Social Policy and Queer Lives: Coming Out of the Closet?

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Abstract

Social Policy as an academic discipline has been at the forefront of many progressive movements in society, exploring problems of poverty, hardship, exclusion and suffering, government intervention, and the critical appraisal of those interventions. Yet it has been strangely silent on issues of sexual identity and gender identity and the inequities faced by the LGBTQ+ community. In this article we draw upon lesbian and gay studies, and queer studies, to, first, unpack how heteronormativity is reinforced in social policy in practice and in its analysis within Social Policy as a discipline. This illustrates how the family, as a core basis for welfare in societies, has meant that, reflexively, the base unit of analysis within Social Policy has been the heterosexual family, without a full interrogation of what this means for different groups. Second, we review the limited evidence available around the inequalities LGBTQ+ people face, primarily in the UK (and wider global North), highlighting how the years of oppression have made "counting" this group of people difficult within our usual survey instruments. Thus, while Social Policy has aimed to achieve a universal social citizenship for all, it has inadvertently remained silent on how to include LGBTQ+ in its analysis.

Introduction

Recent analysis for the Social Policy Association has brought to the fore concern with how the discipline has not integrated issues of race and ethnicity into research and teaching (Craig et al., 2019). Although not as wide ranging, this paper highlights a similar concern in relation to how the discipline has not broadly engaged with issues of sexuality and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) citizens' experiences of welfare provision. Gradual legal changes over the last two decades advancing the rights of LGBT+ people have encouraged some analysis, yet Social Policy remains strangely silent on issues of sexual identity and gender identity and the inequities faced by the LGBTQ+ community. A search in the journal archive shows only one article published on queer, LGBT or LGBTQ issues in the journal's history. Renewing the call by Carabine (1996) for sexuality to be incorporated into the discipline, this paper starts by drawing out a justification for investigating the interaction of LGBTQ+ populations with welfare provision in its broadest sense.

We start with a justification of why to focus on the lives of LGBTQ+ citizens before engaging with debate within Social Policy that challenges the assumption of a universal citizen identity. Drawing on feminist critique and debates around diversity of citizen lives we highlight the implicit heterosexuality (and cis-gendered assumptions) of Social Policy debates and narratives: how they serve to silence the lived experience of "queer citizens". We then discuss the challenges of knowing queer populations, but outline what we do know from the growing base of statistical information, about differences in welfare and well-being for LGBTQ+ people. Finally, with empirical data we briefly outline how the heterosexism of social policies negatively impacts on the lives of LGBTQ+ people through design, rather than explicit discrimination. Thus, we highlight how such a focus must become a mainstream focus for Social Policy research, particularly in progressive social and legislative contexts.

An initial justification of focusing on queer lives.

Research on policy, politics, and LGBTQ+ lives, rightly, focuses on legal changes removing the criminalisation of sexual behaviours, or gender roles, or the extension of legal rights (such as citizenship and marriage) to sexual and gender minorities. This fight for basic protection *from* the law continues in most countries today. However, in the Global North, and particularly northern Europe, legal and policy changes over the last few decades have aimed to achieve legal protection against discrimination on the grounds of sexual and gender identity. In the UK the Equalities Act 2006 established "sexual orientation" as a protected characteristic, making it illegal to discriminate against someone directly or indirectly on the grounds of:

- being heterosexual, gay, lesbian or bisexual
- someone believing you share a particular sexual orientation or identity (discrimination by perception)
- being connected to someone who has a particular sexual orientation (this is known as discrimination by association)

Similar protections exist for transgender people, offering protection against discrimination because your gender identity is different from that assigned at birth. This still maintains a gender binary, and basic rights for non-binary people are still forthcoming in most states (Monro, 2019).

Such legal framings make broad assumptions around sexual identity that have been challenged by queer activists and scholars. These legal definitions are based upon heterosexual framings of citizen sameness except, regarding LGBTQ+ people, who you have sex with or your gender identity. Within LGBTQ+ activism there have been similar framings along assimilationist lines.

Briefly, assimilationist approaches reframe LGBT lives into a heteronormative narrative to suggest that apart from attraction to people of the same sex, we are otherwise the same. Thus, policies such as equal marriage are seen to further the assimilation of LGBT people into the mainstream and obscure difference in the pursuit of equality. A more radical view challenges this approach, challenging the pursuit of integration and favouring the more disruptive queer-ing of societal norms. Furthermore, as commonly argued within the LGBTQ+ community, even umbrella acronym(s) fail to fully capture experiences and the types of discrimination and marginalisation individuals face (Formby, 2017).

Societal understanding of homosexuality emerged to construct it as "other". Homosexuality was constructed as a distinct identity and a medical defect from the 1870s, marking a difference from an historic focus on sexual acts, such as buggery, and a concern with maintaining male primogeniture (Foucault, 1990). The historic emergence of the label "homosexual" is linked to urbanization and industrial capitalism which enabled an individual to live independently via wage labour and no longer rely on the family unit (D'Emilio, 1992). Thus, homosexual desire could become a central aspect of identity in a way that was not previously possible. Yet whilst legal interventions tended to outlaw same-sex acts between men, this largely left female same-sex desire outside of legal interventions, so that female homosexuality 'took much longer than male homosexuality to constitute the basis of a communal, subcultural identity' (Jagose, 1996: 13) and later faced increased persecution in Western culture from the twentieth century, which Faderman (1985) argues was partly a backlash to the growing Feminist movement.

In any discussion of sexuality, we must distinguish between sexual behaviour and sexual identity: the former being ubiquitous, and the latter evolving under certain historic conditions (Jagose, 1996; Browne, 2010). The World Health Organisation adopts a framing of sexual orientation that incorporates physical, emotional and romantic attraction towards other people (WHO, 2021). This does not reflect broader queer scholarship that has sought to disrupt and complicate such simplistic definitions. Thus, we use the term sexual identity, to highlight how labels relating to non-normative sexual identities (homosexuality) are imbued with meaning within society and shape how those labelled view themselves and are viewed. Odets (2020: 20), in his psychoanalytical approach, discusses this difference through his concept of *gay sensibility,* relating to a gay man's internal experience and his characteristic external expression of self towards others.

Essentially (focusing on gay men) Odets is suggesting that homosexuality has been shaped by a heterosexual definition that primarily focuses upon a narrow, behavioural identity (sexual attraction and behaviour), which obscures a wider gay sensibility. Assimilationist approaches have integrated heterosexual

definitions of what it means to be gay, and therefore fail to recognise that sexuality is entwined within a fuller, complex, authentic life.

Queer theory reinforces such arguments. Jagose (1996) suggests that the historic emergence of homosexuality implies heterosexuality is somehow more natural and implicit within social life. Psychological accounts which labelled homosexuality as a medical defect, religious and legal framings which define the family within heterosexual terms placing other forms as illegitimate and inauthentic, dominated. But as Katz (1983) has argued the term heterosexuality emerges only because of the concept of homosexuality, yet heterosexuality is presented as neutral sexuality.

Such a presentation of heterosexuality as an unproblematic state which needs no explanation is termed heteronormativity (Jackson 2007). Heteronormativity flows through everyday social life: for example, until recent legal reforms uttering the words "I am married" implied you were "coming out" as heterosexual (the legal status was only available to this group), whereas declarations of homosexuality had to be more "gratuitous" (Kitzinger 2005). This naturalisation also obscures the varied relationships between people of the same sex which are not labelled homosexual; in the past and in contemporary experiences, such as men identifying as "mostly straight" (McCormack, 2018). As Carabine (2004) argues sexuality is not just who or what we desire, it is also what we do and how we practise our sexuality combined with cultural meaning. Labels used, and the lived experience that ensues, are mediated through cultural understandings that have naturalised heterosexuality and presented homosexuality as a deviation from the "norm" (Weeks, 1989).

Gender trouble

This naturalisation of heterosexuality in society also naturalises cisgender identities (cis): a term used since the 1990s to refer to someone whose gender identity aligns with that they were assigned at birth (Schilt and Westbrook, 2009). Cis relates specifically to gender and so someone could be cis and heterosexual (commonly shortened to cishet) or cis and homosexual. A societal driver for discrimination against homosexuals was often the way sexual behaviour upset gender norms in society: lesbians being sexually promiscuous; gay men being sexually passive. However, recent years of trans activism have led to a focus on the specific issues experienced by transgender people, and a similar shift away from viewing trans lives as a medical problem to a wider recognition of societal discrimination (Hines and Santos, 2018). In the UK context, this has focused on reform of the gender recognition process, to move away from a highly medicalised process where trans people must "prove" their transness, towards a self-declaration model. Aside from discrimination such as this, trans people also suffer from greater levels of violence and direct discrimination (Namaste, 1996; Colliver and Silvestri, 2022), and most states around the world

do not recognise the existence of non-binary people. As with gay men in the 1980s and 1990s, trans people have also become the focus of contemporary "culture wars", resulting in societal abjection and rising moral panics, putting them in an even more invidious position. While non-heterosexuals and transgender people have often faced similar discrimination in society, with comparable routes, and have often been strong allies in the fight against discrimination, it is important to acknowledge the differences in experience, and that many trans people identify as heterosexual.

Heteronormativity, cisnormativity and Social Policy

Weeks (1989) argued the Fabian tradition provided a problematic account of sexuality within Social Policy. Early engagement with eugenicist ideas promoted policies that produced the "right sort" of people and state intervention to ensure appropriate forms of motherhood and family. Sexuality is thus at the heart of social policy and a key part of state regulatory activity. The problem rests in the presumptive heterosexuality of all citizens. The relevance of this argument is renewed considering the recent critique of Social Policy and its lack of engagement in issues of race and ethnicity (Craig et al., 2019; Meer, 2020). As Meer (2020) argued in relation to race/ethnicity (echoing wider analysis by Williams, 1989, and others) the development of the welfare state adopted a universalistic view that did not consider that a citizen could be anything other than white, male, non-disabled and heterosexual. Consequently, there is a need to reposition Social Policy analysis to 'recognise and challenge entrenched conventions' (Meer, 2020:17) that protect certain categories of analysis.

As Richardson (2000) suggested Social Policy has developed relatively little theorizing about the relationship between sexuality and social policy. It is our position that the discipline has failed to appreciate a deeper, richness of experience of non-heterosexuals and non-cisgender people, and thus failed to use the insights to be gained from their lives to critically explore the role of the state, welfare and social policy in shaping cishet citizenship, that is *cishet-izenship*. In Marshallian terms, we must focus on social cishet-izenship.

We draw out the term social cishet-izenship following work that has challenged the concept of universalism (Lister, 1997; Williams, 1989, 1992). Lister (1998) argued for a gendered analysis of a differentiated universalism to value those excluded from the "false universalism" of social policy. In relation to sexual identity Concannon (2008) and Yılmaz and Göçmen (2016) specifically examine LGBTQ+ citizenship in social policy debates. Concannon highlights intersections between LGBTQ+ citizenship and social exclusion literature to suggest a need for a new model for social policy that engages and responds to the needs and choices of LGBTQ+ individuals and communities. Yet many policy changes (equal marriage rights, the Equality Act 2010 and the rise in prominence of trans debates) have superseded much of this analysis. More

broadly Plummer (2001) has sought to rethink citizenship to place intimacy and personal lives into an analysis of citizenship and the recognition of rights, responsibilities and care this implies.

Yılmaz and Göçmen (2016) highlight a range of discrimination experienced by LGBTQ+ people across employment, housing and health to suggest a lack of recognition of LGBTQ+ people in the Turkish context, which resonates with experience in the UK. They suggest the need for a radical shift to reverse heterosexism embedded in citizenship and social policy, based on:

1. Anti-discrimination legislation
2. Public regulation of policy domains
3. A challenge to false universalism (Lister, 1998).

Whilst in the UK points 1 and 2 are evident, our contention is that point three does not go far enough as a critique as it fails to challenge dominant "cishet" assumptions in the framing of social issues, citizenship, and policy solutions. We require a means of articulating the challenges of homonormative ideologies and formulating alternatives, beyond assimilationist narratives: for which we suggest the term social cishet-izenship.

Social cishet-izenship

Like Smith and Lee (2015: 56), in their account of political science, there is a need for Social Policy 'to uncover and critique how particular moral orders become normalized, necessitated and thus positioned as being beyond ethical scrutiny'. Who is constituted as human and who is then included is fundamentally shaped by narratives around citizenship. Such discourse within welfare provision has links with deep-seated notions of nation-building and subsequently the citizen (Williams, 1989). The welfare state is integral to processes of creating a *cishet-izenship* and obscures LGBTQ+ identities as a civil and political rights debate. As universalistic tendencies require, we accept all humans share fundamental basic needs to be satisfied by welfare systems.

Marshall's Whiggish narrative regarding the formation of citizen rights and the later formulation of these rights into provisions in the post-war welfare settlement was widely critiqued. This totalising archetype has been criticised for not recognising difference from gendered critiques of the concept of citizenship (Lister, 1997). Subsequently, the concept of need adopts these assumptions, problematising the delivery of welfare to diverse populations. Whilst definitions of need are open to academic debate (Dean, 2020), the underpinning assumptions regarding the cishet-izen will often taint these articulations of need.

Examining this "taint" we can review the significance of sexuality alongside the concept of need. Richardson (2000) demonstrates the importance of

sexuality in such analysis, perhaps best termed in relation to felt and expressed needs (Bradshaw, 2013). Richardson highlights how women, through an *expression* of their needs attached to their sexuality, gained access to education and health services which can protect against unwanted pregnancies. The campaign efforts to recognise this sexual need therefore moved from a felt need (something that is a perceived fundamental to welfare, but not articulated) to an expressed need (a need that has been articulated for satisfaction). Similarly, for LGBTQ+ people such analysis can indicate a range of needs: freedom from discrimination and inclusive services. Inclusion of sexuality is not simply about same-sex activity, it is about opposition to wider social exclusion based on identity. This is about fundamental rights to social recognition and self-expression. This is something which welfare policies have historically played a role in suppressing: the lack of legal partnership rights limiting access to shared housing and pension provision; the pernicious section 28 prohibiting the "teaching" of sexuality and preventing many LGBTQ+ teachers from "coming out", or schools tackling homophobic bullying. For trans people this can refer to the ability to live in their gender without fear of violence, stigma and exclusion, which may be facilitated in a range of welfare domains.

It is not that needs are necessarily extremely diverse and different for LGBTQ+ people *per se*. Rather that to secure participation in society, via physical health and autonomy (drawing on Doyal and Gough, 1991) there is a need to recognise variation and diversity in how some needs are articulated and satisfied. However, the establishment of cishet-izenship creates stigmatising barriers which have hindered and denied the existence of the varied rights of LGBTQ+ citizens which fundamentally eroded their ability to develop as autonomous citizens.

The formation of this denied sense of citizenship rests in the origins of fundamental concepts that have shaped the development of welfare provision. Nation-building and welfare state development are closely intertwined (Williams, 1989). Processes of nation-building draw upon the idea of an *imagined community* (Finlayson, 2008). Such communities develop a symbolic articulation of identity within a geographic territory, but these communities are imagined because they are social constructs. They are attempts to provide a unifying feeling to many people who will never speak or interact but will have a shared sense of national identity. As Canavan (1996) notes, these *ersatz* communities arise to meet the needs of modern society.

The sense of commonality informing how people are brought together within the imagined community points to how social justice can be articulated. Norms of social cohesion are generated creating a sense of superior and inferior groups; Lewis (2002), for example, illustrates this in relation to the British Empire as a distinction between those "at home" and those "in the colonies". Homogeneity is quintessential to this as illustrated in Williams' (1989) classic

text – notions of nation, and the family, become central organising principles of the welfare state. These same factors normalised heterosexuality as a set of legally sanctioned practices structuring everyday life. Heterosexuality has become embedded through practices such as marriage, and associated welfare supports to legally sanctioned relationships, influencing education provision and even healthcare (such as earlier prohibitions for same-sex partners to have family rights in hospitals).

A key part of this has been the public/private division of society. In the UK, the Wolfenden Report of 1957 eventually led to the de-criminalization of sex between two men in private, where the display of homosexuality was construed as not able to offend public decency. This criminalized public demonstration of homosexuality (any form of affection, friendship, or desire) whilst reaffirming the legality of many heterosexual demonstrations in those same public spaces. This divide was made explicit in the continued prosecution of gay men in the UK for the offence of "importuning for immoral purposes" until the 1990s (Tatchell, 2017). This not only informs the norms within the imagined community that are deemed acceptable but also indicates that certain groups do not have a right to public space.

Such historic expectations on LGBTQ+ people have important continued ramifications for welfare provision. As Carabine (2004) illustrated LGBTQ+ people have often been reluctant to disclose their sexuality to welfare professionals and to "pass" as heterosexual (and let welfare professionals assume heterosexuality). Data from the 2018 UK Government LGBT survey (GEO, 2018) illustrated a persistent pattern as 46% of cisgender respondents had not disclosed their sexuality to a healthcare professional in the 12 months preceding the survey (many felt it was not relevant). For bisexual respondents, this figure was higher (67%) than gay/lesbian respondents (36%). Where sexual orientation was disclosed 75% stated it had no effect, 17% that is had a positive effect and 8% a negative effect. For trans respondents 38% reported a negative experience based on their gender identity. Within other welfare domains, such as schooling, research highlights extensive bullying of LGBTQ+ people (Robinson et al., 2013), although within a context of a broader decline in homophobia (McCormack, 2012). This shows how the reluctance of the welfare state, and society, to recognise and accept LGBTQ+ citizens continues to restrict public expressions of identity preventing a full expression of citizenship rights (Bell and Binnie, 2000).

The development of the LGBT Action Plan by the UK Government in July 2018 was applauded as the first comprehensive, cross-departmental plan specifically addressing LGBTQ+ inequality. Yet as Lawrence and Taylor (2020) demonstrate, the discourse of the plan contains phrasing, and silences, perpetuating heteronormative ideology. From the positioning of normative partnering as the foundation for LGBTQ+ relationships to "we" or "us" language that continues

to present LGBTQ+ people as "the other", cishet-izenship is implicitly reinforced. The Action Plan appears to accept LGB lives when presented within a socially conservative and neo-liberal framework whilst offering opaque support for trans* and gender-non-confirming citizens. Acceptance and recognition of queer lives remains, at best, marginal.

To conclude, rights form part of wider, collective social and cultural expressions which are essential to human wellbeing. The integration of *cishet-izenship* into welfare discourses has fundamentally denied LGBTQ+ citizens the ability to express identity free from stigma and victimisation. Following Richardson (2000:122), there is a need to go beyond tolerance of diverse lives within set boundaries and pursue an active cultivation of sexual diversity to allow *all* citizens 'access to the cultural, social and economic conditions that will enable previously marginalised and stigmatized identities to develop and flourish as a legitimate and equal part of the "cultural landscape"'. The welfare state tolerates, it does not cultivate, for its practices remain implicitly framed in heteronormative terms. The challenge to inclusion within Social Policy is the little we know about LGBTQ+ lives.

What little do we know?

One of the key challenges in understanding LGBTQ+ lives is our comparative lack of understanding of welfare needs. As queer scholars have long recognised, when one's very existence is criminalised by the state, one is not forthcoming with information about one's life. The removal of direct discriminatory laws against LGBTQ+ people has led to a growth in what we know – questions about sexual identity have been asked in routine surveys in the UK since 2006 (McManus 2003). As such survey tools are rolled-out globally, they consistently show that around 3-4% of the population identify as non-heterosexual; however, persistently, "prefer not to answer" is the largest sexual minority. Such survey tools are not without controversy; a long-term criticism from activists is that they force queer subjects into categories imposed by heterosexual society (Browne, 2010). However, a consensus has emerged that to be counted is to count, and that the experiences of queer people can only be fully understood if they are included in surveys (Browne, 2010). As questions on sexual and gender identity have been rolled-out they have become subject to transphobic and homophobic lobbying by those who wish LGBTQ+ people to *not* be counted (Guyan, 2021).

We now do know more about the lives and welfare of LGB people, particularly in the UK. We know that gays and lesbians are likely to have higher educational qualifications than heterosexuals; we know that lesbians earn relatively more than heterosexual women; we know that gay men do not seem to have an earnings impact due to their sexual identity; we know that bisexuals have

markedly poorer wellbeing than other groups; we know that lesbians and gays are more likely to be single and less likely to have children; we know that in Scotland they are less likely to own their own home, and more likely to live in a deprived neighbourhood (Matthews and Besemer, 2015; Uhrig, 2015; Aksoy et al., 2018; Bridges and Mann, 2019; Mann, Blackaby *et al.,* 2019). This suggests a complex picture of intersectional disadvantage *and* possible advantage experienced by non-heterosexuals that social and welfare policies interact with. However, the complexity of such data requires further investigation; for example, while lesbians might be higher-earning, they also suffer more from anxiety at work (McDermott, 2006).

This is different from the picture of relentless negativity reported by activist organisations (McCormack, 2020). Such narratives are the result of the methodological questions discussed – in lieu of official data on queer people, researchers access a self-selecting population through LGBTQ+ support organisations or through online surveys (Cimpian, 2017). While we can recognise the relative advantage for *some* LGB people, in *some* areas of lives, and relative complexity, we cannot ignore the enduring discrimination faced by LGBTQ+ people. In particular, the experience of minority stress – expressed in the reported unwillingness of same-sex couples to hold hands in public, and the policing of gendered presentations (GEO, 2018) - highlights this and is no doubt linked to lower levels of wellbeing and life satisfaction, and higher rates of mental health problems and drug and alcohol misuse for LGBTQ+ people (Mann et al., 2019). Thus, it is alarming that the contraction of the UK state since 2010 has reduced funding for many organisations that support LGBTQ+ people and overstretched gender-identity clinics (Colgan et al., 2014; Matthews, 2020).

Constructing cishet-izenship at the street-level

While we can now recognise that non-LGBTQ+ people may have specific welfare needs not fully met by heteronormative social policy, we must also recognise the way administration, processes and regulations of policy recreate heteronormativity and/or cisnormativity. A good example of this is English homelessness policy. England, and the wider UK, has robust legislation to tackle homelessness – if families and households are experiencing unintentional homelessness, then their local housing authority (usually the local council) has a duty to permanently house them. However, in England such a duty is only due to households in "priority need". Priority need is denied to single-person households unless specific conditions are met. This indirectly discriminates against LGBT+ people as they are more likely to be single. Academic and activist research has also shown how "priority need" is extensively used as a bureaucratic barrier to prevent LGBT+ people who have been thrown out of their homes due to their identity accessing safe and secure housing (Bateman, 2015; Tunåker, 2017). Housing

officers sometimes encourage LGBT+ young people who are at risk of violence from their families to return to the family home to avoid having to discharge their duties to house them under the law (Tunåker, 2017).

Feminist research on homelessness has shown how the presumption that homeless people are predominantly young, single men, or families facing specific circumstances, has problematically framed policy responses to focus on these groups, to the neglect of the diversity of women's experiences (Watson and Austerberry, 1986). This fails to appreciate how heteronormativity constructs domesticity for women, and how an experience of homelessness for women can be a greater collapse of identity (McCarthy, 2018). We would argue that our queer-ying of the cishet-itizenship of homelessness policy can further these insights, revealing the importance of "logical" or "chosen" families for many queer people (and increasingly for many non-queer people facing housing precarity and unaffordability – Valentine et al., 2003; Maupin, 2017).

Such a turn in Social Policy scholarship can also reveal how queer lives are made invisible through the recognition processes of the state (Browne, 2010; Matthews and Poyner, 2020; Guyan, 2021). It can productively allow us to answer simple questions like: how do we know if a welfare system adequately protects LGBTQ+ citizens if we are not regularly recording this data on service users; how can we protect LGBTQ+ service users, such as tenants of social housing, from discrimination if we do not know they exist (Matthews and Poyner 2020)?

Conclusion – difference and universalism

Focusing on social policy and rights, and not basic legal rights, our argument is that through key concepts and implementation, Social Policy has quarantined LGBT+ lives into the private sphere, as something we do not want to know about. This facilitates the regulation of behaviours and expectations and creates barriers to the self-expression that is fundamental to citizenship. One's ability to articulate needs is severely curtailed if it involves processes of "outing". Recognising non-heterosexual/non-cisgender needs at the macro level does not automatically prevent discrimination at the street-level. The promotion of assimilationist narratives of queer lives overlooks how rights are expressed in terms of difference. Like Lister (1997) and Young (2000), therefore, we are making a call for recognition of difference within concepts of citizenships – which usually rests uneasily with Social Policy discourse of universal rights and protections. Furthermore, the integrationist/radical split is not as simple as often presented. When queer lives are brought into heteronormative/cisnormative institutions (like marriage) then these institutions become queered by the presence of queer people. This underpins our broader argument that a queer

focus to Social Policy scholarship could then further queer the heteronormative/cisnormative institutions of social policy.

Contemporary history illustrates the key role of social movements in challenging normative assumptions of citizenship and forcing a recognition of diversity (Annetts *et al.,* 2009). Campaign groups continue to challenge legal, political and social discrimination that has marginalised LGBTQ+ people, and promote reforms to secure equal treatment and acceptance. A continued tension, dating back to the emergence of the Mattachine Society in the US in the 1950s, is whether such activism should be against heteronormative society, or seek to assimilate non-heterosexual/non-cisgender lives into heterosexual/cis-gender society on heterosexual and cis terms: homonormativity. Such debates *within* LGBTQ+ communities themselves highlight the limitations of totalizing concepts of citizenship that promote sameness for the sake of universality and act as a justification for a common collectivism. We agree with Lister (1997) that there is a question as to whether a concept of citizenship can be reformulated to recognise difference, to include rather than append queer people. This recognises the wider intersectional turn in Social Policy, which challenges the formulation of universalism that has been fundamental to the provision of welfare (Williams, 1992, 2016). Thus, this paper offers a framework for Social Policy scholarship to take forward this approach and challenge the *cishet-izen* framing of policy debates and analysis.

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The authors declare none

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