

**Author:** Alexis Reynolds

**Title:** Black Gay Men: The UIUC Experience

**About the Author:** Currently as a Senior at the University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana, majoring in psychology with a concentration in sociology and African American studies, my particular interest is how various experiences in regards to the constructs of self differs across race. In particular, it is essential to identify and evaluate how systemic mediums such as educational institutions, religion, and communal organizations accommodate these differences and promote awareness. My previous research through the ACCESS Initiative Evaluation Team signified the determination of the general Champaign-Urbana community to strive daily to enhance the efficiency of an array of prevention and intervention organizations within the community. I question whether the University of Illinois, an institute that classifies themselves as a diverse central support unit, also perseveres towards cultural competence in all realms of its' outreach programs.

**Keywords:** African American, Down-low, LGBT

**Abstract:** Some of my key questions that I will utilize and branch off from are:

How does the UIUC campus environment influence LGBT identity in African American males?

Branch-off Questions: How accommodating is UIUC to being African American and gay? How does the African American community on campus react to "non-normative" sexual practices?

**Question:** My research question has not changed very much, but I am going to try to put more emphasize on how participants choose to utilize certain UIUC resources. I am going to stem away a little bit from self-identity and focus more on personal experiences and feelings of self-worth.

**Plan:** Title: "Identity Formation: LGBT Issues in the African American Community"

2. How do perceptions, stigmas, and shared values within the African American community influence the identify formation process in regards to sexual orientations (identifying as LGBT)?

3. I believe that it is important to delve further into my research topic because very few realize that ethnicity influences an array of supposed "self" formed ideologies such as political views, religious outlooks, and to a point, one's own feeling worth or self. Due to propaganda through various mediums, music, television, books, and movies racial stereotypes are still subliminally being fed to viewers of various racial backgrounds. Living in such an atmosphere promotes and enables the self-fulfilling prophecy and can lead to "self-segregation". In short, I believe that it is significant to see that, even with an African American President, African Americans still feel pressurized to fit a socio-culturally constructed mold.

4. There are very few UIUC students that have done research on my topic in particular. One student researched the social constructs of HIV and AIDS in relationship to the African American community. The author goes in depth on how these diseases exacerbate the stigma and oppression associated with ethnicity.

**EUI References/Tagging:** [1=Read, but not relevant, i.e., i took a look at this project but my own EUI project does not really have anything to do with it; 2=Somewhat Relevant, i.e., I think my project is related to this EUI project, but I do not really build specifically on any of its arguments or data in my project; 3=Very relevant, i.e., My project builds on this project; namely, my project's arguments confirm/contradict the discussions in this project.]

Lane, Marcus. 2009. *Conflicting Identities: Life of LGBT Students on Campus*

Holmes, Kwame. 2011. *Chocolate to Rainbow City: the dialects of black and gay community formation in postwar Washington D.C*

Bauer, Erica. 2011. *HIV and AIDS, Disclosure, Stigma, and Social Support within Church communities.*

**Reflect:** My entire experiencing throughout the EUI research process was eye-opening to how much I truly enjoy conducting research. Seeing all of my work come together was really fulfilling and made me realize that being overly curious can be efficiently utilized when applying to your interests and passions. But as is life, there are restrictions and guidelines of ethics to comply with which helped me step away from particular subjective viewpoints and strived towards objectivity. When researching something that you are interested in or passionate about comes a bit of bias and I feel like with the help of IRB in approving and constructing my questions I was able to wade through some of my own assumptions and stray away from having my opinions impact my research.

**Recommendations:** On the basis of my research findings, I would recommend that UIUC dive into various culture more and apply their finds to the outreach resources they offer.