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# Religious Disaffiliation and Sexually Minoritised Groups: A Scoping Review of the Literature

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## ABSTRACT

Religious teachings and beliefs often convey an understanding of sexuality that excludes and marginalizes sexually minoritised people. This PRISMA-compliant scoping review selected 29 peer-reviewed papers about the religious disaffiliation of sexually minoritised people for full-text analysis and synthesis. With the use of reflexive thematic and bibliometric analysis, the review found that current research highlights the complicated relationship between religious and LGBTQIA+ identities. This relationship often leads individuals to disaffiliate from their religions and, in turn, either reaffiliate with a different faith tradition, remain with the same but under different terms, or stay nonaffiliated indefinitely. Further research is needed to better understand the non-linear and intricate process of disaffiliation that occurs when there is tension between one's religious identity and sexuality, as well as the impact that these pressures have on the mental health and well-being of LGBTQIA+ individuals.

## KEYWORDS

Religion; faith; sexuality; gender; LGBTQIA+; scoping review

## Introduction

There is a substantial body of literature examining the challenges faced by sexually minoritised<sup>1</sup> (i.e., LGBTQIA+)<sup>2</sup> groups in reconciling their religious identity with their sexuality (Ganzevoort et al., 2011; Henrickson, 2007; Miles et al., 2023). These challenges arise in part due to the inflexible views about sexuality found within many religious communities (Craig et al., 2017). While there are notable examples of religious groups and denominations that provide active support to sexually minoritised groups (Ceatha et al., 2021), religious teachings and beliefs often adhere to a strictly heterosexual understanding of sexuality, labeling practices that fall outside this remit as immoral or sinful (Block, 2023). This exclusion, whether subtle or overt, can marginalize individuals whose sexuality does not align

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with these norms, and cause feelings of alienation, shame, guilt, and internal conflict. For these individuals, sexuality can become the “catalyst for questioning their religious identity and making religious shifts” (Sherry et al., 2010, p. 116).

Religious disaffiliation is the process by which individuals distance themselves from or completely sever ties with their religious affiliation. This is conditioned by a multitude of “push-and-pull” factors, including sociodemographic characteristics, religious skepticism, and political affiliation (Vargas, 2012, p. 202). These factors may be more pronounced in the lives of LGBTQIA+ people, who are more likely to face poorer mental health outcomes overall, often underpinned by both the historical (current in many developing nations) trauma due to persecution, oppression, disenfranchisement of identities and social life, such as during the HIV/AIDS pandemic (Hagai et al., 2020; Iantaffi, 2020; Woulfe & Goodman, 2020). The decision to disaffiliate from one’s religion is never entirely a rational choice from an individual but is conditioned by a range of broader socio-political and religious factors. Moreover, disaffiliation is not a static, linear outcome of these tensions but rather a process of disengagement with religious beliefs and practices, which can range from subtle forms of disaffiliation to outright rejection and/or deconversion.

However, there are numerous ambiguities in the literature about the effects of religion and religious disaffiliation on the lives of sexually minoritised people. For example, while numerous articles explore the challenges associated with managing sexual and religious identities, some studies (e.g., Rosenkrantz et al., 2016) suggest that “intersecting religious/spiritual LGBTQ identities may synergistically contribute to personal and spiritual growth and development” (p. 133). Several other studies confirm the positive impact of religious engagement on the lives of LGBTQIA+ individuals (e.g., Brennan-Ing et al., 2013; Gandy et al., 2021). There are also uncertainties concerning the relationship between religious disaffiliation and mental health, not just among sexually minoritised groups but in the general population overall. In the general population, while some studies have shown that those who disaffiliate from religion have worse health outcomes and subjective well-being than those who maintain their religious affiliation (Fenelon & Danielsen, 2016), some studies (e.g., Haire, 2022) have noted that individuals who choose to leave religions undergo a process of identity reconstruction over time, which can foster personal resilience. Similar contradictory findings have been noted in high-cost religions, which require more time and commitment from their followers (Scheitle & Adamczyk, 2010). For instance, Scheitle and Adamczyk (2010) found that individuals who switch from high-cost religions to a different faith experience poorer health outcomes. On the other hand, Björkmark et al. (2022) highlight the long-term benefits of disaffiliating from high-cost religions, such as freedom, empowerment, and improved well-being. Given these contrasting viewpoints, we believe that this scoping review surveying the scholarship on the topic represents an important intervention.

This topic is also timely given broader international trends related to sexually minoritised people. The Williams Institute's Global Acceptance Index outlines that from 1980 to 2020 there has been a general trend internationally toward increasing tolerance toward sexual minorities, particularly in Western countries (Flores, 2021). While this is a positive development, the report also indicates polarization is occurring, with support for sexual minorities declining in countries with more conservative or authoritarian regimes. Even countries generally more tolerant have seen a reactionary backlash against the perceived promotion of LGBTQI+ practices, often underpinned by religious values. Given this polarization, the question of religious disaffiliation has become more pertinent as individuals increasingly have access to forms of community support that may embolden them to reject remaining silent about their sexual identity in environments that either resist or regress in acceptance. It seems probable then that, in various contexts, maintaining both religious and sexual identity for sexually minoritised people is proving increasingly untenable. Indeed, while focusing only on a US context, a PRRI report from March 2024 indicates that negative teachings about LGBTQ individuals have become an increasingly prominent factor in the reason why people have left their religious affiliation, an increase from 29% in 2016 to 47% in 2024 (Public Religion Research Institute [PRRI], 2024). However, while numerous academic articles explore the tension between sexual and religious identities, the process of disaffiliation remains an under-explored topic. Our ambition with this scoping review is to explore the current body of knowledge concerning the predictors of and challenges in this process of disaffiliation, and to, in turn, highlight research gaps that need to be explored.

## **Methodology**

This is a scoping review of the literature, which aims to investigate a topic from various disciplinary, methodological and contextual perspectives. Such reviews allow researchers to capture the breadth and diversity of a specific topic and highlight relevant gaps with future implications in research (Peters et al., 2017). The framework for the review is based on the Arksey and O'Malley (2005) and Joanna Briggs Institute model for conducting scoping reviews and is PRISMA-compliant.

## **Search strategy**

The review used the PICO model (Santos et al., 2007) to define the research question and develop a literature search strategy. The review harvested literature related to the original terms LGBTQIA+, religion, religious disaffiliation and religious disengagement. Truncation enabled a more exhaustive search, while Boolean operators (Timmins & McCabe, 2005) helped diversify the findings. Furthermore, the ancestral approach (White, 1994) was used to scan reference

**Table 1.** PICO model.

| Description                | Terms   |
|----------------------------|---|
| P: Population, patient     | LGBTQIA+; sexual minorities; sexually minoritised groups; sexual diversity; LGB*                |
| I: Intervention, indicator | Faith; relig*; spirit*  |
| C: Comparison, control     | Religious affiliation   |
| O: Outcome                 | Religious disaffiliation; religious deconversion; religious detachment; religious disengagement |

lists and bibliographies of papers. [Table 1](#) shows the PICO model and variation of the terms used in the search strategy.

The evidence-based guidelines for systematic reviews outlined in the PRISMA statement (Moher et al., 2009) informed the design of this review to ensure quality assurance. We conducted a computer-based search of a range of databases to reflect the diversity of disciplines, methodologies and theories, as well as chronological periods in this area. The search databases included PubMed, Scopus, PsychINFO, Web of Science, ProQuest Central, Science Direct, PsycARTICLES, Academic Search Premier, and CINHALL. A search was also conducted using Google Scholar to identify papers not included in the databases above. The initial searches were conducted by the first two authors between December 2023 and February 2024. The following search string was entered in the databases: (LGBTQIA+ OR sexual minorities OR sexually minoritised groups OR sexual diversity OR LGB\* OR gay OR lesbian OR trans\*) AND (religious disaffiliation OR religious deconversion OR religious detachment OR religious disengagement OR spiritual disaffiliation OR spiritual disengagement). The full-text articles were retrieved from the titles and abstracts of these results. No existing review articles on the subject were identified to conduct a hand search of their bibliographies for additional papers.

### ***Inclusion and exclusion criteria***

The search applied limiters to narrow its scope and focus on the question it sought to explore. Given the scoping nature of the review, no limiter was applied chronologically, nor in terms of geopolitical location or religious denomination. Only peer-reviewed primary and empirical studies that had received ethical approval were included in the review, as it aimed to focus on current research evidence. These studies focused on practices of religious disaffiliation among sexually minoritised groups, as well as the aftermath of disaffiliation, including experiences of community, identity and mental health and wellbeing. Furthermore, studies of varied methodological approaches were included, and from various disciplinary areas, which allowed for a broader scope of the current evidence base. Lastly, only studies written and

**Table 2.** Summary of included studies.

| N | Authors (year)         | Title  | Journal                                      | Country                               | Aim   | Methodology   | Timeframe                      | Sample size | Specifications of the participants   |
|---|------------------------|--|--|---------------------------------------|---|---|--------------------------------|-------------|--|
| 1 | Avishai (2020)         | Religious Queer People Beyond Identity Conflict: Lessons from Orthodox LGBT Jews in Israel'                                      | Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion | Israel                                | To challenge the conflict frame in understanding the experiences of Orthodox Jewish LGBTQ+ individuals and to propose a more nuanced and dynamic framework. | Qualitative, including interviews (64 participants), digital ethnography, and fieldwork.    | September 2016 to January 2018 | 64          | Orthodox Jewish individuals with same-sex attraction, varying in age, religiosity, life history, family status, geographical location.           |
| 2 | Block (2023)           | Complicit Silence, Fluid Identities and a Shift to Personalized Faith: LGBTQ+ Experiences in Conservative Christian Communities' | Studies in Religion/ Sciences Religieuses    | Canada (British Columbia and Alberta) | To explore LGBTQ+ conservative Christian communities, focusing on the issues of silence, identity fluidity, and the shift to a personalized faith.          | Qualitative study using in-depth interviews.  | Unspecified                    | 6           | LGBTQ+ individuals within conservative Christian communities, aged 19–35.  |
| 3 | Bradshaw et al. (2015) | Religious Experiences of GBQT Mormon Males   | Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion | USA                                   | To investigate the relationship between sexual orientation and religious experiences among GBQT males within the LDS Church.                                | Mixed-methods, including an online survey and qualitative analysis of open-ended responses. | July to September 2011         | 1042        | GBQT males, predominantly white/ Caucasian, with various educational backgrounds, relationship statuses, and from multiple states and countries. |

(Continued)

Table 2. (Continued).

| N | Authors (year)        | Title   | Journal                        | Country | Aim   | Methodology                              | Timeframe    | Sample size | Specifications of the participants  |
|---|-----------------------|---|--------------------------------|---------|---|--|--------------|-------------|---|
| 4 | Bridges et al. (2020) | Identity Affirmation and Mental Health among Sexual Minorities: A Raised-Mormon Sample                      | Journal of GLBT Family Studies | USA     | To explore the relationship between identity affirmation and mental health among sexual minorities raised in the Mormon community.  | Cross-sectional survey method.           | 2016 to 2017 | 530         | Cisgender men and women who identified as sexual minorities and were raised in the Mormon Church. Majority identified as White, with a larger proportion of men. The average age was around 36.4 years. |
| 5 | Crowell et al. (2015) | Specific Aspects of Minority Stress Associated With Depression Among LDS Affiliated Non-Heterosexual Adults | Journal of Homosexuality       | USA     | To examine how specific aspects of minority stress are individually and collectively associated with depression among non-heterosexual adults affiliated with the LDS Church. | Quantitative study using online surveys. | Unspecified  | 634         | Heterosexual adults (ages 18–33) who are current or former members of the LDS Church.   |

(Continued)

**Table 2.** (Continued).

| N | Authors (year)                  | Title   | Journal                              | Country   | Aim   | Methodology   | Timeframe    | Sample size  | Specifications of the participants   |
|---|---------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|-----------|---|---|--------------|--|--|
| 6 | Jones et al. (2022)             | Religious conversion practices and LGBTQA+ youth  | Sexuality Research and Social Policy | Australia | To investigate the experiences and outcomes of Australian LGBTQA+ youths' exposure to religious conversion practices.               | Quantitative study using online survey.   | Unspecified  | 6,412  | Australian LGBTQA + youth aged 14–21 years.  |
| 7 | A. Dahl and Galliher (2012a)    | The Interplay of Sexual and Religious Identity Development in LGBTQ Adolescents and Young Adults: A Qualitative Inquiry | Identity                             | USA       | To explore the interplay between sexual and religious identity development in LGBTQ adolescents and young adults.                   | Qualitative study using individual interviews, journal writing, and focus groups.     | 2009 to 2010 | 19 participants (8 adolescents aged 15–18, 11 young adults aged 19–24) | LGBTQ adolescents and young adults, predominantly raised in the LDS Church, with some raised Catholic or Presbyterian. |
| 8 | A. L. Dahl and Galliher (2012b) | LGBTQ Adolescents and Young Adults Raised within a Christian Religious Context: Positive and Negative Outcomes          | Journal of Adolescence               | USA       | To understand the positive and negative outcomes of LGBTQ adolescents and young adults raised within a Christian religious context. | Qualitative study, utilizing in-depth interviews, journal writings, and focus groups. | Unspecified  | 19 participants (8 adolescents and 11 young adults)                    | LGBTQ adolescents and young adults raised in various Christian religious affiliations (majority from the LDS Church).  |

(Continued)





Table 2. (Continued).

| N  | Authors (year)              | Title   | Journal   | Country                  | Aim   | Methodology   | Timeframe              | Sample size | Specifications of the participants   |
|----|-----------------------------|---|---|--------------------------|---|---|------------------------|-------------|--|
| 9  | Henrickson (2007)           | Lavender faith: Religion, spirituality and identity in lesbian, gay and bisexual New Zealanders | Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought | New Zealand              | To explore religion and spirituality among LGB individuals in New Zealand and their influence on identity formation and social experiences. | Quantitative study: National survey   | April to July 2004     | 2,269       | Diverse LGB individuals from New Zealand, representing various age groups  |
| 10 | Anderson and McGuire (2021) | "I feel like God doesn't like me." Faith and Ambiguous Loss Among Transgender Youth             | Family Relations  | USA, Canada, and Ireland | To expand the use of ambiguous loss theory to religion and religious rejection for sexual- and gender-minority people.                      | Qualitative thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews.  | 2010 to 2014           | 63          | Transgender youth from the United States, Canada, and Ireland, raised in religious Christian homes.  |
| 11 | Dehlin et al. (2015)        | Navigating Sexual and Religious Identity Conflict: A Mormon Perspective                         | Identity  | USA                      | To understand how same-sex attracted individuals within the LDS Church navigate sexual and religious identity conflict.                     | Mixed-methods, using an internet-based survey and incorporating elements from various scales and assessments. | July to September 2011 | 1,493       | Same-sex attracted or former members of the LDS Church, majority men, average age of 36.8 years, predominantly White, various educational and relationship statuses. |

(Continued)

**Table 2.** (Continued).

| N  | Authors (year)            | Title   | Journal   | Country                       | Aim  | Methodology   | Timeframe   | Sample size | Specifications of the participants                        |
|----|---------------------------|---|---|-------------------------------|--|---|-------------|-------------|---|
| 12 | Harris et al. (2020)      | LGBTQI+ and Christian? Who decides?   | Journal of Religion & Social Work: Social Thought                 | Unspecified                   | While exploring themes of identity and Christian history, affiliation, and vocation, the study answers the question who determines who is Christian and who is not.  | Phenomenological qualitative study using semi-structured interviews               | 2014        | 20          | Christians and LGBTQI+<br>5 adult men & 15 adult women    |
| 13 | Hattie and Beagan (2013)  | Reconfiguring Spirituality and Sexual/Gender Identity: "It's a Feeling of Connection to Something Bigger, It's Part of a Wholeness" | Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought | Canada (Halifax, Nova Scotia) | Explore how Canadian women who identified as LGBTQ addressed potentially conflicting aspects of self, reconfiguring their spiritual and/or sexual/gender identities. | Interpretive or hermeneutic phenomenology via in-depth semi-structured interviews | Unspecified | 11          | Canadian women who identified as LGBTQ. Age range- 23-62. |
| 14 | Joseph and Cranney (2017) | Self-esteem among lesbian, gay, bisexual and same-sex-attracted Mormons and ex-Mormons  | Religion & Culture  | USA                           | Investigate the relationships among self-esteem, participation in the Mormon Church, and sexual identity acceptance.   | Quantitative study: Online survey, Path analysis approach                         | 2013-2014   | 348         | LGB/SSA (Same-sex attracted) Mormons and ex-Mormons.      |

(Continued)

**Table 2.** (Continued).

| N  | Authors (year)        | Title   | Journal                                 | Country | Aim   | Methodology                | Timeframe    | Sample size | Specifications of the participants  |
|----|-----------------------|---|---|---------|---|----------------------------|--------------|-------------|---|
| 15 | Lefevor et al. (2020) | The Role of Religiousness and Beliefs About Sexuality in Well-Being Among Sexual Minority Mormons | Psychology of Religion and Spirituality | USA     | Using intersectionality as a guiding framework, the study examines the differential relationships of religiousness and beliefs about sexuality with well-being among a group of individuals who experience, or have experienced, conflict between their religious and sexual identities: sexual minority Mormons. | Quantitative study: survey | 2016 to 2017 | 1128        | +18 years, experience or have experienced same sex attractions, complete the survey questions of the interest in the study, and have identified their single/relationship status as single and celibate, single and non-celibate, in a same-sex relationship, or in a mixed-orientation relationship. |

(Continued)

**Table 2.** (Continued).

| N  | Authors (year)        | Title   | Journal   | Country | Aim   | Methodology  | Timeframe  | Sample size | Specifications of the participants         |
|----|-----------------------|---|---|---------|---|--|--|-------------|--|
| 16 | Lefevor et al. (2023) | Correlates of Christian Religious Identification and Deidentification Among Sexual and Gender Minorities: A U.S. Probability Sample | Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity | USA     | Investigates (a) which demographic characteristics are associated with SGM's religious deidentification as adults; (b) what childhood experiences are related to deidentification; and (c) how religious deidentification may relate to SGMs' experiences of minority stressors, resilience resources, and health indicators as adults. | Quantitative study<br>a) Generational, a national survey of sexual minority adults<br>b) TransPop, first national probability sample of transgender adults | April 2016–March 2018<br>April–Aug 2016 & June 2017–Dec 2018 | 1529        | Adult sexual and gender minorities (SGMs). |

(Continued)



Table 2. (Continued).

| N  | Authors (year)        | Title  | Journal  | Country            | Aim  | Methodology                                      | Timeframe          | Sample size | Specifications of the participants   |
|----|-----------------------|--|--|--------------------|--|--|--------------------|-------------|--|
| 17 | Lefevor et al. (2022) | "He Just Wanted Me to Do What Was Best for Me:" Latter-Day Saint Clergy's Counsel to Sexual and Gender Minorities and Its Impact | Religions  | USA (Not explicit) | To understand how clergy in theologically conservative congregations can effectively and authentically support their SGM congregants, and the consequences of their support.   | Semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis | April to June 2021 | 25          | Current and former members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (CJCLDS) who identified as sexual and gender minorities (SGM).                                       |
| 18 | Lefevor et al. (2023) | The Impact of Changes in Religion on Health Among Sexual Minority Mormons  | The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion | USA                | Investigate how a particular group of SGMs—those who were raised in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (aka Mormons)—navigate decisions about religiousness and how those decisions influence their experience of minority stress, mental health, and well-being. | 2-year longitudinal study                        | 2020–2022          | 132         | At least 18 years old, residing in the US, been baptized in the CJCLDS at some point in their life, and reported some degree of same-sex sexual attraction, behavior, or identity. |

(Continued)

**Table 2.** (Continued).

| N  | Authors (year)         | Title  | Journal                                 | Country | Aim  | Methodology                    | Timeframe   | Sample size | Specifications of the participants   |
|----|------------------------|--|---|---------|--|--------------------------------|---|-------------|--|
| 19 | Saunders et al. (2023) | Religious Transitions, Sexual Minority Status, and Depressive Symptoms from Adolescence to Early Adulthood | Society and Mental Health               | USA     | Test (1) whether religious transitions are associated with depression during the passage to adulthood, and (2) whether any association between religious transitions and depression is moderated by sexual identity. | Survey and in-depth interviews | Draws data from Waves I (1994–1995) and IV (2008) from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health study. | 12,287      | Wave I- adolescents (13–17) and some of their parents. Wave IV- Same participants were 24–32 years old.  |
| 20 | Exline et al. (2021)   | Religious and spiritual struggles among transgender and gender-nonconforming adults                        | Psychology of religion and spirituality | USA     | Explore the struggles that transgender and gender-nonconforming (TGNC) individuals face regarding religion/ spirituality and what types of religious beliefs and experiences make such struggles more likely.        | Quantitative study: survey     | Unspecified   | 305         | Individuals who self-identified as transgender male, transgender female, gender fluid, gender nonbinary, genderqueer, Two Spirit, agender, or other, self-described TGNC identities. |

(Continued)



Table 2. (Continued).

| N  | Authors (year)              | Title   | Journal                                      | Country | Aim  | Methodology  | Timeframe                    | Sample size              | Specifications of the participants   |
|----|-----------------------------|---|--|---------|--|--|------------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| 23 | Woodell and Schwadel (2020) | Changes in religiosity among lesbian, gay, and bisexual emerging adults   | Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion | USA     | How religiosity changes in emerging adults who are lesbian, gay or bisexual                        | Analysis of data from longitudinal studies: 1) National Longitudinal Study of Adolescents to Adult Health; 2) National Study of Youth and Religion | Sep 1994<br>NSYR: since 2002 | 90,118                   | Adolescents self-identifying as lesbian, gay or bisexual.                                |
| 24 | Vulakh et al. (2023)        | Attributions of LGBTQ+ identity and religious views on homosexuality to disaffiliation from Orthodox Judaism              | Religions                                    | USA     | Explore whether religious disaffiliation is attributed to sexual identity or religious homophobia  | Quantitative study: survey   | Unspecified                  | 117                      | LGBTQ+ self-identified individuals who disaffiliated from Orthodox Judaism.              |
| 25 | Foster et al. (2011)        | 'It's my inner strength': Spirituality, religion and HIV in the lives of young African American men who have sex with men | Culture, Health and Sexuality                | USA     | Examine the role of r/s in young black men who have sex with men in San Francisco-Oakland Bay Area | Qualitative – interviews<br>Thematic analysis  | Unspecified                  | 31                       | Young black men who have sex with men and are HIV-positive.                              |
| 26 | Sherkat (2016)              | Sexuality and religious commitment revisited: exploring the religious commitments of sexual minorities, 1991–2014         | Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion | USA     | Explore the relationship between behavioral sexuality and religiosity                              | Cross-sectional study<br>Data from General Social Survey (1991–2014)   | 2012–2017                    | 22990<br>(approximately) | Adult individuals who have had same-sex relations in the last five years from the study. |

(Continued)

**Table 2.** (Continued).

| N  | Authors (year)          | Title  | Journal                                      | Country | Aim   | Methodology  | Timeframe   | Sample size                  | Specifications of the participants  |
|----|-------------------------|--|--|---------|---|--|-------------|------------------------------|---|
| 27 | Sorrell et al. (2023)   | "Like little knives, stabbing me:" the impact of microaggressions on LGBTQ+ teens and their parents in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints | Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion | USA     | Explore the impacts of micro-aggressions and coping strategies of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer/questioning teens and their parents | Qualitative study – interviews<br>Thematic analysis  | Unspecified | 19 dyads (teens and parents) | Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer/questioning teens, and their parents. |
| 28 | Stern and Wright (2018) | Discrete effects of religiosity and spirituality on gay identity and self-esteem   | Journal of Homosexuality                     | USA     | Examine the effects of r/s on positive and negative gay identity and self-esteem  | Quantitative study: survey<br>1)spiritual well-being questionnaire, 2) intrinsic spirituality scale, 3) religious commitment inventory-10, 4) Duke religious inventory, 5) lesbian, gay, and bisexual identity scale, 6) heteronormative attitudes and beliefs scale, 7) the Rosenberg self-esteem scale | Unspecified | 376                          | Self-identified sexual minority adults.   |

(Continued)



**Table 2.** (Continued).

| N  | Authors (year)           | Title  | Journal             | Country | Aim   | Methodology   | Timeframe | Sample size | Specifications of the participants      |
|----|--------------------------|--|---------------------|---------|---|---|-----------|-------------|---|
| 29 | Scheitle and Wolf (2017) | The religious origins and destinations of individuals identifying as a sexual minority | Sexuality & Culture | USA     | Explore religious disaffiliations of individuals identifying as a sexual minority | Cross-sectional study<br>2008–2014 data from the General Social Surveys | 2014–2016 | 7245        | Self-identified sexual minority adults. |

published in English were included in this review, due to language barriers and resource limitations.

### ***Sifting process***

The initial search of the databases and a hand search resulted in 3,486 papers. After duplicates were removed and limiters applied, a total of 2,743 papers remained. The papers were organized in Zotero, and the abstracts and titles were reviewed, resulting in 57 papers eligible for assessment. These were shared between the three researchers for an initial full-text assessment. All inter-reviewer discrepancies were discussed and reconciled, and 28 records were excluded, resulting in 29 papers for full-text review, analysis, and synthesis. Sifting discrepancies included queries about the methodological rigor of studies, as well as the relevance to gender, sexuality, or both. The latter was primarily due to the tendency in research to generalize knowledge about LGBTQIA+ identities without explicitly referring to gender or sexuality. Reference lists of these papers were scanned to identify any relevant papers that meet the criteria for inclusion. No new paper was identified at this stage. [Figure 1](#) shows the sifting process.

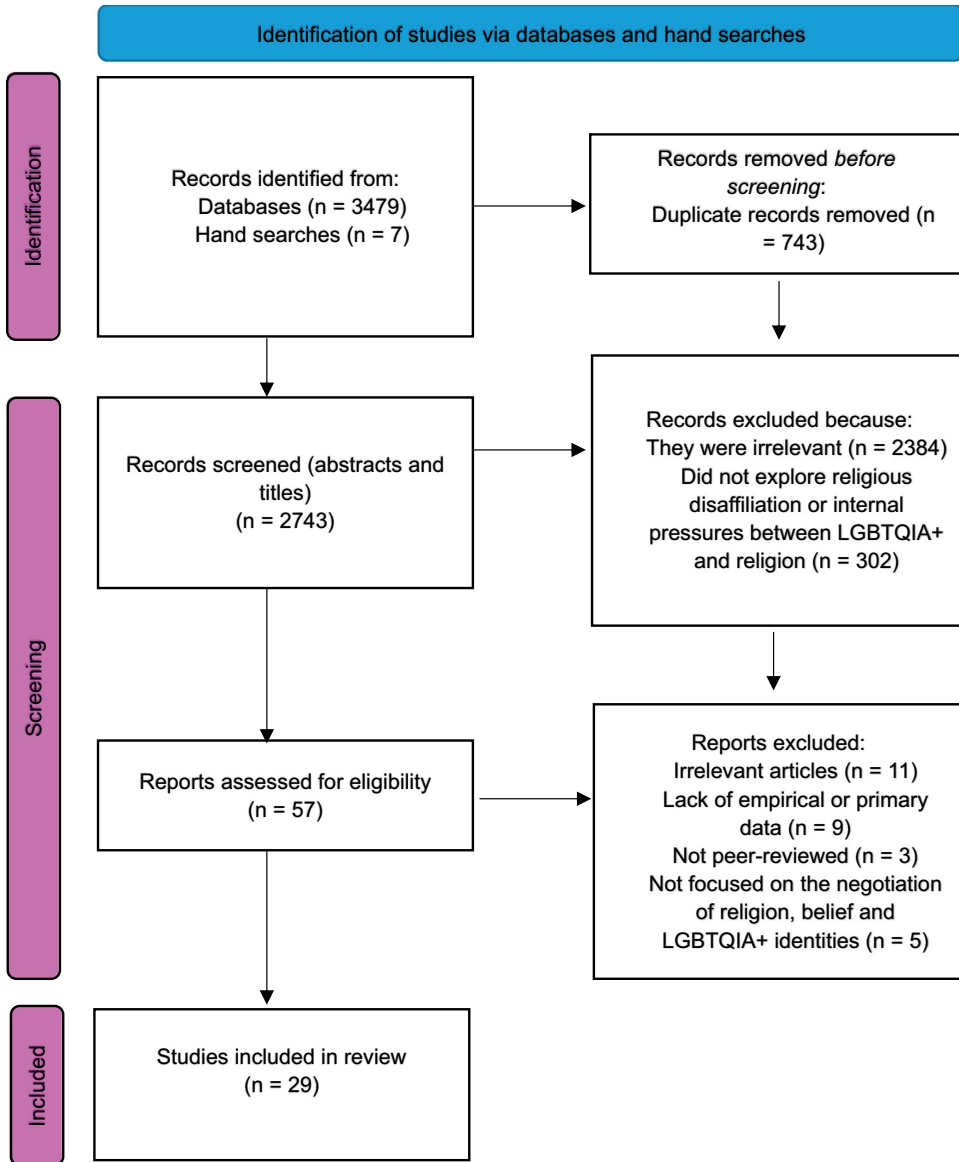
The 29 papers included were reviewed against quality criteria (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme, 2018; Pluye & Hong, 2014) ([Table 2](#)) and were found to uphold ethical standards and validity in results, with sufficient rigor in the analysis.

### ***Narrative synthesis***

For the data analysis and synthesis, the NVivo qualitative data analysis software (version 12; QSR International, 2020) was used. Once the papers were organized in NVivo, reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019) was used to organize, summarize, and synthesize the results. Papers were divided into three clusters and each researcher took the lead in coding one, while the other two contributed to conversations before concluding with the final narrative synthesis. The codes were grouped into themes and subthemes based on the inter-reviewer conversations. Finally, VOSViewer was used to conduct a bibliometric analysis and draw visualizations of the networks of associations of the co-occurrences in the reviewed papers.

## **Results**

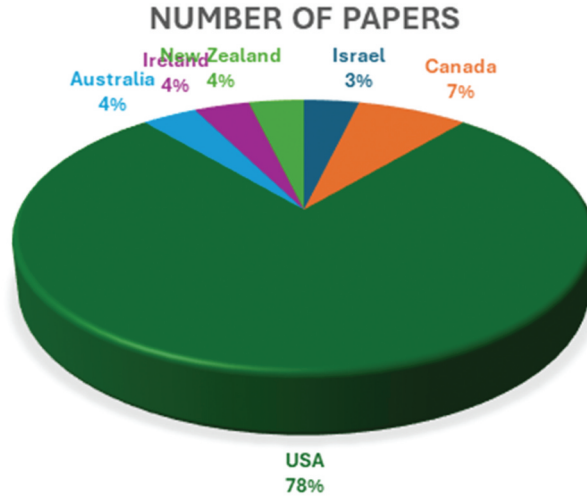
The reviewed papers included a total sample of 149,232 participants. The lowest sample size was six participants and the highest was 90,118. Of the papers, four focused purely on large datasets from national surveys. The data in the studies was collected between 1994 and 2022, with the latest study



**Figure 1.** PRISMA flow diagram of paper selection.

published in 2023. Furthermore, most of the studies were conducted in the USA ( $n = 21$ ) and a small number originated in other nations (Figure 2). Lastly, a good balance of methodological designs was used with 14 studies using a quantitative design, 10 using a qualitative one and three using a mixed methods approach.

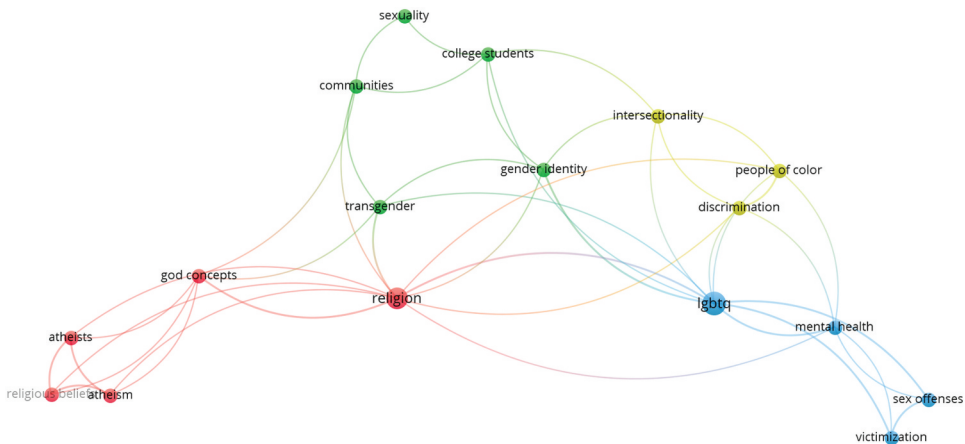
All studies focused on LGBTQIA+ self-identified individuals with a religious background, affiliation or upbringing, and the relationship of those two sets of identities, as well as the outcomes from the tensions between



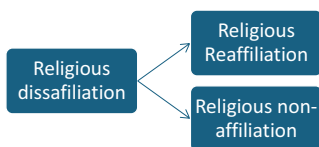
**Figure 2.** Papers by country.

religious teachings, attitudes toward gender and sexuality, and LGBTQIA+ identities. A bibliometric analysis showed that research published in this area focused on four distinct areas while exploring associated concepts and overlapping themes. Specifically, the four clusters of concepts in research are: 1) atheism, religion, belief and God concepts; 2) communities, gender identities and sexuality; 3) mental health, sex offenses and victimization; and 4) discrimination and intersectionality. **Figure 3** is a visualization of those clusters, color-coded, and their interrelationships.

Accumulatively, the studies included in this review highlighted two intertwined categories of knowledge. First, the studies showed a difficult relationship between LGBTQIA+ identities and religion, belief, and spirituality.



**Figure 3.** Network visualisation of clusters of concepts in research.



**Figure 4.** Common outcomes from being LGBTQIA+ and religious.

Second, all studies, in different ways and with different implications, detail a process that LGBTQIA+ individuals go through when experiencing the tensions of this relationship, the choice of *disaffiliation*, and whether it leads to *non-affiliation* or *reaffiliation* (Table 3). The following subsections present each of these in turn.

### **The complexities of religious faith and LGBTQIA+ identities**

There were numerous complexities explored in the literature concerning the relationship between religious faith and practice and LGBTQIA+ identities. However, it ought to be stressed that there was a heavy focus on Christian and Western contexts. The decision to disaffiliate and subsequent outcomes are informed by a series of interacting factors, including familial support (Joseph & Cranney, 2017), depth of engagement with religious practice (Lefevor et al., 2020), and the individual's life stage. For example, Saunders et al. (2023) outline how adolescence, a period of life already rife with numerous disruptions, including but not limited to education, employment, and romantic relationships, heightened stress associated with transitioning to or from a particular religion during adolescence.

An important distinction that emerged was between adherence to external religious doctrines and more personalized forms of spirituality. Stern and Wright (2018), for example, explored the impact of religiosity

**Table 3.** Papers by themes.

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| Religion and LGBTQIA+     | Stern and Wright (2018), Sorrell et al. (2023), Exline et al. (2021), Block (2023), Bradshaw et al. (2015), Bridges et al. (2020), Dehlin et al. (2015), Jones et al. (2022), A. Dahl and Galliher (2012a), A. L. Dahl and Galliher (2012b), Henrickson (2007), Anderson and McGuire (2021), Foster et al. (2011), Lefevor (2023), Lefevor, Skidmore, et al. (2023), Lefevor, Bouten, et al. (2023), Harris et al. (2020), Lefevor et al. (2022), Joseph and Cranney (2017), Saunders et al. (2023), and Lefevor et al. (2020) |
| Religious disaffiliation  | Scheitle and Wolf (2017), Sherkat (2016), Vulakh et al. (2023), Foster et al. (2011), Bridges et al. (2020), Henrickson (2007), Dehlin et al. (2015), Harris et al. (2020), Lefevor et al. (2020), Lefevor et al. (2022), Crowell et al. (2015), Lefevor, Skidmore, et al. (2023), Joseph and Cranney (2017), Hattie and Beagan (2013), Lefevor, Bouten, et al. (2023), and Avishai (2020)   |
| Religious reaffiliation   | Schneitle and Wolf (2017), Sherkat (2016), Foster et al. (2011), Avishai (2020), Block (2023), A. Dahl and Galliher (2012a), A. L. Dahl and Galliher (2012b), Dehlin et al. (2015), Goodrich and Luke (2019), Hattie and Beagan (2013), Lauricella et al. (2017), Lefevor et al. (2022), and Harris et al. (2020)  |
| Religious non-affiliation | Scheitle and Wolf (2017), Woodell and Schwadel (2020), Henrickson (2007), and Joseph and Cranney (2017)  |

and spirituality on LGB identities, heteronormative beliefs and self-esteem. The results highlighted that higher religiosity is linked with lower identity affirmation ( $b = -.154$ ,  $t(365) = -2.155$ ,  $p < .05$ ), while spiritual and more personalized beliefs are associated with higher identity affirmation ( $b = .275$ ,  $t(365) = 3.760$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Similarly, religiosity presented as a predictor of internalized homonegativity, and lower self-esteem, both of which were found to cause stressors, psychological distress and identity conflict in LGB individuals. Altogether, religiosity is found to be positively correlated with higher levels of heteronormative beliefs. On the contrary, the same study showed that spirituality and more personalized approaches to faith are not related to internalized homonegativity, and can positively influence self-esteem and support the development of an LGB identity. Given these findings, it is unsurprising that research reports an association between affiliation with traditional religious beliefs and attending conversion therapies, as well as harassment and oppressive environments for LGBTQIA+ people, which lead to negative mental health outcomes altogether (Jones et al., 2022).

Furthermore, this difficult relationship between religious and LGBTQIA+ identities becomes more complicated when looked at through an intersectional lens. For example, Stern and Wright (2018) found that racially and ethnically minoritized groups have higher levels of internalized homonegativity when associated with religiosity compared to their counterparts. Foster et al. (2011) indeed found that there is heightened stigma and homophobia in traditional black churches, and the tension of being a gay man and Christian in that environment is deemed unbearable for many. Similarly, Exline et al. (2021) opined that racially and ethnically minoritized people are more likely to be rejected by their religious communities by comparison to their White counterparts.

It is worth noting that one study in this review explored identities beyond gay men, lesbian women, bisexual individuals, and trans people. Sorrell et al. (2023) focused on identities such as pansexual, queer, nonbinary, questioning. Findings show the emotional impact of microaggressions experienced by the participants, including doubt (i.e., questioning religious teachings and especially when those were used to invalidate, shame or exclude LGBTQIA+ individuals), which often led to loss of faith, disengagement from the Church or other establishment, nonbelonging (i.e., feeling unwelcome and isolated), and disillusionment. In line with the experiences of losing faith, Anderson and McGuire (2021) highlighted that trans youth experience ambiguous losses in relation to their faith and belief in God when they are raised in religious environments that pose disapproving views of gender, gender expression and sexuality.

### ***LGBTQIA+ and religious identities***

The reflexive thematic analysis and narrative synthesis of the findings indicate that LGBTQIA+ people who have disaffiliated from religious groups often do not disengage completely from their faith. This process of disaffiliation appears to be complicated and personalized, leading to religious reaffiliation, either with a different and more accepting religious belief or with the same religious belief but more spiritually and under different circumstances (Figure 4). In other words, reaffiliation or non-affiliation necessitates, in this context, initial disaffiliation from a religious tradition.

### ***Religious disaffiliation***

The reviewed papers extensively discussed evidence of religious disaffiliation when there are tensions between religious and LGBTQIA+ identities. When confronted with a choice, sexually minoritised groups tend to exhibit a greater inclination toward abandoning their religious identity or faith as opposed to renouncing their sexuality or attempting to segregate these two identities. This is particularly pronounced in more rigid, conservative religious institutions, as Dehlin et al.'s (2015) study of the Latter-day Saints Church shows. Henrickson (2007) found that disaffiliation from Christianity was 2.37 times more likely than the rate of the public. Another example is that of Scheitle and Wolf (2017); the researchers found that lesbian women and gay men show twice the rate of disaffiliation from Christian traditions and specifically Protestantism, as opposed to gender-conforming and heterosexual individuals, while those who have children appeared to be more likely to disaffiliate and not reaffiliate with any religion. Equally, bisexual and gay men are found to be more likely to disaffiliate from sectarian Protestantism or other Christian traditions (Sherkat, 2016). Other studies showed that LGBTQIA+ Christians chose to disaffiliate from their religion or find a new way of maintaining their faith but not abiding by its traditions (Harris et al., 2020; Lefevor et al., 2020, 2022).

Vulakh et al. (2023) have recently suggested that 15.38% of LGBTQIA+ people considered sexuality or religious views on homosexuality as the cause to disaffiliate from their religion. Most participants in this study considered lost trust or belief in God to be the main outcome from the above and thus cause for disaffiliation. Not dissimilar to this study, Foster et al. (2011) had previously opined that homophobia and stigmatization were associated with churches' views and impacted the decision to disengage and disaffiliate. In fact, fears around homosexuality have been identified as one of the leading causes of religious disaffiliation among Orthodox Jewish sexual minorities (Avishai, 2020).

Research also shows that disaffiliation leads to positive outcomes of well-being and general improvement in terms of self-esteem. For instance, Bridges et al. (2020) reported that Mormons, who tend to disaffiliate by 53% of the

general LGBTQIA+ Mormon population, showed lower levels of internal homonegativity than those still affiliated. Another example is that of Dehlin et al. (2015), showing links with higher self-esteem, well-being, and lower levels of internalized homophobia.

Disengagement or deidentification from conservative religious traditions is a gradual process happening over time and may complicate “mental health and well-being because of its impact on meaning in life” (Lefevor, Skidmore, et al., 2023, p. 224). Religious disaffiliation comes with its own risks. For example, in a study on same-sex attracted Mormons, “those who left the church or were non-practicing reported lower family support” than those practicing Mormons (Joseph & Cranney, 2017, p. 1035). Other studies have similarly reported lost familial relationships when individuals disaffiliated with their religions (e.g., Hattie & Beagan, 2013). Depending on one’s race and geographic location—rural or urban—the extent of familial and other social networks may vary, which may also impact the decision to maintain or renounce one’s religious affiliation. According to Lefevor, Bouten, et al. (2023), sexual and gender minorities of racially marginalized groups, or those who live in rural regions instead of urban ones, are more inclined to maintain their religious affiliation. Moreover, an association was found between one’s formative years and subsequent religious disaffiliation. As an illustration, detrimental childhood experiences and bullying were more prevalent among SGMs who abandoned Christianity compared to SGMs who never were Christian (Lefevor, Bouten, et al., 2023).

### ***Religious reaffiliation***

Disaffiliation is the first step in a process of negotiating religious and LGBTQIA+ identities, as this is presented by the current body of knowledge in research. Those who choose to disaffiliate might do so on the proviso that they reaffiliate either with a different religion, and usually with traditions such as Judaism, Buddhism, and liberal nontraditional religions such as Unitarian Universalism (Hattie & Beagan, 2013; Scheitle & Wolf, 2017), or with their own faith but via a spiritual and more personalized lens. Research by Sherkat (2016) has shown that gay men and bisexual women are more likely to reaffiliate with non-Christian religious traditions and show lower rates of participation in religious practices.

Current research reporting religious reaffiliation tendencies largely frames this as a coping strategy; one which is employed by LGBTQIA+ who wish to remain affiliated with their original faith but disengage from its traditional views that contradict their gender, gender expression and/or sexuality. Many Christian LGBTQIA+ people, for instance, found a “reconciliated” church after years of exploring and serving in many churches without coming out (Harris et al., 2020, p. 467). Foster et al. (2011) opined that regardless of the initial disaffiliation, spirituality and religion remained important aspects of



LGBTQIA+ people's lives and found that 96% remained spiritual even when they disengaged from religious practices, especially gay men with an HIV+ diagnosis.

A different study (Avishai, 2020) that focused on Orthodox LGBT Jews in Israel found that the tensions between religious and LGBT identities cause the process of navigating and renegotiating faith and religious identities from a personal perspective and not following religious teachings. Further research opined similar outcomes (Block, 2023; Hattie & Beagan, 2013; Lauricella et al., 2017) and the expressed need to find new ways to stay connected to original religious communities (A. Dahl & Galliher, 2012a; A. L. Dahl & Galliher, 2012b).

Studies have also shown that reaffiliation among gay men and lesbian women can be attributed to higher levels of education and/or lower likelihood of having children (Scheitle & Wolf, 2017); this pattern is not shown for bisexual individuals. Others, like Dehlin et al. (2015), found that only a small percentage of LGBTQIA+ Christians (i.e., 4.4%) reported to have successfully navigated a healthy reaffiliation with their religion of origin, which included practices.

Goodrich and Luke (2019) and Lefevor et al. (2022) explored the benefits of counseling in this process of reaffiliation with one's original religious belief but under different criteria. These studies found that LGBTQIA+ individuals, with counseling, were able to renegotiate their identities and find clarity in a personal path to their faith, which led to a higher degree of cognitive flexibility and personal agency.

***Religious non-affiliation.*** Many LGBTQIA+ self-identified individuals, due to struggles within their religion and religious communities, chose to disaffiliate and chose to distance themselves from any religious belief or tradition completely. Scheitle and Wolf (2017) found that bisexual individuals, for example, are more likely to not affiliate with any tradition after they disengage with their faith or origin. Similarly, gay men and lesbian women are more likely to be unaffiliated (Scheitle & Wolf, 2017). That said, Woodell and Schwadel (2020) reported that there is a 71% likelihood for gay men and lesbian women to follow religious non-affiliation, an 80% likelihood for bisexual people, and 98% for younger people under the age of 25.

Research has also shown positive outcomes from the decision of religious non-affiliation. Specifically, LGB people who remained unaffiliated reported more support from family and partners than those with an affiliation (Henrickson, 2007). The same study showed higher rates of happiness among those with religious non-affiliation. Another example is that among those raised as Mormons who reported higher identity

acceptance and well-being once they were unaffiliated (Joseph & Cranney, 2017).

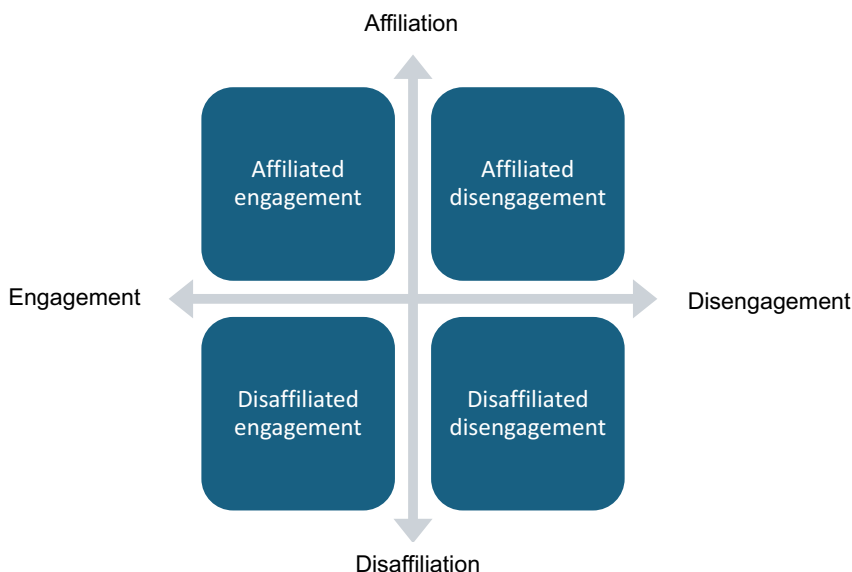
## Discussion

This review focused on exploring the relationship between religious and LGBTQIA+ identities in the lived experiences of those self-identifying as LGBTQIA+. Research highlights the complicated and tense experiences of LGBTQIA+ individuals who are also affiliated with particularly more conservative religions. This challenging relationship has been observed since the 1980s, and its need for exploration underlined with Schippert (1999). Schippert stretched the need to examine religious affiliation and belief through the lens of feminist and queer theories and particularly opined that such theoretical frames may help step away from the notion of religious as the moral option and LGBTQIA+ as its opposite. In other words, there is a need for what Judith Butler called a radical resignification of the symbolic domain (Butler, 2014).

The framework below (Figure 5) depicts the results of this review. The arrows represent how engagement/disengagement and affiliation/disaffiliation are not binary but exist on a continuum. Moreover, in practice, these two axes cannot be neatly separated. Their differentiation here, however, allows us to trace the complex and often strategic, positions that sexualized minorities take up in relation to religion and belief. Specifically, *affiliation* refers to an individual's formal membership and active participation in a religious community, and *disaffiliation* involves withdrawing from or disengaging from this community, leading either to reaffiliation or non-affiliation. Meanwhile, engagement pertains specifically to the internalization, the personal and public commitment to the doctrines and practices of a particular religion, and disengagement involves rejection or questioning of these doctrines and practices, even if formal affiliation remains.

### *Affiliated engagement*

Affiliated engagement indicates a minimal conflict of the identity of a sexually minoritised person, allowing nonabrasive integration into their religious faith. Given this scoping review explored “disaffiliation,” this was the least represented of the categories, but there are extensive examples in the literature of successful integration of sexual identity within the context of a religious community (e.g. Hugues & Rouse, 2023; Scroggs & McKnight, 2020).



**Figure 5.** Religious engagement and affiliation of LGBTQIA+ people.

### ***Affiliated disengagement***

Affiliated disengagement refers to individuals who, despite their formal affiliation with a religious faith, internally reject or question the religious doctrines and often disengage from active participation. This often occurs among younger individuals or those constrained by socio-economic factors, who find it challenging to formally disaffiliate. In the data, there were several instances of sexually minoritised people strategically maintaining affiliation with a religious group because of the social support and capital it afforded them (e.g. A. Dahl & Galliher, 2012a). It also ought to be stressed that the distinction between engagement and disengagement is often not straightforward. There were examples in which the first indication of an individual's disengagement from their faith paradoxically took the form of a redoubled effort to engage with church practices. This often seemed to be a cover for a nascent sense of non-belonging within the community. This outcome is reminiscent of Day's (2011) thesis of "believing in belonging." Day's thesis argues that the place of religious identity in the modern world is complicated and ever-changing, with millions of people in the Christian faith abiding by their affiliation but without knowing what this means. In other words, religious identity becomes a cultural trait, a set of practices that invite people to join different community groups rather than facilitate their personal faith and spiritual views. Similarly, the results from this review do show that often LGBTQIA+ individuals with a religious faith may disengage on the one

hand due to tensions mentioned earlier but remain affiliated for other reasons, such as community and family relations.

### ***Disaffiliated engagement***

Disaffiliated engagement encompasses those who have formally or informally withdrawn from their faith but retain a personal commitment to certain aspects of their former religious beliefs and practices. In the data, there were several instances in which individuals described their movement toward a more personalized belief system, which entailed retaining certain aspects of their former religion amenable to their identity (Avishai, 2020). Drawing on Davie's (1994) work, this is an instance of the thesis of "believing without belonging." In other words, not a changing role of faith and religion as debated for decades in the field of the sociology of religion, but a change in the personal meaning that faith has and the way people choose to engage with their religious identities, whether privately or publicly. Disaffiliated engagement accentuates this thesis but in the context of gender and sexually minoritised people, which research has not explored extensively yet.

### ***Disaffiliated disengagement***

Disaffiliated disengagement represents a complete distancing from religious affiliation and a rejection of its doctrines. However, it is unlikely for individuals to wholly separate themselves from their former religious perspectives. As numerous scholars have pointed out, religious upbringing, even if consciously separated from, still often provides the backdrop informing an individual's post-disaffiliation worldview. In other words, residual influences of former religious ideologies often persist, reflecting some degree of internalization. Dahl and Galliher's (2012a) study noted how, despite formally disaffiliating and rejecting the "theological" aspects of their religious past, gender and sexually minoritised people nonetheless continued to adhere to some of their religion's traditional values. Therefore, *disaffiliated disengagement* does not represent an endpoint but a part of a complex and dynamic process.

### ***Methodological critique***

The reviewed literature navigates the tensions between religious and LGBTQIA+ identities, as well as the choices of disaffiliation and reaffiliation or non-affiliation. Yet, it is limited to largely Christian religions, gay men, lesbian women, bisexuals and with a limited exploration among trans individuals. Samples in the current studies are not wide enough to include other identities that are classified under the umbrella term LGBTQIA+, yet

knowledge tends to generalize across all such identities of gender, gender expression and sexuality.

Albeit the limited diversification in the samples, their size and thoroughness of sampling techniques enrich research-informed knowledge, producing reliable results with many implications for research, policy and practice. The balanced research designs between qualitative, quantitative and mixed-methods studies equally offer a balanced result in our current knowledge in this area. Longitudinal studies enable the attribution of causality between variables as well, identifying the complex tendencies of the outcomes of the relationship between religion and LGBTQIA+ identities, as well as other intersected identities like race and age.

Qualitative and exploratory study designs support the development of an in-depth understanding of the personal journeys of LGBTQIA+ religious people and the impact that religious traditions and views associated with gender and sexuality conformity have. Such designs facilitate knowledge that can directly influence practice that is effective and sensitive to the needs of those involved.

### ***Implications for research and practice***

The results of this scoping review suggest that it is important to consider religious disaffiliation as a dynamic and evolving process rather than a fixed and linear outcome resulting from conflicts over religious teachings on non-heterosexuality and non-heteronormativity. The framework depicted in [Figure 5](#) may be valuable for examining how individuals within each of the four quadrants – *affiliated engaged*, *affiliated disengaged*, *disaffiliated engagement* and *disaffiliated disengagement* – actively pursue and sustain supportive connections following the separation from their religious faith and/or community. Those researching the relationship between gender and sexually minoritised groups and identity/intersectionality/social support would find this particularly useful. Further, it is noted in this review that disaffiliation from religion can result in either reaffiliation or non-affiliation. This pattern has mainly been observed in Christianity and Judaism, as evidenced by the existing research covered in this review. However, it is currently not known if similar effects extend to East Asian religions, such as Islam, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Hinduism. That research on religious disaffiliation within the context of these faiths has been conspicuously absent is provocative, suggesting that these unattended contexts merit investigation.

This study's practical implications are also significant and wide-ranging. The results from this review could benefit those working in mental health services, community support, and advocacy organizations. It might be valuable for mental health professionals to assess the presence/absence and severity of mental health effects in each of the four quadrants. They can then develop and offer bespoke counseling services to tackle the unique challenges engaged and disengaged, affiliated, and disaffiliated individuals face. Similarly,

community support and advocacy groups can utilize the results of our study to establish inclusive, supportive networks.

### **Limitations**

The findings of this review should be approached considering its limitations. First, 21 of the 29 studies included in this review originate from the US. This narrow context in which we find knowledge in this area raises questions about its transferability. When exploring the lived experiences of gender and sexually minoritised individuals and in relation to their religious faith, it is important to consider the context in which they have experienced their faith. Socio-political and historical aspects of the US regarding religion certainly affect people's lived experiences, and this would not be dissimilar in other contexts. It is thus a fair observation that the current body of knowledge represents more of the Western societies rather than the Global South, for example, adding to the concerns of colonized knowledge. Furthermore, the selection criteria of this review did not allow for the inclusion of studies other than in the English language, leaving out potentially important and impactful work.

### **Conclusions**

The literature on the tensions between religion and LGBTQIA+ identities highlights a complicated relationship of identities, with LGBTQIA+ individuals experiencing a challenging and often impactful situation through the prism of heteronormative and binary views on gender and sexuality. Such tense experiences lead to choices that may force one to disengage, disaffiliate or both from one's religious faith and/or community. The large samples and diversified methodologies in the reviewed studies strengthen its outcomes and implications. Future research is needed, though, to examine the non-linear process of disaffiliation, its causality and predictive factors.

### **Notes**

1. The term "sexually minoritised" groups is used to refer to individuals who self-identify with a sexuality that is systemically and socially disenfranchised. The term minoritised, as opposed to minority, is used because this refers to circumstances and socio-legal norms that minoritise the identity, rather than the identity being a minority by default, which the second term refers to
2. While the term "LGBTQIA+" encompasses both sexual and gender minority identities, this review specifically focuses on sexuality. This term will still be used occasionally given its prominence in the literature and wider discourse.

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