

SUMMARY

As members of two marginalized groups, same-gender-loving (SGL) males of color may not fully experience being part of the gay community for being black, or fully experience being part of the African American community for being SGL. Navigating and negotiating these identities without proper support, acceptance, and understanding can present difficult life experiences for SGL males of color. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to find out how SGL males of color navigate and negotiate their identities and experiences over time.

Four SGL males, including the author, of color participated in this study. Ethnographic and autoethnographic narratives were used to describe personal experiences within a wider cultural and social context to gain a better understanding of the participants and of the person I am today. Evocative autoethnographic narratives were generated so that the reader can be pulled into becoming part of the narratives by understanding, feeling, and being empathic to the experience of the participants.

The findings explored how four participants navigated and negotiated their identities over time. The participants discovered their SGL identity at an early age between 8 and 10 years old and grew up in families where homosexuality was not tolerated, but their families did encourage the participants to be proud of their ethnic identity. The participants were not aware of any SGL organizations in the communities in which they grew up. The participants preferred to keep to themselves throughout middle school and high school because of the lack of support and the fear of exposing their SGL identity. All participants grew up going to church, and although the participants said they still believe in God, only one participant in this study regularly attends church. As the participants matured in their thinking, two of the younger participants were fully open about their same-gender-loving identity and chose to live as their authentic selves, whereas

two of the older participants felt they could not live their full authentic selves as SGL males. The participants felt a lack of support and a sense of alienation from the black community, white community, and gay white community, because of their sexual orientation, ethnicity, and body image, as all four had experienced being overweight. In addition to the findings, implications for research, school support, school policy, and theory are considered.