

Editorial

2025 HAS BEEN characterised by rapidly shifting events, many of which are acutely relevant to those studying the role of sexuality and gender in politics, culture, and activism. Transgender communities continue to face campaigns of (re)criminalization and marginalization, as anti-trans legislation is passed in countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom. In the aftermath of the murder of Charlie Kirk, the targeting of trans and gender-diverse communities has escalated. Following the arguments advanced by Kirk – who, in his public debates and through the organization Turning Point USA, promoted the idea that violent radicalization festers in trans community spaces – political proposals have been put forward to adopt the label “transgender ideology-inspired violent extremism.” The conservative, right-wing Oversight Project, formulated by the Heritage Foundation, has launched this campaign, drawing on age-old transphobic tropes of trans people as “evil deceivers and make-believers” (Bettcher 2007). Although research and statistics consistently show that trans people are not the perpetrators but rather the victims of crime – and disproportionately so – the trope of the delusional, potentially dangerous trans person remains pervasive. The Heritage Foundation describes the use of everyday terms such as *cisgender*, *misgendering*, and *deadnaming* as warning signs of radicalization, extremism and imminent terrorism. This represents the latest turn in the epistemic – and material – violence directed at trans citizens (and

noncitizens) in the United States, targeting the very building blocks of trans solidarity and community, as well as efforts to foster alliances between trans and cis organizing.

Meanwhile, Russia continues to fight its war against Ukraine in the name of “traditional family values,” while European states increasingly refer to the protection of gender equality and sexual minority rights in their efforts to justify military rearmament and societal preparation for war and crises. The EU, NATO, and many individual nation-states happily combine rainbow flags and camouflage patterns in their ongoing public communication. This European excitement for queer and gendered mobilizations in the name of state security forces and national defense in response to the war in Ukraine might reflexively alienate many of us working in places geographically removed from the direct line of conflict.

Eastern and Central European feminist and queer activists and researchers, on the other hand, have from the start of Russia’s full-scale invasion pointed to the complex relationship between the defense of LGBTQ+ and women’s rights against Russian aggression and the pressing need for military organizations capable of such a defense in situations of occupation. Their calls for military action from the West have been phrased both through emancipatory notions of sexuality and gender and through decolonial analyses of the Ukrainian relationship to both the EU and a renewed Russian bid for imperialism and colonization (Edenborg 2025; Hendl et al 2024; Luciani & Shevtsova 2024; Shevtsova 2024).

Undoubtedly, the European focus on preparations for war on the continent tends to crowd out other important issues and concerns, including rising social inequality, climate change, and the continued rise of the populist right and its anti-gender politics across national contexts. The sheer multitude of pressing issues can create a feeling of multidirectional urgency, of getting caught up in the rush of the moment, potentially leading to a desire for straightforward explanations and solutions. As researchers, we therefore need to make sure that we are not merely falling back on familiar concepts and analytical shortcuts when assessing

the multiple contemporary challenges we face. Instead, we need to apply suitable methodologies, rely on relevant and up-to-date empirical data and conduct our analyses informed by theoretical and ethical perspectives that reflect the complexity of contexts and the multiplicity of sites on which these changes are happening. At a time of scrutiny of queer, feminist, and gender researchers and activists, this is not only our obligation as scholars, it is also one way of withstanding the political pressure that accompanies many of the issues at hand.

This issue

This issue marks the transition to a partly new editorial team. While Kat Kehl took over editor in chief responsibilities from Elisabeth Lund Engebretsen as 2024 turned into 2025, we now also have a new team of editors in charge of lambda's review section. With this issue we would like to extend our heartfelt thanks both to Elisabeth Lund Engebretsen – whose sharp intellect and unwavering commitment to queer scholarly work and community building formed the backbone of editorial processes for almost five years – and to Marie Dalby, Sara Salminen, and Matilda Lindgren for their work as review editors. The breadth of their knowledge has enriched the review section in terms of what texts have been considered for review and how they have been reviewed. With this issue, we welcome Jenny Andrine Madsen Evang and Joel W. Abdelmoez to the editorial team. We look forward to working together!

The issue encompasses six research articles, an essay, and two reviews, and the themes range from bottom shaming to queer waiting in Michael Cunningham's *The Hours*. Two of the articles – written by Varpu Alasuutari and by Åse Røthing, Marthe Lilletun Langeland and Hedda Widahl respectively – examine Christian communities as contexts that queers navigate and in which they experience and express desires and resistance. Alasuutari's article "Striving for an Equal Church: Affective Utopias of Christian Queer Activists in Finland, 1960s–2000s," explores the hopes and aims of Christian queer activists in Finland during the second half of the twentieth century. Alasuutari draws on José Muñoz's conceptualization of utopia as the "not-yet-existing and hope-

ful queer futurity” and combines it with an analysis of affective aspects of activism. Using a range of materials – oral history interviews, autobiographical writings, and archival materials collected by the activists – Alasuutari asks how utopian thinking can be traced in the stories of queer activists engaged in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. The conclusion is that such utopian thinking was a central force within the early decades of Christian queer activism.

Sociologist of religion Åse Røthing, together with trained teachers Marthe Lilletun Langeland and Hedda Widahl, contribute the article “Queer Pupils at Christian Private Schools: ‘Theological Heteronormativity’ and Colliding Rights.” It is based on an interview study with queer women – former pupils of Christian private schools in Norway – analyzing their experiences discussing sexuality and homosexual desire in these school settings. Røthing et al. argue that sex education in the context of Christian private schools is imbued with what they call theological heteronormativity – i.e., the idea that heterosexuality is presented as “a prerequisite for living a life in accordance with God’s commandments, and thus also as a prerequisite for attaining eternal life in Heaven after death.” This theological framework fosters a milieu of insecurity and unsafety for queer pupils, even in contexts where individual teachers provide alternative and more inclusive ways of interpreting the Bible and Christian life.

Educational spaces are part of the context of Eirik Skjelstad’s analysis of a young nonbinary individual’s navigation of gender, identity, and social norms in contemporary Norway. Skjelstad’s article, “Exploring the Lived Experiences of a Gender-Expansive Youth: Music, Gender Identity and Epistemic Injustice,” follows thirteen-year-old Neptune’s use of music and literature in their understanding and expression of their nonbinary subjectivity in a society that does not support gender-expansive lives. It discusses Neptune’s bleak encounters with the Norwegian health care system, but also their thoughts on what would make schools safer spaces for like-minded youth. The article, with its rich ethnographic material, offers a unique insight into an individual journey of self-recognition and self-expansion.

Lena Sotevik and Amanda Nordin also give voice to queer youth, but the theme of their article – ”Allt jag behöver finns ju här’: Queera ungdomars narrativ om urbana normer och ruralt motstånd” – is resistance to urban norms and queer rural life. Drawing on interviews with young queer rural residents in Sweden, Sotevik and Nordin analyze how the participants experience and negotiate place in relation to age and queerness, deconstructing what Jack Halberstam has called *metronormativity*. The narratives show how young queers are leading the way in changing stereotypes of heteronormative rural life, both materially and discursively: organizing queer community events, critiquing the unfair distribution of social resources, and problematizing the notion that one must move to the city to come out of the closet.

Oscar von Seth’s contribution to the issue is a close reading of the canonized novel *The Hours*, focusing on the specific type of waiting that awaits queers. “Queer Waiting in Michael Cunningham’s *The Hours*” theorizes, in dialogue with José Esteban Muñoz’s concept of “utopian queer futurity” and Martin Heidegger’s “Gelassenheit,” how waiting structures the experiences of the novel’s queer characters. While the characters wait for things – to succumb to AIDS-related complications, to find ways to escape heteronormative family structures, and so on – this waiting is more than a stalling of the mundane present. It can be understood as a strategy for dealing with queer life conditions. von Seth argues that this reading of *The Hours* can function as a motivator “to uproot the social structures (like the closet) that make waiting a central feature of the queer experience to begin with.”

The focus of Richard Vytņiorgu and Jaime Garcia-Iglesias’ article is shame – and anticipated shame – experienced by men who engage in receptive anal intercourse, or bottoming. “Bottom Shaming, Shame Anxiety, and Sexual Wellbeing” explores how the concept of “bottom shaming” has developed historically and transculturally, using a range of media materials and social media postings. It addresses cultures of bottom shaming in various settings, both clinical and nonclinical, and outlines the impact of anticipated shame on sexual well-being.

Malin Fors has written the issue's essay, titled "Farewell LGBTQ+ Competency. Rest in Peace. May You Never Be Needed Again," which muses on an imagined future in which LGBTQ+ educational interventions would be redundant. Fors notes that in the eight years that have passed since she wrote the text – in Swedish, as a tongue-in-cheek epilogue to an anthology on LGBTQ+ psychology (2017) – the polarization of the public debate on LGBTQ+ competency and mainstreaming has escalated, and that the argument she made – namely, that it is essential to engage with LGBTQ+ issues and queer experiences in clinical settings even without expert knowledge – is still valid and perhaps even more important in 2025.

The issue closes with two reviews. Reidar Schei Jessen's review of Edward Summanen and Matilda Wurm's award-winning book *Trans: Fakta, forskning och erfarenheter* (2023) lauds its approach of bringing academic work into dialogue with lived experience, in the structure of the book. Jon Binnie reviews Julia Lagerman's PhD thesis, *A Nationalist Contradiction: Homonationalism and Nationalist Anti-LGBTQ Politics and Activism in Sweden* (2023), which explores the role of gender and LGBTQ politics in struggles over the meaning of Swedish national identity and nationalism.

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