

# TRANSFORMING EXPERIENCE: NEGOTIATIONS OF SEXUAL IDENTITY IN THE COMPOSING PROCESSES OF GAY MEN

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*Negotiating meaning, knowledge, and identity is fundamental to composing processes. These negotiations occur both individually and socially for writers. Sexual identity is an intrinsic part of these negotiations, but is often overlooked by researchers. This study explored the phenomenon of negotiating sexual identity in the composing processes of self-identified gay men. Using purposeful intensity sampling, I selected 7 gay men for semi-structured interviews. These interviews were analyzed using narrative analysis (Reissman, 2003) and the science of phenomenological inquiry as outlined by both Giorgi (1985) and Moustakas (1994). The data presented 7 emergent themes: (a) discovery, (b) expression, (c) courage, (d) being out, (e) reflection, (f) negotiating public and personal identity, and (g) integration. The essential experience of the phenomenon was transformation, wherein the qualities of engaging sexual identity in composing processes allowed the participants to bring deeper structures of meaning into written form.*