Racism in America has played a vital role in the destruction of the black man’s positive identity elements. The black man’s obsession with identity has emerged as a result of his peculiar experiences in his mother country. He is forced to accept the values of the dominant white society which is not ready to accept him as a person. This crisis of identity is clearly evident in Afro American writings and life. An existential anxiety and an alienation from the society and from himself, a feeling of nobodyness and the struggle for survival are the prominent aspects of American life. Identity development is a continuous process and never really ends. The proposed study of the search for identity of Lorraine Hansberry and James Baldwin and of the heroes of their plays is based on this concept. This is a psychological and literary study based mainly on the theories of the famous social psychologist Erik H. Erikson.

The thesis is divided into five chapters and chapter five gives the conclusion with a comparative study of the identity quest found in Lorraine Hansberry and James Baldwin. Chapter one contains the necessary social, political and cultural background of the Negro which compels him to search for identity. Chapter two presents the theme of identity. Various identity theories are discussed and an analysis of problems of identity faced by the African Americans is also given. Chapter three brings into focus the identity quest found in the plays of James Baldwin. Chapter four projects the search for identity found in the plays of Lorraine Hansberry. Chapter five focuses on the
various similarities and differences between Lorraine Hansberry and James Baldwin in their treatment of the concept of identity.

Both Lorraine Hansberry and James Baldwin conquered and contributed much to the world. They created new possibilities for the blacks. Through their plays they proved that art can be a weapon to liberate the people.