

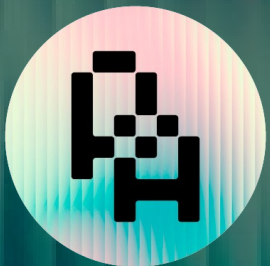
Evaluations of asylum claims based on sexual orientation: Psychological aspects

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Psychology at the Frontiers: Asylum Interviewing and Decision Making [Psych-AID]

About me



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4th year doctoral researcher in **legal psychology**, Åbo Akademi University



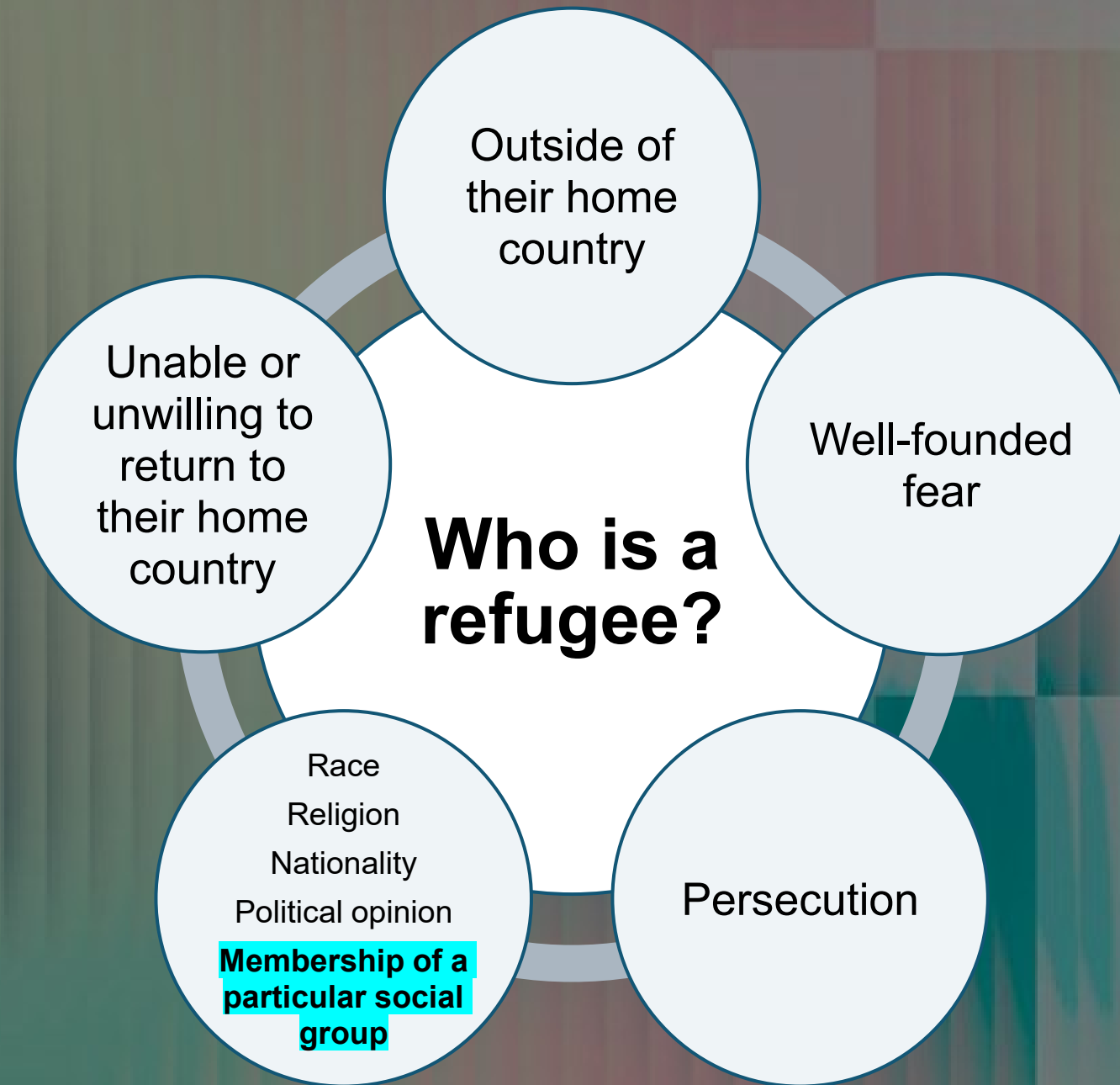
MA Human Rights, Columbia University in the City of New York
BA Sociology, American University in Cairo, Egypt



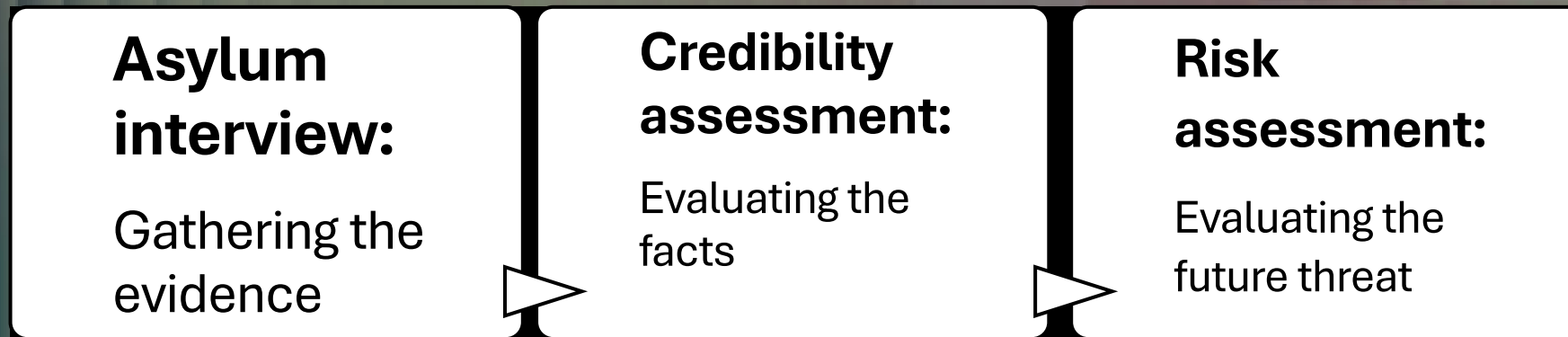
Since 2012: Represented asylum applicants, conducted refugee status determination, trained policy actors (UNHCR, International Labor Organization, NGOs in Egypt and Italy)



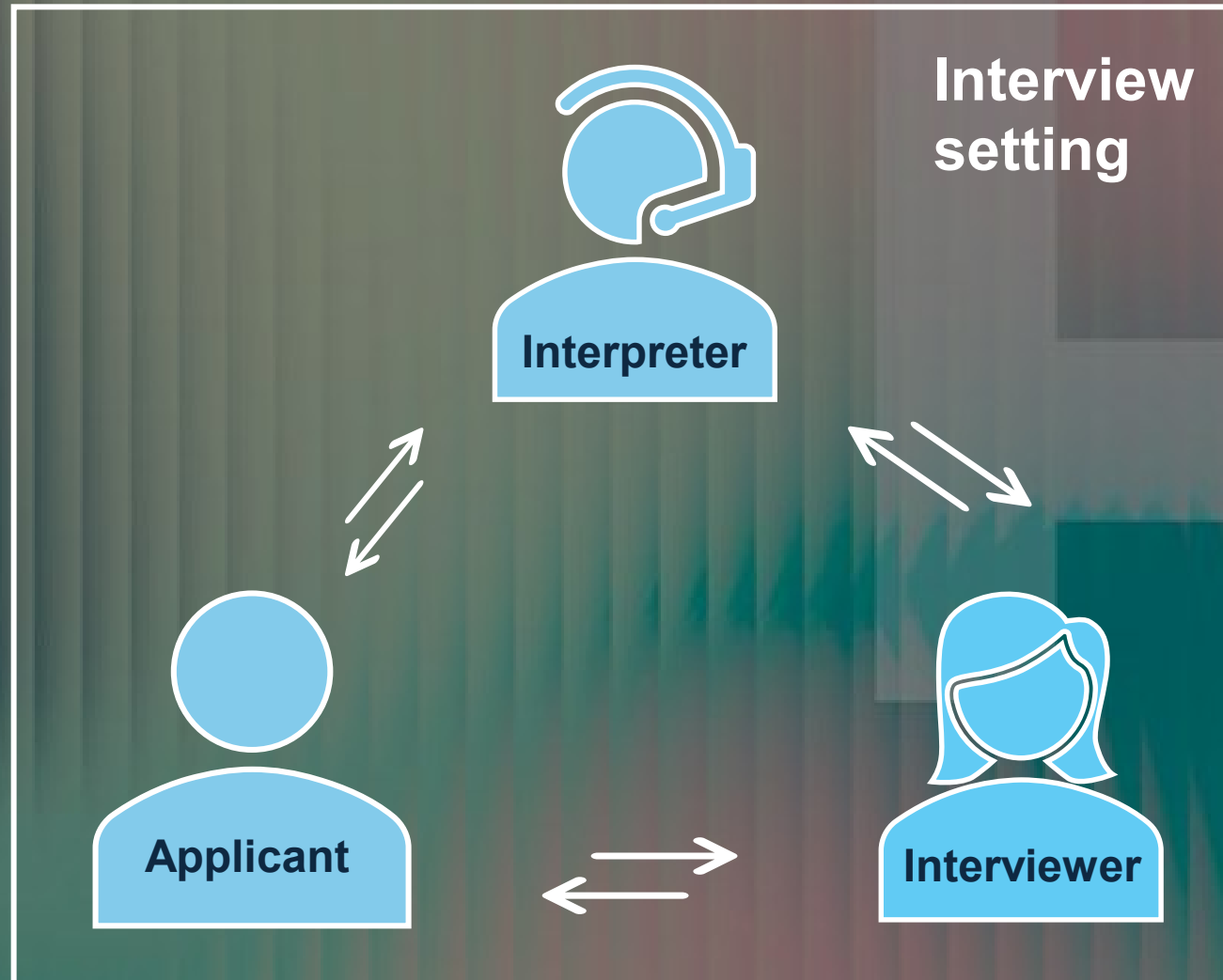
Psychology at the Frontiers: Asylum Interviewing and Decision Making [Psych-AID]



The asylum procedure in a nutshell



What does psychology have to do with it?



Research questions



How are asylum applicants with claims based on sexual orientation **interviewed**?



How is the **credibility** of claims based on sexual orientation **evaluated**?



How do asylum applicants **explain** their **delay in disclosing** their sexual orientation?

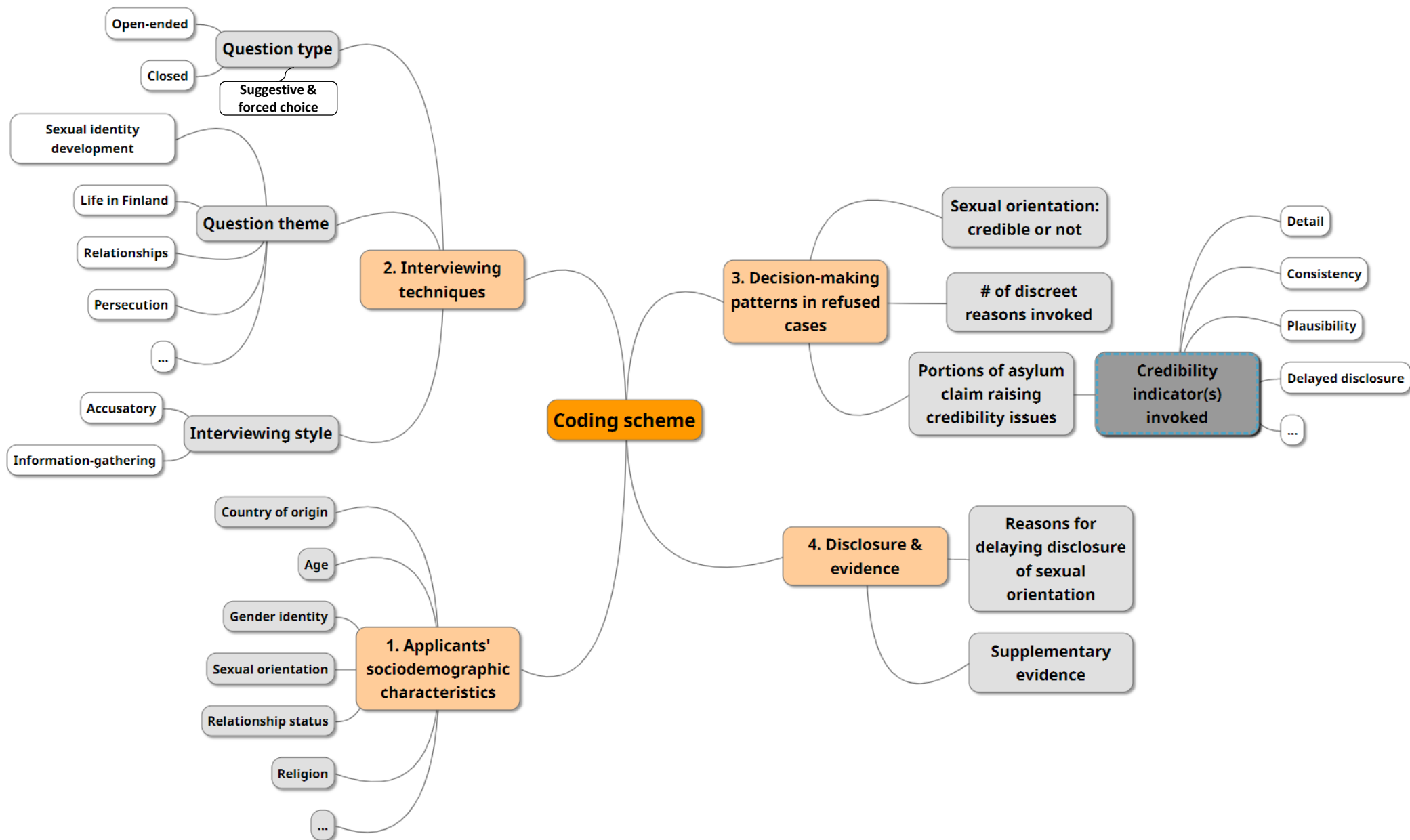
Data used for the research

(218 asylum cases based on sexual orientation)

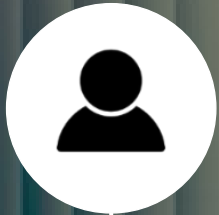


Asylum interview
transcripts
(129 interview
transcripts)

Written decision
justifications
(68 negative
decisions)



Applicants' sociodemographic characteristics



- **Men (n = 115)**
- Women (n = 8)
- Non-binary (n = 4)
- Not specified (n = 2)

26

Mean age
(Range: 16-55)



- **Iraq (n = 87)**
- Russia (n = 11)
- Cameroon (n = 6)



- **Gay (n = 85)**
- Bisexual (n = 14)
- No label used (n = 11)
- Perceived as non-heterosexual (n = 4)

Psychological assumptions about human sexuality

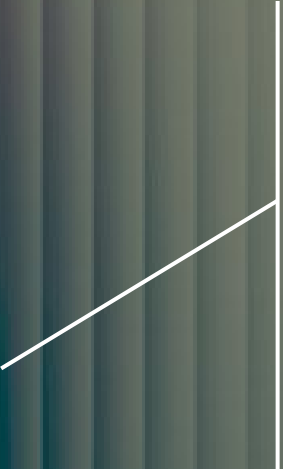
- Rejected applicants' claims generally not considered detailed, consistent, or plausible enough.

Expectations of
shame /
internalized
homophobia

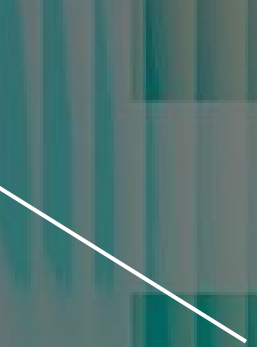
Sexual behavior
alone not convincing
enough

Sexual orientation
and religion believed
to be incompatible

Excerpts from case decisions



*“Although your own family background would be more liberal than a normal family from Iraq, the Finnish Immigration Service believes that, considering the generally conservative attitudes of the society of [country of origin], a person **could be reasonably required** to be able to describe more precisely **their own feelings or conflicts connected to their sexual orientation.**”*



*“You have also been asked how you experience the relationship between your religion and your sexuality. You have responded narrowly that **you do not see that as a problem**, because **although you are Muslim, you do not practice Islam.**”*

Interview style, question type, and question content (13,000+ questions across 222 interviews)



Generally followed
the **recommended**
information-
gathering style of
interviewing...
(91%)



...BUT **wh- and**
yes/no questions
predominant
(80%) and **very**
few were **open-**
ended (12%)



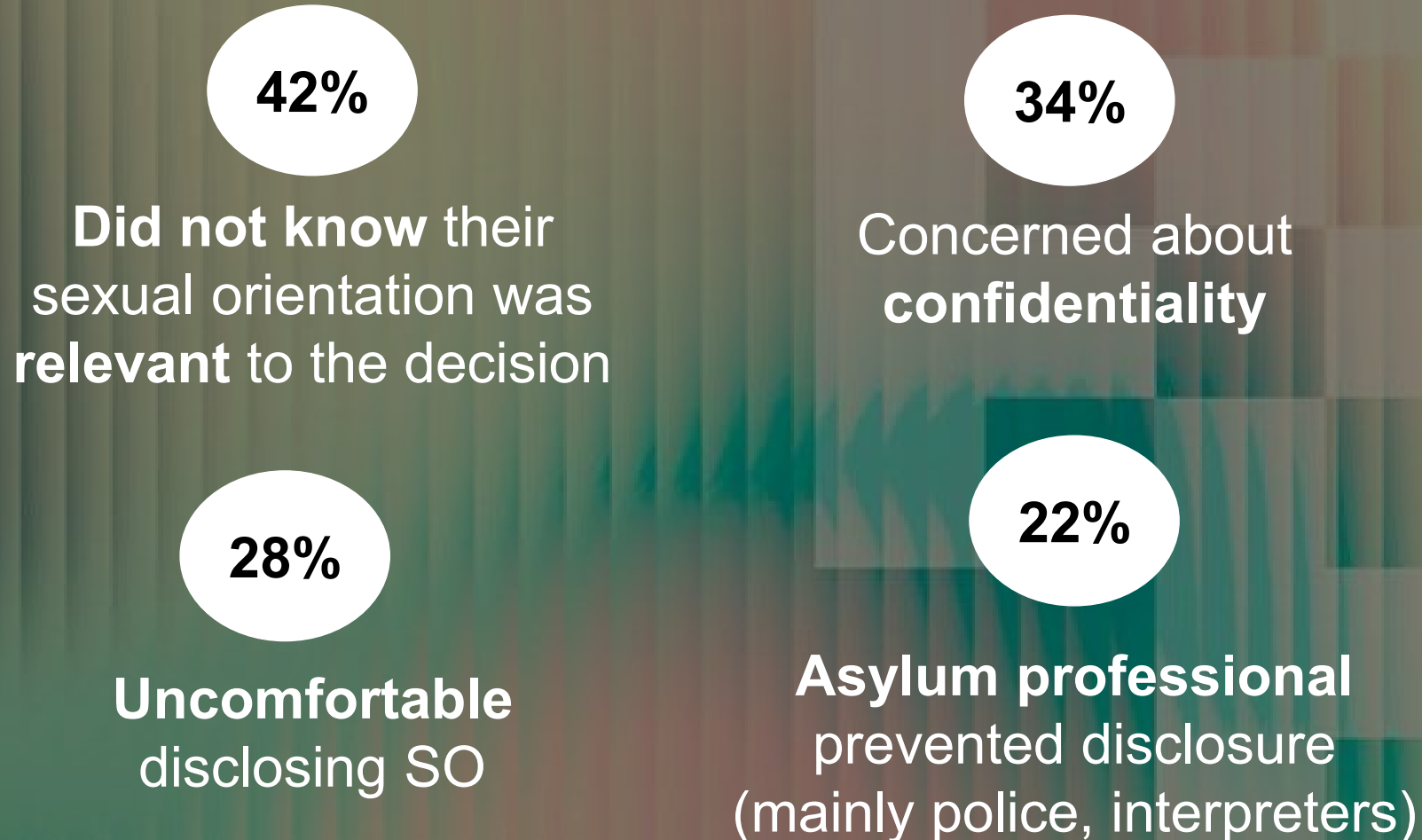
Questions
asked primarily
about
applicant's
identity / inner
psyche

Suggestive questions were rare, but problematic

"So at no point did you want to change yourself or try to be with girls?"

"Is there a feeling of shame or other negative feelings related to this?"

Applicants' reasons for delaying disclosure of sexual orientation (53 cases)



Key takeaways

1. Mismatch between question formulation and expectations surrounding narratives

- Closed questions vs. detailed narratives

2. Thematic focus of questions not reflective of applicants' experiences and priorities

- Focus on inner psyche/identity

3. Need for more consideration for applicants' barriers to disclosure

- More information about the eligibility criteria for asylum
- More clarity in establishing ground rules
- More focus on trust and rapport-building



A review of psycho-legal issues in credibility assessments of asylum claims based on religion

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Religious persecution is a leading supporting evidence, presenting a complex task for asylum-seekers. Asylum officials evaluating the credibility of asylum-seekers' status. We reviewed 21 original manuscripts on asylum claims based on religion. We focused on (a) the credibility assessments related to the presence of an interfaith conversion, and (b) their credibility assessments based on religious conversion related to the presence of an interfaith conversion. We reviewed 21 original manuscripts on asylum claims based on religion. We focused on (a) the credibility assessments related to the presence of an interfaith conversion, and (b) their credibility assessments based on religious conversion related to the presence of an interfaith conversion. We reviewed 21 original manuscripts on asylum claims based on religion. We focused on (a) the credibility assessments related to the presence of an interfaith conversion, and (b) their credibility assessments based on religious conversion related to the presence of an interfaith conversion.

Key words: asylum; asylum-seekers; religious persecution; faith; investigative interviewing; not

PSYCHOLOGY, CRIME & LAW
2023, VOL. 29, NO. 10, 1001–1030
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1068316X.2022.2044038>

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

REVIEW ARTICLE



Asylum claims based on sexual orientation: a review of psycho-legal issues in credibility assessments

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ABSTRACT

The number of people seeking asylum based on their sexual orientation is expected to continue increasing. Assessing the credibility of such claims to determine whether asylum-seekers meet the criteria for refugee status is a complex task for asylum officials. These assessments involve several psychological aspects, affecting applicants' disclosure and asylum officials' determinations. Here, we present a narrative literature review of 47 original manuscripts to analyze credibility assessments in asylum claims based on sexual orientation. We demonstrate that asylum officials often make assumptions regarding human sexuality, sexual identity formation and sexual behavior that are either partially or entirely unsupported by psychological research. These assumptions are problematic as they undermine the validity of the asylum process and put vulnerable individuals at risk of severe harm. The challenges are aggravated in the cross-cultural context of asylum determinations, where applicants from different countries may manifest their sexual orientation in ways that deviate from Western expectations. We discuss the implications of our review's findings for psychological research and asylum practice.

Received: 16 October 2023 | Accepted: 7 October 2024
DOI: 10.1111/jcpp.12278

ARTICLE

(In)credibly queer? Assessments of asylum claims based on sexual orientation

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Funding information: Stiftelsen för Åbo Akademi, Swedish Cultural Foundation, Grant/Award Number: 151173; Academy of Finland, Grant/Award Number: 335442 and 335634; Sundell Foundation

Abstract
This review article discusses the challenges of assessing asylum claims based on sexual orientation. It highlights the need for a more nuanced understanding of human sexuality and the importance of considering cultural and religious contexts. The article also discusses the implications of the findings for psychological research and asylum practice.

“How would you define your sexuality?” Analyzing the questions asked in official asylum interviews with sexual minorities

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Last edited

This manuscript is current preprint. The content is preliminary and subject to change.

Delayed disclosure of sexual orientation in the asylum procedure: Reasons reported by the applicants and consequences on the asylum decision

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Thank you for your attention!

Questions?



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