

Choose a group in society and consider how they have had to engage with the 'politics of recognition' in order to seek greater equity in the last 50 years

Politics of recognition aspires towards appreciating individuals, experiences, groups, identities, expertise, humanity, upholding citizenship rights and status while giving people respect and dignity (Lister, 2004; Fraser, 2000). Taylor (1994) highlights that individuals in groups and society are formed by a need for recognition. These groups in society often include those that have been marginalized or oppressed. It is Taylor who emphasises that recognition is more than a courtesy, but 'a vital human need' (1994, p. 26). In this assignment a critical engagement will be made on the group in society described as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual and Queer (LGBTQ). This will cover their struggles through the past 50 years in order to gain greater equity in society. This will include a thorough discussion of the legislation relating to the past half-century. However, the starting point of this discussion will in fact be 1967 as a crucial piece of legislation was passed. Criticism shall be presented as to whether the past 50 years has produced enough recognition for the LGBTQ assemblage, or if there is a further need for acknowledgement of this marginalised group.

The Sexual Offences Act (1967) was approved, decriminalising sexual relations between two men, including in private, over the age of 21. Interestingly, this did not cover those who worked within the armed forces (Legislation.gov.uk, 1967). It is hard to distinguish the practice of this act within the military due to the year of the act. Research shows that homosexuals would be convicted or even discharged from the army (Evans, 2019; Shilts, 1993). Honneth (1995), a German philosopher believes that the principle of achievement can highlight the recognition for citizens knowledge in their employment (Martineau, Meer and Thompson, 2012). In this respect, how were the homosexual citizens of that time able to gain achievement in the armed forces with the oppression they faced compared to homosexual citizens in other careers. Homosexuals were forced to hide their sexual orientation due to fears of dismissal and stigmatized judgements (Dean-Sinclair, 2009; Meyer, 2003; Lewis, 1997). Meyer (1995) classifies prejudice, self-perceived stigma and internalised homophobia to be three main components linked to minority stress.

It was not until nearly thirty years later that the UK Government lifted the ban on Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual citizens from serving in the armed forces (BBC News, 2017). A lack of recognition for lesbianism in the 1967 act was displayed due to women not being acknowledged although, when the ban was removed, they were then recognised. However, lesbians were incorporated within The Nullity of Marriage Act (1971) which explicitly banned marriages between same sex couples in Wales and England (Api.parliament.uk, 1971). Thus, showing the sheer lack of equal recognition for LGBTQ compared to straight citizens at this period in time.

Within the same year Kenneth Smith's (1971), research suggests that a personality profile could be used to describe the psychological hatred towards homosexuality. Psychologist Weinberg (1973), who coined the term 'homophobia' also uses this method within his own research and publishing's. It was merely a year after Weinberg's book was published when the American Psychiatric Association (APA) chose to eliminate homosexuality being listed under mental health disorders (Macionis and Plummer, 2005). Using this labelling, the term homophobia developed into a significant tool for lesbian and gay advocates, activists and their associates (Herek, 2004; Meyer, 2003; Freedman, 2000). Other negative attitudes towards the LGBTQ group were given targeted yet precise names. These include lesbophobia- the connection of sexism and homophobia aimed at lesbians, biphobia- directed at bisexual people and bisexuality. Transphobia is directly aimed at transsexual, transgender, gender variance or gender role nonconformity citizens (Spijkerboer, 2013; Schuiling and Likis, 2011; Adams et al., 2007).

It was in the 1980's that another issue surfaced in the long and arduous journey of being accepted as an integral and accepted part of society as a member of a LGBTQ group. This involves the fact that black homosexuality only became recognised at this time, with the formation of the first black lesbian and gay group. The group requested funding from the Greater London Council to create a centre for providing counselling, a helpline, other resources and advice. Five years later the centre opened to all homosexuals and lesbians from the funding that was provided (The British Library, 2019).

Phinney (1996), a professor of psychology and creator of a model of ethnic identity argues that racial identity may be more important for black citizens compared to white. This is due to the racial prejudice and specific discrimination that black citizens have historically encountered (Fields et al., 2016; Erikson, 1968,1964).

Matters of race along with homophobic issues link with one another when the AIDS outbreak first struck. Researchers claim that prejudice against LGBTQ groups is morally wrong and affects every class of citizen. Furthermore, Blumenfield argues that due to anti-gay bias, young people participate in sexual activities earlier than intended to somehow prove to others that they are heterosexual or 'straight'. Blumenfield also stated:

Anti-gay bias contributed significantly to the spread of the AIDS epidemic. Anti-gay bias prevents the ability of schools to create effective honest sexual education programs that would save children's lives and prevent STDs (sexually transmitted diseases).

(Blumenfeld,2001)

In 1983 a blood bank policy came out to prevent men who have intercourse with other men (MSM) from giving blood. Researchers suggest that it is a natural misconception that all MSM are the same high risk. As for the conception of non-MSM are correspondingly of a lower risk (Arora, 2017; Kesby & Sothern, 2014). Nearly 28 years later, The Department of Health removes the lifetime ban on MSM donating blood although, they still had a 12-month celibacy clause in place (nhs.uk, 2011). Until a further six years down the line the Department of Health reduced the 12-month celibacy ban to 3-months. The reduction in the celibacy clause has arguably reduced the stigmas held against gay men (Sturrock and Mucklow, 2018).

The justifications and advantages of the exclusion/deferral for MSM blood donors has been questioned by LGBTQ advocacy organizations. Due to technological advances in blood screenings through using Nucleic Acid Testing (NAT) methods, MSM exclusions are arguably outdated (Leiss, Tyshenko and Krewski, 2008; Hurley, 2009). The NAT testing methods improve the tests sensitivity by enabling a higher discovery rate of contaminated blood. It also reduces the window period in which contamination detection is possible all accounting for

contaminates such as HIV the virus which causes AIDS, Hepatitis B or C and Transfusion Transmitted Infections (TTI) (Fda.gov, 2019; Busch et al., 2005). Women were not taken into consideration on this account whether they were heterosexual or lesbian.

Throughout the last 50 years it is the impact of one piece of legislation that caused the galvanisation of all the different groups representing the LGBTQ. This Act will now be discussed in detail as its formation and eventual repeal was a major step forward for the recognition of LGBTQ. Section 28 under the Local Government Act 1988 was introduced by the former UK Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher (Sanders and Spraggs, 1989). This instructed that local governments:

Shall not intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality or promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship.

(Smith, 1994; Kollman and Waites, 2014)

On May 24th 1988, Section 28 became an official regulation. An intensive uproar within the lesbian community arose. The previous night to May 24th numerous protests were implemented by lesbian women. This included a few lesbian women gaining access into the public gallery at the House of Commons during the voting of the Section 28 bill. Two of those women threw themselves over the balcony using handmade ropes made of knots in washing line and abseiled into the voting chamber of the house. An interview with one of the women almost 30 years later stated that, if the decision was to repeal Section 28, they would have sat there peacefully. As the decision and vote of the outcome was the opposite, the protest began (Clews, 2019; Godfrey, 2019; Joannou, 2017).

An equally as famous protest on the same day as the parliament invasion was the lesbian women who invaded the BBC's Six O' Clock News. They handcuffed themselves to any bits of equipment they could get to. One woman cuffed herself to News reporter Sue Lawley's desk. The other news presenter Nicholas Witchell sat on her while she shouted, 'Stop Section 28'. Although the actual footage of the live news report did not show the protesters, it still

demonstrated to the nation that homosexuals were not afraid to fight back and spread the message through media (Godfrey, 2019; BBCNews, 2018; Joannou, 2017; PinkNews, 2009).

The bill had more political responses, with actor Sir Ian McKellen standing up for gay rights by 'coming out' as gay on live national radio. The interviewer asked McKellen (1998) if he would 'like to see Section 28 disappear altogether' where McKellen responded, 'Yes. I think it's offensive to anyone who is, like myself, homosexual'. This went on to inspire other celebrities to be open about their sexual orientations. McKellen became a founding member of Stonewall UK, which was officially launched exactly a year from the day that Section 28 was voted into law. Stonewall volunteers set up a press release, announcing the establishment of the Stonewall group to the LGBT press (Stonewall, 2017). It was created as a charity as well as a company however, not all the homosexual community approved. McKellen (1998) stated that, such a small demographic of 'middle-class' Londoner's does not represent every homosexual citizen. The politics grew more disruptive as political parties had inner turmoil stemming from section 28.

In 1999 William Hague leader of the conservative party, through public eyes questionably, discharged frontbencher Shaun Woodward. As Woodward refused to support the party's views that Section 28 should not be abolished (Hayton, 2010; News.bbc.co.uk, 1999). This prompted Steve Norris, a pro-gay rights conservative to express his opinion against Section 28 publicly. The inner party turbulence continued when in 2000 the famous homosexual conservative Ivan Massow, defected to the opposing Labour Party, due to the continuation of support for Section 28 through the conservatives. This arguably demonstrated the political parties being torn apart from within (Gimson, 2015; Sylvester, 2002; News.bbc.co.uk, 2000).

Not only was the Conservative party in favour of Section 28, it gained support from religious groups such as the African and Caribbean Evangelical Association, the Christian Institute, groups inside the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church, the Muslim Council of Britain and the Christian Action Research and Education. The press also had its supporters, newspapers such as The Telegraph and The Daily Mail editorialized against revoking the

Section. Supporters of Section 28 used the argument that the law safeguarded young people from ‘predatory homosexuals’ and those who tried to ‘indoctrinate’ vulnerable children into homosexuality (Prono, 2004; Rahman, 2004; Stacey, Franklin and Lury, 1991). On this speculation, Bronfenbrenner (1979), identifies that influences on individuals can be more extensive than the immediate environment that they reside in.

However, there were evident groups that opposed the Section such as, Stonewall and other homosexual rights advocates, the Gay Times, the Pink Paper and OutRage! Politically, the Liberal Democrats, Labour Party and Green Party also object, along with certain individuals such as previously mentioned, Sir Ian McKellen, Ivan Massow and many more outstanding figures (The Labour Party, 2018; Greenparty.org.uk, 2015). Certain religious leaders and groups also disapproved of the Section including Richard Harris, Bishop of Oxford (Harries, 2006). The opposing newspapers included The Independent, The Daily Mirror and The Guardian. Opponents of Section 28 argued that it was an unjust law that discriminated against homosexuals and endangered vulnerable children (Featherstone, 2019; PinkNews, 2018; Outrage.org.uk, 1990).

It is worth noting that in 2000 Stonewall also raised a campaign in order to decrease the age of consent for same sex relations between men from 18 to 16 (YoungStonewall, 2015). As a vote was cast six years prior in the UK House of Commons to reduce the age from 21 to 16 but was defeated and was only lowered to 18 (Dillner, 1994). Women’s same sex relations ages were not set or considered throughout this process. However, Stonewall’s campaign was a success and one year later the changes were made to the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 2000, to reduce the age of consent to 16 and group sex between men had also become decriminalised (Legislation.gov.uk, 2000).

The first attempt of a legislation repeal for Section 28 transpired on 7th February 2000 through the Labour Government under the Local Government Act 2000 (Legislation.gov.uk, 2000). This was subjugated by Baroness Young’s House of Lords campaign (Chitty, 2002). The repeal was re-introduced on 24th July 2000 however, it was again overcome in the House of Lords.

The Labour Government conceded legislation to revoke Section 28 under the Local Government Act (2003) through a vote of MP's. The repeal was accepted through the Lords and established Royal Assent on 18th September 2003, it came into effect exactly two months later (Legislation.gov.uk, 2003). However, three years after the law was repealed, Chairman Francis Maude of the Conservative Party admitted to Pinknews.co.uk that he regrets voting for the policy, it was a mistake and morally wrong (Cohen, 2010).

After Section 28 had become dismissed, this allowed other more equitable Acts to come into enforcement. The Civil Partnership Act (2004) was passed permitting same-sex couples the equal responsibilities and rights as married heterosexual couples in Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland. In the same year the Gender Recognition Act (2004) was passed allowing transsexual citizens complete legal recognition to their appropriate gender. The act permits transsexuals to obtain a new birth certificate, even though the options for gender are still regulated to 'Female' or 'Male' (Legislation.gov.uk, 2004). Knudsen (2006) states that intersectionality shows how different cultural and social categories intertwine. The importance of numerous stigmatised identities being socially accepted, can help lessen adverse effects on the health and wellbeing of LGBTQ citizens (And.digital, 2017; Mule et al., 2009; Megathlin, 2007).

The creation of inclusive policies is imperative for all the citizens within the demographic. Currently transgender citizens face many challenges ranging from confusion on how to dress to suit their identity, to controversy over which public bathrooms/ changing rooms they can utilise, including constant daily discrimination (Transgender-Trend, 2019). Stonewalls 2018 Trans Report States, '41% (2 in 5 transsexual people) and 31% (3 in 10 non-binary people) have faced an incident or hate crime due to their gender within the last year' (Bachmann, 2018). Transgender citizens experience many inequalities whether it's from society, uneducated medical/educational staff, friends, family and within the workplace. Many are experiencing some form of issue, especially through the transition process, and face difficulties in obtaining support and understanding (Meyer, 2007; Whittle, Turner and Al-Alami, 2007). Many transgender people become rejected from their families, become homeless and subjective to

poverty (Divan et al., 2016; Quintana, 2009). Domestic life can be a struggle whether its personally or the desire to start a family within the LGBTQ group.

In 2005 the Adoption and Children Act (2002) was established, permitting unmarried and same-sex couples to apply for joint adoption (Legislation.gov.uk, 2002). Bigner and Bozett (1989) in research have discovered that there is no validating evidence 'of any kind' that young people living with homosexual parents encounter insignificant negative outcomes (Averett, Nalavany and Ryan, 2009). This created a gateway for a form of normality for same-sex couples to enjoy starting a family like non-homosexual couples.

The Equality Act (2010) covered many under the umbrella of the LGBTQ group and became updated to add gender reassignment as a 'protected characteristic'. It also states that citizens with disabilities are a protected characteristic (Legislation.gov.uk, 2010). This Law can help protect people under those demographics however, there is not much light shed upon those who are LGBTQ with disabilities combined. This is considering over one-third of adults who are LGBTQ categorise as having a disability, whether this is visible or non-visible (Ascher, 2018).

Discussions of same sex parenting is apparent, but legalities around same gender marriage are only just becoming recognised. The Marriage (same sex couples) Act 2013 was passed in England and Wales then one year later it officially came into force (Legislation.gov.uk, 2013). With the first same-sex marriage officially able to take place from 29th March 2014 (GOV.UK, 2013). Sexual diversity was judged by the minority in the last 50 years however, negative issues are still present to this day. The fight for equal rights and less discrimination is an ongoing battle. Legislations may be in place to help protect certain 'characteristics' or sexual orientations currently, but this does not mean everyone will abide by it. Although, today homosexuality is more accepted by society the begging question is, are more people becoming accepting of LGBTQ groups or is the flamboyant empowerment of the group disguising the difficulties they still face in society today?

From the past to the present day, in many cases, the elderly demographic who fit the category of LGBTQ, are hiding their sexuality from society. This is due to the fear of being scrutinised from those who share an anti-gay mindset; which drawing from past examples, was indoctrinated into culture, for instance Section 28 (Hafford-Letchfield et al., 2017; Somerville, 2015; Simpson et al., 2016; Toksvig, 2016). Arguably, Section 28 being dismissive on regard to equity did have some benefits, as it encouraged celebrity homosexual citizens to be open about their sexuality (The Independent, 2000). This in turn inspired many followers to feel empowered. It was a catalyst that brought all the different groups of homosexuality together and to fight as one- the LGBTQ (Lgbthistorymonth.org.uk, 2014).

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