendliness” along with women’s rights and gender equality are taken as signs of modern Western superiority over, in particular, the Muslim world (Puar, 2007; Butler, 2008). Paul Mepschen, Jan Willem Duyvendak and Justus Uitermark (2013/2014, 8) elaborate, defining it as falling within “neo-culturalism”, a form of cultural protectionism “grounded in a discourse that represents the world as divided into different, inimical cultures and that frames the ‘national cultures’ of Europe as in need of protection against the effects of globalization and immigration”. Fatima El Tayeb (2012) writes of an ever-growing “coalition of neoliberals, progressive white queer activists, conservatives, feminists, homonationalists and white supremacists”. She asserts that “homonormative queers are offered protection through an Islamophobic consensus that frames the policing of poor, racialized communities as a protection of human rights.” (ibid., 2012). Homonationalism may provide further barriers to confidently identifying as a homosexual Muslim and may create exclusion and ethnic othering (Jaspal, 2017).

It is important, then, when we address the question of the identification of homosexual Muslims, to assess the extent to which, being homosexual, one can protect oneself from Islamophobia. Our respondents were specifically

asked this question in order to disentangle homophobic prejudice from Islamophobia. The majority of them had faced Islamophobic attitudes and being homosexual had not always protected them from being excluded by both homo-friendly and homophobic individuals. For example, Asmaa stated that she had been a victim of Islamophobic comments from her work colleagues:

Being homosexual does not protect me from Islamophobic attacks such “hello Islamist” or “are you going to join ISIS” or sometimes, I am asked if my family will stone me for my homosexuality. These comments are not often racist but stereotyped and Islamophobic banter about Islam and Muslims. (Asmaa, 28 years old, Canterbury)

Ahmed has also complained about what he called the “double penalty” of being Muslim and homosexual. “I still face both homophobia and Islamophobia not only from Muslims but also from white British people. For me it is a double disadvantage to be homosexual and Muslim with different opinions but always the same hatred” (Ahmed, 41 years old, Brighton).

Other respondents underlined the Islamophobia within the homosexual community and the difficulties they faced to be accepted as homosexual Muslims. Imraan described his experience as often associated with Islamophobic stereotypes.

For many white homosexuals, I am the Asian Muslim, and not a “real gay”. They also think that being Muslim is for them a danger that one day I hurt them on behalf of my religion. There are racist and Islamophobic people in the LGBTQ community as it is the case for all the British society. (Nazeeha, 24 years old, Oxford)

For Salem, Islamophobia within the homosexual community is just a problem of ignorance and homosexuals are less hateful than heterosexuals towards Muslims. “The LGBTQ community is not naturally Islamophobic, and I feel that it is only a matter of ignorance rather than hatred” (Salem, 27 years old, London).

The respondents in this study also shed light on the fact that the British homosexual community itself can be Islamophobic, making belonging then to either community, Muslim or homosexual, ever more challenging.

To start with, it can be difficult within the LGBT side of things, it can be very difficult for us to find accessible spaces, we can ... when some of our members have attended LGBT spaces, they’ve come across barriers.

A lot of these LGBT places, like night clubs, bars tend to be ... gate kept by people. And so if you imagine someone were to get a job or a head staff, they're always told you you're in the wrong place, and then I go out of the mix. I have been in situations, where I have had to defend my faith and try and convince people that you can be this ... These kind of cost micro-aggressions ... I think it's racism I think and it's Islamophobia, but also I think it is because historically, religion has ... has traumatized LGBT. (Kareem, 22 years old, London)

In contrast to previous research on homosexual ethnic minorities in Britain (McKeown et al., 2010), the respondents suggested that the homosexual community in Britain is not always inclusive and may show hostility towards non-whites. Exposure to negative stereotypes concerning their religious identities, particularly with the current upsurge of hostility towards Islam in Western countries, may give rise to a perception that this habitually valued group membership is tainted and shameful, potentially challenging Muslim homosexuals' sense of self-esteem and belonging. This further illustrates the societal challenge of Islamophobia, which affects not only the general Muslim minority but also the homosexual subgroup.

Islamophobic attitudes faced by homosexual Muslims shed light on the intersectional exclusion of this group. This paradigm consists of the denial of one component of their belonging by the dominant narratives of British society (Akachar, 2015). The risks that Muslim homosexuals may be othered has created a feeling of exclusion so that being homosexual is not enough protection for them. The belonging of homosexual Muslims can be a disruptive paradigm challenged by a hegemonic white and often secular homosexual identity, where values and norms are more anchored to Western values (Puar, 2017). Momin Rahman (2010) argues that homosexual Muslims are located both inside and outside the intersectional identity matrix, facing challenges to both forms of identification. This situation creates disruption in Western secularised societies where homosexuality is more accepted than Islam.

White homosexual identity may involve, for Muslim homosexuals, a feeling of exclusion and a process of othering because of forms of suspicion regarding their religion and their ability to integrate within the homosexual community, where Islamophobic attitudes faced by homosexual Muslims can be explained by two major postures. First, they can be the subject of hostility toward Islam. The Abrahamic faiths have always been associated with aversion and hostility toward homosexuality and Islamophobia can therefore be interpreted as a form of hostility to homophobic rules introduced by Muslims who want to impose sharia law (Ekman, 2015). Second, homonationalist attitudes may lead

to the stigmatisation and othering of homosexual Muslims (Puar, 2007). Gay rights have recently become an ideological marker used by conservative and nationalist groups to express a form of hostility towards Muslims (Kwon et al., 2022). Accordingly, groups or political parties can be tempted to instrumentalise homosexuality with the aim of protecting national values by opposing them to othered values, particularly Muslim ones, and immigrant groups in general. However, normative support for homosexual rights is not universal across Britain, leading to the question of whether and how national context shapes these dynamic configurations of selective tolerance. Somewhat related to homonationalist thinking, the othering of homosexual Muslims is a consistent part of the construction of modern European societies, where Islam is often depicted as incompatible with British values and British multiculturalism.

To summarise, British homosexual Muslims are struggling for the recognition of their group and their identities. They face a dual penalty because of their perceived incompatible identifications. This situation needs more focus from academia and policy makers so that the values of equality, tolerance and mutual respect that are at the heart of the British multiculturalism can be better understood and anchored.

5 Discussion Comments and Conclusion

Recent decades have seen the emergence of new forms of identification within the Muslim community. Long problematised and excluded on multiple fronts within the dominant religious, political and feminist discourses, homosexual Muslims have come out and undertaken a struggle for visibility and recognition. Their belonging has become an important question and this process has entailed various aspects of the question of homosexuality in Islam. Today, Islamic homosexuality illustrates an intersectional identity that is relevant for both scholars and policy makers. This article has tried to bridge the gap between two oppressed minorities by focusing on a minority within a minority in a multicultural society that recognises differences and values diversity. The qualitative fieldwork that was undertaken has enabled us to address questions of identification strategies as well as the problems faced by homosexual Muslims in Britain, in particular homophobia and Islamophobia.

Results from this study contribute to our understanding of identity construction among Muslim homosexuals in Britain, highlighting that, even though they live in a multicultural and liberal society, homosexual Muslims still face rejection and face conflict between their homosexuality and their Muslimness. The four themes analysed have shed light upon the dual identity

of homosexual Muslims, and their battle to reconcile the tensions raised by both Islamic homophobia and British Islamophobia.

The findings of this study suggest that the experiences of British homosexual Muslims involve either an identity conflict or a hybrid integration. The former represents an incompatibility between being Muslim and being homosexual and therefore a threat of hegemonic religious identification. The risk of exclusion is particularly high among people who live in a Muslim neighbourhood where adherence to Muslim identity is restrictive and even exclusive of other forms of belonging. Nevertheless, this hostility of Islam and Muslims toward homosexuality is evolving and heteronormative discourses are now coexisting with more neutral and even homo-friendly approaches. This suggests that a new bicultural belonging among homosexual Muslims can be constructed to address individual strategies for managing both identities.

This hybrid identification has fostered new interpretations of what homosexuality should be in Islam. Homosexual Muslims use this socialisation in order to manage the risks of opposing their homosexuality to their Islamic faith. Both identities face two different but comparable forms of hatred. From one side, LGB Muslims face a religiously motivated homophobia that is rooted in the heteronormative precepts of Islam. From the other, they also face Islamophobic attitudes in which Islam is now used as a form of civilisational opposition to British values of tolerance and inclusion. Muslims are then depicted as a threat to homosexuals and such speech is spread even among the homosexual community. Surprisingly, the experiences of British homosexual Muslims are minimised within their communities and this socialisation involves complex processes of recognition and visibilisation that should incorporate the study of different intersections between the various individual and collective identities.

Finally, while this study has produced interesting findings, it is important to note certain limitations for future perspectives. The various strategies of articulation between Muslim and homosexual identifications require a deep analysis of not only homonationalism but also the heteronormativity of Islam and Muslim culture. This will enable a deep analysis of not only religious and cultural settings but also the ontological and epistemological bases of the position of Islam regarding homosexuality.

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