The line dividing citizens and those excluded from its promise was long shaped by the public/private dichotomy, consigning women to the private, while reserving citizenship’s sphere of the public domain for men. Feminist theorists, in criticizing this dichotomy, have examined the relationships between citizenship, dependency, and reproduction. While those considered sexually deviant have suffered exclusions from citizenship, gay and lesbian subjects in some sites currently enjoy a role as model citizens. This shift has accompanied a transition in the role of the citizen from producer of work to consumer: the privatized, self-governing, and sexually free individual is today’s prototypical citizen. This new sexual citizen is contrasted with illiberal others, who are cast outside as unfit candidates for citizenship. Queer citizenship does not provide a more encompassing vision; citizenship is not available to be queered, given how it inevitably splits the world into those who belong and those left outside.

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Introduction

Citizenship is ‘Janus-faced,’ simultaneously projecting the warm embrace of inclusion while excluding those who are outside the borders of belonging. Janus, the Roman god of doors and gates, was portrayed as having two faces, gazing in opposite directions. Citizenship is similarly split. One face of citizenship welcomes ‘we the people’ within the circle of membership; the other face refuses admission to those outside.

That citizenship is phrased in a language of universalism helps mask its dual nature. Iris Marion Young observed that citizenship is said to express ‘a general will, a point of view and interest that citizens have in common which transcends their differences.’ Yet at the same time, it imposes ‘a demand for homogeneity among citizens.’ As citizenship evolved in tandem with the Western nation-state, it incorporated a presumptively masculine and heteronormative subject. Women and sexually non-normative subjects were considered unfit candidates for full membership.

Citizenship’s ambit has recently expanded, in recognizing some women and sexual minorities as full citizens, granting them the equality or autonomy they had been historically denied. But this remains an incomplete project, and citizenship may not be capable of infinite extension. As citizenship stretches to incorporate new bodies, it excludes fresh targets of unbelonging.

Feminist, sexual, and queer approaches to citizenship have foregrounded human questions of dependency, reproduction, and sexuality that had been long neglected in citizenship discourse. As explained by feminist theorists, such issues historically had been invisible to citizenship discourse because of the dichotomy between public and private, which split the human universe into gendered bodily spheres. Yet recent attention to relationships of care work, reproduction, and sexual intimacy has raised anew complicated questions about the bifurcation of the personal and the political. At the same time, other themes are emerging in the field. How do ever-intensifying market consumption and shifting categories of sexual freedom re-shape a perception of the citizen self? The self-governing, privatized, and sexually free individual arguably has become the prototypical citizen against which others are found wanting. These are racialized and illiberal others, whose purported lack of sexual freedom relegates them to the wrong side of history, and to the outside of citizenship.
Gendered Histories

A brief history shows how gender shaped specific exclusions from citizenship. Incorporating women as political subjects forces a revision of the famous trajectory of citizenship rights articulated by T.H. Marshall. Marshall asserted that in Western liberal democracies over the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries, respectively, civil rights of property and protection, political rights of participation, and finally and incompletely, social rights were secured. But this narrative did not hold true for women. Into the late nineteenth century, women in countries such as Britain and the United States were not considered independent legal subjects, and thus could not control property or make contracts. At the same time, the campaign to recognize equality between men and women was an intersectional story. As one example, the first Married Women’s Property Act passed in the United States, enacted in Mississippi in 1839, aimed primarily to secure the ownership rights of women slaveholders over black persons who were enslaved. We see here how a step toward full citizenship for some women relied upon the denial of personhood of others.

The doctrine of coverture, shaping property relations between man and wife, also ensured that a woman’s body was not her own; marital rape and domestic violence did not begin to be criminalized until the twentieth century. Both remain unrecognized as criminal acts in several nation-states today. Women lacked the right to control their own bodies through abortion or contraception, a right which continues to be challenged and so controversial that in 2016 then candidate for U.S. president Donald Trump stated that women who sought abortions should be punished. Women’s access to political citizenship began to be guaranteed only at the end of the nineteenth century; the right to vote was only granted nationally in the United States in 1920 and the United Kingdom in 1928, and women were not awarded the right to vote throughout Switzerland until 1990. When suffrage activist Virginia Minor argued in 1874 that her citizenship in the American Republic mandated that she be granted voting rights, the Supreme Court ruled that her citizenship was merely a thin construction, correlating with no assurance of political rights: citizenship for women actually meant only ‘membership of a nation and nothing more.’

Yet women were also denied access to this ‘membership of a nation,’ by which the court meant the formal legal status of citizenship. Citizenship differentiates the citizen from the alien and thus refers not only to civil, political, and social rights; it also concerns membership within the community of the nation-state. Due to the doctrine of dependent citizenship, which placed the husband in the embodied position of the nation-state, married women suffered expatriation when marrying non-citizens. Until World War I, the nationality laws of virtually all countries made a married woman’s nationality contingent upon that of her husband. While this provided an expedited path to citizenship for immigrant women who married citizens, U.S. citizen women who married noncitizens lost their citizenship from 1907 well into the 1930s. Legislation enacted in
1922 secured independent citizenship for white women who married white noncitizen men, but explicitly divested citizenship from women who either were racially ineligible to become U.S. citizens or who married men who were similarly ineligible. Women still do not have an equal right to pass their citizenship to their children in twenty-seven countries, a disability which can leave their children vulnerable to statelessness. The idea that citizenship as a form of property can be thus restricted in its transfer was challenged famously in the 1992 Unity Dow case, which found that a law allowing only a father or an unmarried mother to pass citizenship to his or her children born in Botswana was unconstitutional on the ground of sex discrimination. Which persons have been recognizable as citizens, and what attendant rights they can enjoy, has been highly gendered since the foundation of the very notion of nation-state citizenship.

Even when nationality laws are not explicitly gendered, the ‘dirty work’ of citizenship is carried out by immigration law’s restrictions in shaping access to the political community. Immigration admission has never been open to undesirable subjects. Those who are allowed entry primarily provide valuable human capital or permit family reunification; historically women were admitted only as dependents with a migration status tied to that of their male relatives. In U.S. immigration law, for example, the right to family unity only belonged to the male head of the household, until 1952.

What underlay these exclusions was an unquestioned public/private dichotomy, one that consigned women to the private or domestic sphere, reserving citizenship’s sphere of the public domain for men. This was a division not only of the appropriate realms for gendered action but of putatively immutable characteristics (dependency, sentiment, and passivity, versus autonomy, rationality, and self-possession) thought integral to each realm.

The gendered boundary between ‘public’ and ‘private’ spheres correlated with two different kinds of claims to social resources, one based on market labor, and the other based upon family ties. (This gendered public/private dichotomy thus links to another public/private dichotomy: that between the state and the market, both arenas dominated by men.) In the ‘male’ sphere contractual relations of exchange flourished. Such relations existed between individuals who were presupposed to be free and independent and in control of their objects of exchange. This ‘possessive individualism’ correlated with the idea of self-ownership. Coverture, argue Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon, like slavery, rationalized subjection of those who could not claim their labor power as their own, separating the universe into those who were free citizens, and those who were not.

Judith Shklar famously identified the essential role played by the right to earn, along with voting, as the foundation of American citizenship, as both a matter of dignity and public respect: ‘A good citizen is an earner, because independence is the indelibly necessary quality of genuine, democratic citizenship.’ Thus, eligibility for paid work outside the home was an explicit criterion for citizenship. Rel egated exterior to citizenship were the degraded and enslaved, as well as the citizen’s dependents, whose field of action was
Feminist, Sexual, and Queer Citizenship

confined to the domestic sphere of the intimate family. In that sphere, resources were to flow through blood and sentiment, unlinked to any public circuit of exchange. Single mothers who faced difficulty providing such care and who became the recipients of ‘mother’s pensions’ in the United States, so that the state stepped in for the absent male wage, were ‘pitied but not entitled.’¹⁸ Care work was perceived to be a product of ‘charity,’ rather than of ‘contract.’¹⁹ Otherwise articulated, the public sphere was characterized as the realm of rights and the pursuit of self-interest, while the private was perceived as the realm of needs, bonds, and selflessness of family.²⁰

Reproducing the State

This short history elucidates why women faced obstacles to equal pay in the employment context, and why care work has rarely been perceived as a performance of citizenship. But how, precisely, ought caregiving be understood as a practice of citizenship? And what is the relationship between citizenship and reproduction?

Some scholars argue that care work should be acknowledged as an expression of the responsibilities of social citizenship and should be accorded equal value with paid work obligations.²¹ This can lead to an argument in favor of wages for housework, or for the state’s responsibility for dependency care to be considered a right no less significant than civil or political rights.²² Unpaid domestic work functions as the precondition for the illusion of unencumbered participation of male citizens in the public. Yet this domestic labor is necessary for the social reproduction of the citizenry.

Care work is overwhelmingly performed by women. This care work is both provided within families, and in the form of ‘global care chains,’ which are staffed by women who are hired for the purpose of providing domestic labor.²³ Such women are then unable to provide the same level of care for their own families.²⁴ Women who work on the global care chain are often immigrants, who lack formal citizenship status in the polity where they labor to care for others. Because many have argued that women need to be fully integrated into the labor market in order to achieve equal citizenship, Linda Bosniak asks whether women who hire domestic workers enjoy citizenship at the expense of the citizenship of their household workers, and whether this can be considered a kind of transfer of citizenship. She says not, as the different forms of citizenship at issue makes them nontransferable.²⁵

At the same time, we might note that the global care chain illustrates how actual citizenship is not infinitely expandable. Rather, one group claiming citizenship does so through either explicit or implicit distinction from others who cannot. Inclusion in the waged workforce enabling the full citizenship of first world women empowers them to assert their role as ‘good citizens’ through paid labor in what earlier had been the male sphere, thereby demonstrating their self-possession and market independence. Yet the
freedom to engage in such waged work often rests upon the noncitizenship status of their domestic workers, who labor within the domestic sphere of the intimate family, but for a family that is not their own.

But could care work, no matter who accomplishes it, actually be considered an exercise of citizenship, despite the fact that it takes place in the domestic sphere? Is a distinction to be recognized between a woman campaigning for men to share in care work versus a woman negotiating how to divide care work at home with her partner? Perceiving a divergence between public campaigning versus private negotiating, Ruth Lister once argued that ‘in the case of the former, we are acting as citizens, in the case of the latter, which is nevertheless significant for citizenship, we are not.’ Parsing out the difference, she suggests that ‘the terrain of political citizenship action is the public sphere [yet] it cannot be divorced from what happens in the private, which shapes its contours and which can be the proper object of citizenship struggles.’ In other words, care work provides a resource for political citizenship but should not be considered a form of citizenship activity itself.

Other scholars have asserted, however, that the boundary between the social and political becomes less clear when one centers the experiences of women of color in building one’s theory. Caregiving by women of color can teach their children to resist dominant messages about the identities of racialized ethnic groups and thus has been described as a ‘political act of citizenship.’ One might also consider the critical role of the intimate realm in the consolidation of colonial power, as well as the importance of domestic life in shaping resistance to such power. More recently, Lister has written that in certain circumstances caring can ‘represent political citizenship,’ and that perhaps what is most relevant is ‘what a person does and with what public consequences’ rather than where they do it, meaning whether the care work transpires in the ‘public’ or ‘private.’

This debate begs a question: can the public and private be divorced in this way? Their continued dichotomization suggests a habit of thought which assumes that the modern state is not already enmeshed in the supposedly ‘non-political’ realm of the family. Can the personal be apolitical? Surely not; the modern state regulates even the most ‘private’ realms of the family, the body, and sexuality through forms of surveillance, self-discipline, and social welfare. From a Foucauldian perspective, a public/private distinction that appears to exempt the personal from the disciplinary gaze is illusory: citizenship ‘always lays hold of bodies, ensuring their domestication and normalization.’ As Engin Isin has suggested, perhaps citizenship is ‘social before it is civil or political.’ Because governing the social is a significant object of governing the state, activities such as reproducing, consuming, sexual habits, and one’s choice of dress become objects of government, and therefore sites of contestation.

Yet the prototypical citizen of liberal theory is an abstract being, and disembodied from such social activities. The question of embodiment, especially of the female body, has largely escaped citizenship theory. Men are recognized as having bodies, but it is denied that they are bodies. Put differently, their identities are not subsumed by their bodies;
rather, their bodies are controlled by their minds. The male disassociation from the body casts concerns of the flesh—desire, sex, and reproduction, along with care—into the realm of the female and outside the purview of the public citizen. Making politics ‘fleshy’—centering a ‘shared fleshy sociality’ and a focus on bodies in political theorizing—challenges this construction. Attending to the body would remind us that reproductive self-determination must be understood as central to women’s citizenship, although it remains a distant goal in much of the world. Power over one’s own reproduction is a basic civil right to one’s person.

But the relationship between citizenship and reproduction spans additional dimensions beyond autonomy over one’s person. Women have been the reproducers of citizenship. They mother, both in the sense of their capacity to give birth to future citizens, and as those whose duty it is to care for and inculcate the virtues of the future citizenry. (Men only ‘father’ offspring—or nations, responsible only for the original moment of conception.) Women’s bodies, and not men’s, are located as the symbolic center and boundary marker of the nation. As their bodies represent the nation’s purity and honor, women are subjected to reproductive and other forms of control; their bodies become sites of conflict about national cultural identity. Women whose reproductive capacities are valued are greeted by pro-natalist policies; women whose reproduction is not desired have suffered sterilization, forced abortion, and immigration exclusion. In those jurisdictions which follow jus soli, or birthright citizenship through right of soil, fear is routinely expressed about undesirable women ‘dropping babies’ on the territory in order to anchor citizenship; this has led to calls in the United States and elsewhere to abolish the guarantee of jus soli.

There is a procreative norm which structures social organization, in the sense of good (and not bad) citizens encouraged to have children. This is visible in Oliver Wendell Holmes’ declaration of Progressive Era eugenics on behalf of the Supreme Court: ‘Three generations of imbeciles are enough,’ in upholding the sterilization of Carrie Buck. Echoes of such logics can be heard in recently struck down Swedish and Danish laws requiring transgendered persons to be sterilized before beginning their gender reassignment. The procreative norm is also apparent in the construction of the good citizen as properly child producing. Political societies project a reproductive futurism wherein the child embodies the citizen as an ideal, as the telos of the social order. This vision of the child extends to the fetus as the ultimate citizen, whose claim to fetal citizenship trumps the citizenship of the pregnant woman, who ‘becomes the child to the fetus, becoming more minor and less politically represented.’ The importance of fetal citizenship is evident in the U.S. case of Purvi Patel, who was sentenced in 2015 in the state of Indiana to twenty years for allegedly aborting her own pregnancy.

Extending even further back in the chronology of fetal development, we now see what has been coined as ‘embryo citizenship.’ This concept shaped highly restrictive legislation concerning assisted reproduction in Italy in 2004 in the name of protecting the future interests of the ‘yet to come’ over the present interests of the female citizen.
The law both restricted how many eggs could be fertilized during an in vitro fertilization treatment to three, and forbade embryos from being frozen or destroyed, all in the name of the rights of the ‘conceived being.’

Assisted reproductive technologies both provide the possibility of delinking reproduction from the conventional family, as well as the reassertion of essentialist notions about genetic relations and racial descent. Access to such technologies is shaped by the market. The global care chain staffed by women caring for the children of others is now paralleled by the global reproductive chain, staffed by women who carry the embryos of others, as surrogates. This is now a transnational market which relies upon the lesser market power of poorer countries, as wealthy families scour the globe to ‘rent a womb,’ paying women perhaps one tenth what a commercial surrogate would cost in the richest countries.

The citizenship of children produced by a global reproductive chain can raise challenging questions. As one example, for the transmission of U.S. citizenship, a child born overseas who is conceived through assisted reproductive technologies must prove that a U.S. citizen was either the sperm donor or egg donor. Failure to prove this genetic link via DNA testing can result in statelessness.

How the relationship between citizenship and reproduction structures social and political orders also deserves attention. Though conventional wisdom posits kinship rules concerning race, ethnicity, and gender as ‘natural’ and as predating the rules that govern political societies, it is political societies that actually determine the kinship rules—relying on natality and ancestry—that are then used to reproduce these societies. Jus soli and jus sanguinis (citizenship through blood descent,) which both privilege the moment of birth, are obviously bio-genetic models of producing citizens. Yet Siobhan Somerville argues, looking at the United States, that the concept of naturalization is, perhaps surprisingly, also encumbered with assumptions about a heterosexual reproductive subject, thus reinforcing the model of an organic, sexually reproduced citizenry. She writes that this is metaphorically true: to naturalize is ‘to introduce [a plant or animal] to a place where it is not indigenous, but in which it may survive and reproduce as if it were native.’ We can also consider this true as a matter of governmental practice. Family-sponsored immigration, whereby relatives seek family reunification and which was in the U.S. heterosexually policed until 2013, is in that country the primary avenue through which lawful permanent residence, a precondition for naturalization, is produced.

Yet naturalization is also the mode of citizenship acquisition that best correlates to liberal theory’s vision of the autonomous, disembodied, and self-controlled individual, who has the capacity of free choice. This figure is most clearly exemplified by the immigrant who desires to incorporate himself or herself with a new nation-state. Naturalization, rather than forms of citizenship acquisition which rely upon bodily reproduction thus seem to produce citizenry in a mode that best correlates with the self-possessed, rational actor of liberal theory, in contrast to the ‘fleshy’ product of reproduction.
We could make two observations here. One would be to question Peter Schuck and Rogers Smith’s perplexing stand against ‘citizenship without consent,’ which proposes to end the guarantee of 14th Amendment birthright citizenship in the United States. They argue for changing the mode of citizenship acquisition from ‘ascription’ based upon the accident of birth on U.S. territory to birthright citizenship only for those whose parents are either U.S. citizens or legal permanent residents. But they do not identify naturalization as an optimal mode for citizenship transmission, even while it would seem to well align with the idea of contract or consent.54

The second observation would be to note the connection of naturalization with the desiring and desirable immigrant, a connection that both obscures nonconsensual bases of state formation such as conquest, colonization, and enslavement and serves to symbolize a repeated agreeing to of the social contract.55 We thus see the importance of the naturalization ceremony, a ritualized public performance of citizenship through consent. The idea of a political community performed through consent projects a vision of the society to come produced as an ethical community, an idealized futurity particularly inherent to settler colonial regimes.56 The ideal citizen, capable of autonomy, imagined free of bodily concerns, can thus magically reproduce a state without the sedimentation of flesh or history.
Sexing Citizenship

What of sexual activity absent reproduction? Could such practice be understood as an enactment of citizenship? Citizenship can be understood as a matter of rights; citizenship can also be understood as an active practice. When the ideal citizen is imagined to act, engaged in practices of citizenship, the citizen is assumed to subordinate individual interests to those of the common good. Acts of citizenship, which constitute a participatory democracy through acts of civic virtue, might include ‘voting, volunteering, organizing a book group, or attending a PTA meeting.’

Will Kymlicka and Wayne Norman describe the vision of civic republicans thus: ‘political life is superior to the merely private pleasures …’ Certainly, sexual activity, unless appropriately channeled in a procreative direction, would not be foregrounded as an act of citizenship by civic republicans or many other advocates of participatory citizenship. In fact, the concept of ‘sexual citizenship’ has been ‘dismissed as an oxymoron.’

But it is precisely the intersection between the terms sexual and citizenship that deserves scrutiny. First coined by David Evans in 1993, to refer to how the intertwining of market and state allowed sexual minorities only a partial and privatized citizenship in the realms of leisure and lifestyle, ‘sexual citizenship’ has taken on multiple meanings.

Some take the term to suggest that questions of intimacy are a necessary addition to Marshall’s trio of civil, political, and social rights. This has been alternatively couched as intimate citizenship or affective citizenship. The former refers to ‘private practices, moralities, identities and right claims pertaining to issues of the body, sexuality, relations, reproduction and family,’ while the latter ‘draws on the economy of feelings of belonging that tie the citizenship subject to multiple communities, including the nation-state.’

Others have used the term sexual citizenship to characterize non-normative sexual subjects whose aspirations to inclusion have been thwarted, such that ‘[h]eterosexuality comprised a thick border of citizenship.’ Centering the sexually non-normative might thus require adding new claims, perhaps sexual rights, to the array of citizenship rights, or it could mean identifying sexual minorities as a group denied access to civil, political, and social rights.

How precisely to capture the relationship of these subjects to the state? Terms such as partial citizens, semi-citizens, second-class citizens, anticitizens, and strangers have been proffered. Each of these terms articulates a different relationship to citizenship, varying as to whether the person is positioned outside of citizenship, and if so, how.

Writing in 1998, Diane Richardson asserted that the appropriate descriptor would be partial citizenship. Her evidence: lesbians and gay men are excluded from civil rights such as formal marriages, similar legal status within the armed forces, protection from discrimination in employment or housing, and safety from harassment. The ability of gays and lesbians to exercise political power, in the form of standing for political office, is limited. And they are also denied social rights: pension, inheritance, and tax rights are all
affected by the failure to officially recognize same sex relationships. In Britain, homosexuality had been perceived as both undermining the heterosexual family and posing a danger of treachery and treason. Thus, not full citizens, but partial ones: ‘Lesbians and gay men are entitled to certain rights of existence, but these are extremely circumscribed, being constructed largely on the condition that they remain in the private sphere and do not seek public recognition or membership in the political community.’

Partial citizens could perhaps be considered a synonym for semi-citizens. Elizabeth Cohen coined the term ‘semi-citizens’ in order to underline that people do not hold one uniform public status; there are differentiated bundles of rights, available in different degrees and forms. She positions LGBT citizens today on the ‘outer bound’ of semi-citizenship, as a group with stronger political rights than, say, children, undocumented immigrants, or ex-felons.

‘Second-class citizens’ appears ubiquitously as a term to describe nominal citizens who face systematic discrimination. It expresses the inequality between those who are already formal members of the state and suggests ‘a failure to vindicate, fulfill or respect the substantive entitlements of extant citizenship.’ The freedom to marry campaign in the United States explicitly argued that the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act, which defined marriage for federal purposes as a marriage between one man and one woman, and which was only overturned in 2013, created a second-class citizenship. ‘We are only second-class citizens’ has also been a familiar rallying cry in criticizing discrimination against sexual minorities in housing, blood donation, adoption, the military, and employment. Similarly, the ACLU described the state of North Carolina’s 2016 prohibition against transgendered persons from using bathrooms not assigned to their ‘biological sex’ as signaling second-class citizenship.

Citizenship is sometimes narrated as a story of teleological progress; those previously excluded begin to no longer be regarded as outsiders, as gradually the definition of who belongs becomes more inclusive. The term ‘second-class citizenship’ arguably implies that, over time, groups can move from second class status to first, but this may be possible for only some groups and not others. At the same time, the idea of second-class citizenship does not capture the way in which non-heterosexuals are made visible as dangers to the community—either threatening invasion from outside, or internal degeneration from inside. Shane Phelan thus argues they are best understood to occupy the position of strangers: ‘neither enemies nor friends, neither natives nor foreigners; they are near and not near, far, yet here …’ and in the process abjected from ‘us.’

The teleological triumphal story also ignores the extreme governmental repression of sex and gender nonconformity which coalesced in the mid-twentieth century of the United States: ‘purged from the civil service and military in astounding numbers at midcentury’; barred from federal benefits; faced with FBI and Post Office surveillance; subjected to immigration and naturalization exclusions barring aliens from being admitted on the basis of ‘psychopathic personality’ and ‘sexual deviation’ from 1952 to 1990; and, finally, accused of political subversion. Thus, simultaneous to the incremental enfranchisement
of women and the halting efforts to dismantle Jim Crow, the post-WWII United States newly constructed the homosexual as the ‘anticizen’—creating a hard line posing citizenship against perversion. Here, the anticitizen suggests an oppositional quality, namely, one whose identity threatens to undermine the nation-state, linking political subversion to perversion, a theme to which I will return.

Queer Liberalism, Homonormativity, Homonationalism, and Sexual Citizenship

But do gays and lesbians in countries such as the United States still experience a form of lesser citizenship, however defined, or are they now, in some contexts, in fact considered normative citizen subjects? A number of scholars have recently suggested that gay and lesbian subjects at this moment in fact occupy a privileged position and that their role as model (minority) citizens is used to discipline illiberal minorities or regions of the world. Significant here are the formulations of ‘queer liberalism,’ ‘homonormativity,’ and ‘homonationalism,’ all of which link contemporary normative citizenship to privatization, consumption, and self-governance, while also connecting that citizenship with racial exclusion.

Such a move correlates with a transition away from the notion that participation in the paid labor force is the essential criterion for the conception of citizenship (a conception which, as noted above, limited the means of recognizing feminist claims for equality). Writing in 1990, Nikolas Rose marked a shift in the identity and economic role of the citizen from the producer of work to the consumer: ‘Through consumption we are urged to shape our lives by the use of our purchasing power … The image of the citizen as a choosing self entails a new image of the productive subject.’ In the neoliberal context of a declining welfare state, “[f]reedom” and “power” are thus increasingly (even exclusively) articulated through the market. Here, the power to consume becomes the cornerstone of citizenship. The choosing self is a self-regulating self, freed of a ‘nanny state,’ who can ‘go shopping’ as a patriotic affirmation of citizenship (as President George W. Bush suggested Americans do after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2011).

This consumer citizen no longer expects redistribution or social rights guaranteed by the state, but instead anticipates an ethos of freedom in the marketplace. This freedom now means that the citizen is urged to maximize her own utility, by participating, not in a shared political project, but in the ‘sharing economy.’ This shift accompanies obligations transferred from the state to the individual citizen, a ‘thousand points of light’ whereby volunteerism can take the place of a shrunken state. The social welfare state is being replaced by the market citizen. Active citizenship, then, means a refashioning by the citizen of the self, within a polity newly conceived as a market-state. The Fab Five, the team of gay men who undertook emergency makeovers of heterosexual men on the
hit television show, Queer Eye for the Straight Guy, can thus appear as iconic citizens: they inculcate discipline and self-improvement in others, while shopping.75

Queer theorists have noted that this transformation in citizenship appears in the ascendance of a new ‘homonormativity’ which redefined gay equality as access to previously heteronormative institutions of domestic privacy, the ‘free’ market and patriotism, shrinking the gay public sphere in the process.76 This new politics no longer contested dominant heteronormative assumptions about marriage, monogamy, or reproduction, but upholds them. In the words of the self-described conservative gay rights activist Andrew Sullivan, in 1989: ‘Legalizing gay marriage ... would foster social cohesion, emotional security, and economic prudence ... it could also help nurture children ... It would also, in the wake of AIDS, qualify as a genuine public health measure.’77 This argument spurred Michael Warner to point out what was the ‘trouble with normal’: a retreat from radicalism to respectability, premised in sexual shame.78

The focus on access to institutions of domestic privacy coincided with what Lauren Berlant named the ‘privatization of citizenship’: a collapsing of the political and the personal into a world of ‘public intimacy’ where citizenship was produced by personal acts and no longer directed toward public life.79 The body politic had become partitioned off into ‘residential enclaves’; citizenship was ‘downsized’ to voluntarism and privacy. Civic ethics centered around sexual and familial practices, while political duty required no more than individual acts of consumption and accumulation.80 Excluded from this vision of citizenship are those who make fiscal demands upon the state, as well as the sexually non-normative who do not fit neatly into domestic marriages, those who remain sexual ‘outlaws,’ and ‘citizen perverts.’81 Precluded are those considered too dependent upon the state for support, and those who are too unruly, with their deviant sexual lives and practices, to be good sexual citizens.82

But, importantly, also rejected are those who are thought to be too oppressed to be considered proper citizens. These include racialized immigrant communities, perceived as intolerant, uncivilized and illiberal, embodying the parts of the world from where they come. In David Eng’s conception of ‘queer liberalism,’ newly emancipated gay and lesbian U.S. citizens have been engaged in an increasingly visible and mass-mediated consumer lifestyle, foregrounded as model citizens coupled in conjugal marriage, enacting intimacy as a kind of legally protected property right. This intimacy is imagined to be colorblind, but race is now ‘sublated into normative discourses of privacy, intimacy, bourgeois domesticity, marriage, family and kinship.’ Simultaneously produced, then, as two sides of the same coin, are both queer liberalism and a discourse of racialized immigrant homophobia.83 Normal, now, is white gay visibility; immigrant and nonwhite culture are cast as repressive and dysfunctional.84 We could consider here the activity of European nationalists such as the Dutch politicians Pim Fortuyn and Geert Wilders, linking gay rights with the need to restrict Muslim immigration, or the speech of Donald Trump after the 2016 massacre of forty-nine people at a gay club in Orlando, Florida, where he vowed to protect ‘gay and lesbian citizens’ against ‘radical Islam.’ One could also look to President Trump’s January 2017 executive order, barring citizens from seven
majority Muslim countries from entering the United States, which stated that the United States should not admit ‘those who would oppress Americans’ on the basis of ‘sexual orientation.’

The term sexual citizenship now bears a new meaning, but with a highly negative valence. Rather than an exhortation to expand the rights of sexual minorities in the name of justice, its message is now one of a completed Euro-American project, which justifies efforts such as the war on terror or anti-immigrant policies by depicting parts of the world and particular communities as sexually backward. The sexual-rights-bearing subject created through sexual citizenship, as Leticia Sabsay writes, is reconceived as an entitlement that is both universal and, ahistorically, as one that has always existed. Instead of perceiving all societies as characterized by sexism, homophobia, and transphobia, simply manifested in alternate forms, the world thus becomes organized along a hierarchy of gender and sexual equality development. Cultures outside the North Atlantic are figured as mired in gender oppression, homophobia, and transphobia, in contrast to modernity, tolerance, and democratic values. This conceptualization of ‘homonationalism,’ as articulated by Jasbir Puar, illuminates how acceptance of and tolerance for gay and lesbian subjects has become a barometer by which the right to and capacity for national sovereignty is measured.

As Puar has pointed out, there is a correlation made, not accidentally, between the terrorist and the perverse, indebted to Orientalist constructions of Muslim male sexuality as simultaneously excessively queer and dangerously premodern. This linkage between the perverse and the Oriental dates to the conception of the Western polity as a civilized space in which free men met as individuals and made rational decisions. This democratic Occident was juxtaposed with the despotic Orient, which was tribal, irrational, and dangerously immoral. The Orient was conflated with the sphere of the private, and gendered as female. Characterized by weakness, as well as by vulnerability, female and Oriental bodies created, and continues to create, a justifying circumstance for Western imperial intervention.

The kind of nineteenth-century civilizational hierarchy now being re-configured through homonationalism means that sexual rights can be made to function as a kind of political currency for states. This is a currency which can be expended either to deflect attention from oppressive acts in which those states engage (in what has been called ‘pinkwashing’) or it may be put to work to produce a moral high ground enabling those states to discipline others.

Perhaps this should surprise no one. As Sabsay identifies, the problem is that the ‘citizenship’ of sexual citizenship remains anchored to the notion of the abstract individual and the universal subject-citizen. The citizen is a self who envisions himself or herself as ‘whole and free’ in contradistinction to suffering women in what were once called developing countries, or whose ethno-religious origins link them to those backward regions of the world. The idea of sexual freedom is bound up with the ‘sovereign-free’ individual of liberalism. This ideal citizen is constructed as liberated...
through her distinction from her constitutive other, who is imagined to be living a life of utter subjection and constraint. Thus, sexual citizenship serves as the ‘access gate to juridical, political and social intelligibility.’ Those who fail the test of sexual citizenship, those culturally bodied others, are unable to make themselves belong, even while the cultural specificity of sexual citizenship goes unmarked. This is apparent in the attempt of multiple towns in France in 2016 to enact a ‘burkini ban,’ to take one striking example, leading to the spectacle of armed police officers ticketing women on beaches for covering too much of their bodies and thus refusing to display their bodies to the public in a manner deemed appropriate.

**Conclusion: Queer Citizenship?**

Does it make sense to talk of any alternative to normative sexual citizenship in the form of queer citizenship? The term ‘queer’ was once understood as ‘the name for a political movement and an extensive critique of a wide range of social normalizations and exclusions.’ However the term ‘queer’ has become increasingly unmoored from any standpoint of critique and contestation, coopted to simply serve as an alternative term for LGBTQ identity. Once, to speak of ‘queering citizenship’ suggested subverting citizenship’s foundations, to, for example, challenge its ideology of independence and masculinity and not simply to proclaim ‘citizenship for queers.’ It seems difficult, if not impossible, for queer citizenship to escape the pathway of sexual citizenship, that is, as also smuggling in its baggage a cultural hierarchy of the world. As one example, we could think here of how queer citizenship in the United States has been critiqued as another form of settler citizenship, so that sexual minority politics and culture is defined against the indigenous and engages in indigenous appropriation.

Being included in citizenship may require engaging in a framework of normality and deviance, of legitimacy and illegitimacy, a framework that forecloses other ways of thinking about the sexual field. Citizenship, arguably, is not available to be ‘queered.’ Citizenship, while representing membership, recognition, and belonging, is also a technology of governance: citizenship ‘always lays hold of bodies, ensuring their domestication and normalisation.’

But what of bodies even more unruly that may resist such normalization? If a trans person states, ‘I’m a citizen just like you’ might this actually simultaneously perform both assimilation and radical alterity? In other words, can citizenship both discipline and serve as a means of resistance? Of course, when those who historically have fallen outside citizenship’s protections successfully claim its status, rights, and identity, this claim constitutes a foundational change to political societies. And as citizenship stretches to encompass the formerly excluded its character may shift. Yet even as it moves to embrace these new bodies, citizenship relentlessly, by its foundational logic, continues to rely upon and create new exclusions of ‘those who do not or cannot fit’.
What might be such new expansions and exclusions of citizenship? Future directions for research should attend to how citizenship discourse and practice shape a hierarchy of human life. I suggest here three specific areas of inquiry. An important question to examine is how ideas of citizenship relate to notions of disposability and social death. Disposability refers to the way in which individuals and entire populations are made redundant, abandoned, or expendable. Social death captures the idea of alienation, of ineligibility for personhood, of rightlessness. Both concepts express racialized dispossession, with which theories of feminist, sexual, and queer citizenship productively intersect. Second, animal studies has recently emerged as a significant lens through which to understand conceptions of the human, as who counts as fully human, and which lives matter. Animals function to displace questions about humans, provide a means through which to understand relations between humans, and, of course, humans are also animals. What might feminist, sexual, and queer citizenship learn from animal studies? And, finally, we live in a world that is ever violent, and in one where some believe there to be a civilizational war between the West and Islam. Building on the work on sexual citizenship, more study should focus upon how this perception relates to the conventional, and problematic, presumption that secularism is a precondition for the sexual freedom believed to be a property of the citizen.

Citizenship is about borders—both territorial and metaphorical—even while it concerns belonging. The excluded function as the other against which citizenship claims are articulated and expressed, even in calls for feminist, sexual, or queer citizenship. As this chapter shows, the fact of belonging to citizenship’s inside is made intelligible, through citizenship’s outside.

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Notes:

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Ibid.


Knop (n 7), pp. 104–105.


On states admitting immigrants for reason of human capital see Shachar in this volume.


Fraser and Gordon (n 14), pp. 54–55.


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(19) Fraser and Gordon (n 14), p. 59.


(28) Ibid., p. 30.


(31) Lister (n 21), p. 56.


Ibid., p. 42.


Her sentence was overturned the following year (‘Purvi Patel is Released after Feticide Conviction is Overturned,’ Indianapolis Star, September 1, 2016, online http://www.indystar.com/story/news/crime/2016/09/01/purvi-patel-releases-feticide-conviction-overturned/89707582/).

For an articulation and further discussion of these points, see Dumbrava in this volume.


Ibid., p. 76.

Siobhan Somerville, ‘Queering Birthright Citizenship’ (unpublished manuscript, on file with the author).


See Bonnie Honig, Democracy and the Foreigner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Lauren Berlant (n 44).


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(63) Lister (n 59).


(68) Phelan (n 35), p. 30.


(72) Arguably, no longer just a citizen-consumer, the responsible citizen is now also an individual entrepreneur.


(75) For a discussion, see Cossman (n 62).


Berlant (n 44).

Ibid.


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Sabsay (n 86).

Ibid.


Ibid.

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(94) For a discussion of how this functions in the context of refugee protection, see Costello in this volume.

(95) Sabsay (n 86).


(97) Sabsay (n 86), p. 619.

(98) Ammaturo (n 88), p. 53.


(100) Eng (n 83), p. xi.

(101) Phelan (n 35), p. 62.


(104) Shildrick (n 33), p. 146.


(107) Shildrick (n 33), p. 138.


For the argument that citizenship should be extended to domesticated animals see Donaldson and Kymlicka in this volume.


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