

A NEW Study: Experiences of Queer Educators in Nova Scotia

by Kate Cole (they/she), Educator

Hello NSTU Siblings!

Many of the thousands of you do not know me, as we are such a large family here in Nova Scotia. I am from a rural town in Amherst and have just completed my Master's in Education (Counselling) at Acadia University having taken their thesis route for program completion. I conducted a qualitative-based narrative study with four 2SLGBTQIA+ (queer*) educators in Nova Scotia. The guiding question for this study was: What are the experiences of queer educators in Nova Scotia? The study had four participants, as it was only a thesis and not a dissertation, who shared what their experiences have been over their shared decades of experiences.

I really was curious about the tokenized experience of rural queer educators, but after diving into the literature that exists, a very large gap in academia was found. Queer educators outside of the study may already know what the themes are that emerged based on their own lived experiences in the systems. After conducting a lengthy thematic analysis, three themes emerged in the transcripts from the interviews: **The Work, The Supports, and The Microaggressions of Hegemonic Influence.**

The study highlights the importance of decolonizing the education system and the need for more studies that represent an intersectional representation of our NSTU family. The study highlighted that queer educators have a tokenized workload on top of the regular full workload as an educator. They shared that the supports are minimal for their existence in the system and that they are often advocating for queer youth and by proxy, themselves. The supports that they are receiving are superficial and lack depth outside of window dressings of completion of workshops. The hard work of unlearning and learning bias and privilege is not being done with how the supports are currently situated.

Finally, the microaggressions that are happening to queer educators are impacting how they show up and complete their 195 days each year if they choose to stay in the education system. They are doing the work, with minimal support, and are being impacted by the microaggressions of hegemonic influence; that of heterosexism, gendered expectations within a binary subset, and interlocking forms of oppression that are upheld. Some are choosing not to continue to be advocates, as they are burning out from the workload, the lack of proactive support, and microaggressions of the system. Some are making choices for their future outside of the education system.

The study is one of the very many pieces of scholarship that is needed to highlight the need for social justice within our education system. The study is in the QR code below, should you wish to read it, and highlights more specifically what is needed in the last chapter: the conclusion. It is written in a way that represents my personality; there are jokes. The goal was for the scholarship to be accessible to people who do not, yet, have the language that goes along with learning all that we do not know, while maintaining that there is no way to have concrete knowledge as our construction of this world is collective subjectivity.

So, if you're curious as to where to get started, and want to read more my suggestions are: *Undoing Privilege* by Bob Pease, and *Seeing Gender: An Illustrated Guide to Identity and Expression* by Iris Gottlieb (see next page for book giveaway). Use social media to follow queer creators that use their platform to inform. Some Canadian-based examples hyperlinked are "Queeriosities" podcast, [@myqueerbookshelves](#) TikTok, [@oncanadaproject](#) on Instagram, and [@decolonizemyself](#) on Instagram

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* should you be interested in the word choice of "queer" please read page 8-9 of the study through the QR code

