

# Consensus

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Volume 43  
Issue 2 *Queer(y)ing Labels: Dialogues of  
Identity*

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Article 1

7-25-2022

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### Recommended Citation

Coman, Sherry (2022) "Queer(y)ing Labels: Dialogues of Identity," *Consensus*: Vol. 43: Iss. 2, Article 1.  
DOI: 10.51644/LTAG1721  
Available at: <https://scholars.wlu.ca/consensus/vol43/iss2/1>

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## Queer(y)ing Labels: Dialogues of Identity

Sherry Coman<sup>1</sup>

**I**t is a tremendous pleasure to present the strong and wise voices on offer in this issue, in their innovative expressions of what it means to identify as 2SLGBTQIA+ people and/or allies in a variety of contemporary contexts. I am so grateful for their courage and their insights, both scholarly and personal.

This issue has attempted to frame a dialogue in which compatible voices find solidarity by standing together in theme or by lining up in accidental symmetries of experience. The fluidity of gender identity, which reaches deep into the 2SLGBTQIA+ acronym, invites us to consider more deeply the challenges of living a differently-formed identity within a cisheterosexual dominant society. In the paper that leads our issue, Rosalyn Kantlaht'ant Elm and Janaki Bandara unpack the binary definitions of gender terminology while inviting us into the lived experience of an Indigenous former youth (Ros) informed and nurtured by cultural traditions. In their nuanced reflection, the writers tease out the differences between male and female as biological terms and maleness and femaleness as social constructs, while also acknowledging those of wider gender identities. Complementarily, Authen Katinas takes a look at the film *Victor/Victoria* on the fortieth anniversary of its release. The 1982 queer classic is re-evaluated from a trans perspective for its groundbreaking and sometimes limited perspective on what it means to make choices about presenting one's gender identity to the world.

Some of the papers deal directly with the impacts and harm caused by inadequately prepared faith leaders, educators and psychotherapists working with 2SLGBTQIA+ people. In her reflection on the writing of queer theologian Lynn Tonstad, Victoria Featherston reminds us that what is preached in the pulpit resonates and directly impacts the safety of those who are marginalized. Her story of her own home church upbringing underlines the importance of careful and appropriate training of pastors and psychotherapists. Rachel Warner underscores this problem in her own essay and calls for renewed commitment to authenticity and integrity in the training of professionals who will be providing spiritual and psychotherapeutic care to 2SLGBTQIA+ people. When those who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+ receive harmful messages, they are more likely to internalize these messages and experience internalized homophobia, the subject of Daniel Rzonczinski's important article, which examines this dilemma closely and offers methodological approaches for psychotherapists to consider. Beth Murch's powerful spoken word poem expresses the pain that comes when identity and spirit feel separated from God. Using Jewish prayer learned by heart from a young age, she both wrestles with and embraces her relationship to the divine.

Beth McCutcheon and Karen Kuhnert offer us a rare opportunity to go behind the scenes of church policy documents and see their embedded contexts and histories. Beth McCutcheon presents compelling evidence of heteronormative perspectives in her study of the use of biblical texts in a formative document on human sexuality within the Presbyterian Church in Canada. Karen Kuhnert contributes an essential chronicle of the history of the

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public conversation on human sexuality in the Lutheran churches in Canada, unfolding the story of their distinct identities across the landscape of changing policy within the church and within shifting social perspectives in secular society. Her thorough study allows us to hear with a deepened appreciation the report by ELCIC National Bishop Susan Johnson on the safeguarding principles adopted by religious and political leaders during the Global Interfaith Commission on LGBT+ Lives held in March, 2022.

Rounding out the collection, Jenn Hind-Urquhart and Rachel Hind-Urquhart offer a celebration of the word 'queer', even while acknowledging the challenges the word holds for many within the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. They offer a path to healing for those seeking language that best expresses identity. Steve Hoffard's sermon reflecting on the unbinding of Lazarus offers all of us a chance to unbind each other from the prejudices and predispositions we carry toward those different from ourselves. The issue closes with a number of other insightful and thought-provoking reviews and poems.

"We are finite bodies, regardless of gender, facing an endless amount of experience within culture and society," write Rosalyn Kantlaht'ant Elm and Janaki Bandara in the opening essay. It is my hope, and indeed my firm belief, that this issue illuminates just such a rich diversity of human experience, and also allows its light to reach into the wider world.