

2018

Global Research Competition

The Coexistence and Interplay of
Ethnic and Situational Identity in Hawaii:
Focusing on Kama'aina Spirit



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PREFACE_

Globalization and the Creation of Various Identities

Ethnicity, national identity, and minjok—though they might seem to be very natural, they are all artificially created ideas. As they are all arbitrarily created by humans, they also go through a continuous process of reconstruction and deconstruction. Today, as innumerable amounts of immigrations, emigrations, migrations are happening in the globe, these ideas are subjected to changes.

Gone are the days when countries were composed of a single dominant race. The once dominantly white communities of the Europe accommodating Islamic refugees, and politicians of the U.S. are weary of the Mexicans coming into the Southern province. Due to many movements around the globe, cases have been seen where even people within “related identity groups” tend to “identify themselves differently depending on the social contexts and [...] specific situations” (515).

However, even in the era of globalization, the concept of ethnicity, national identity, and minjok still emphasizes homogeneity, “supressing heterogeneity and ‘internal conflict’ to oppose the external, foreign other.” Through the Global Research Competition, we hope to understand how the concept of race and ethnicity, which normally renders people to form groups and exclude the other, could rather lead to harmony.





LOCATION: HAWAII

Hawaii is also subject to this trend, since its community members are getting more diverse. Today, Hawaii is truly the hub where a myriad of cultures and identities coexist with one another; its members are comprised of Native Hawaiians (Kanaka Maolis), Caucasians, Blacks, Asians, and many more. The case of Hawaii serves as a good example of how different ethnic groups can coexist within a single community all the while retaining their unique culture.







KEY TERMS

Ethnicity and Situational Identity

Ethnicity

Cambridge dictionary defines ethnicity as “a large group of people who have the same national, racial, or cultural origins, or the state of belonging to such a group.” Adding to this, Nagel (1994) claimed that “ethnicity is constructed out of the material of language, religion, culture, appearance, ancestry, or regionality” (pp. 152-153). Though these statements might give the impression that ethnicity is something created in the old days and last forever, this is not correct. “Since ethnicity is not simply a historical legacy of migration or conquest, but is constantly undergoing redefinition and reconstruction, our understanding of such ethnic processes as ethnic conflict, mobilization, resurgence, and change might profit from a reconsideration of some of the core concepts we use to think about ethnicity” (1994). Thus, Nagel concludes that the idea of ethnicity is flexible, possessing a high possibility of being modified.

Situational Identity

In Hawaii industry, plantation boomed due to its warm tropical weather. Such plantation farms brought together numerous ethnic groups ranging from Asians, Portuguese, to South Americans. As they immigrated to Hawaii as plantation workers, they further added to the diversity of Hawaii's population. Here, an interesting phenomenon was observed. “Despite the trends toward homogenization of culture due to globalization, new ethnic identities continue to form or be rediscovered by those who choose to identify as members” (Miyares, 2008, p. 514). This kind of fluid creation of memberships came to be coined as “situational identity.” Doreen Rosenthal (1987) has further elaborated on this concept, stating that in a world where people fluidly move from country to country immigrants “view themselves as members of two cultural worlds, switching identification according to the situation” (p. 178).

OUR RESEARCH

About Hawaiian Identities & Chronological Display



OAHU ISLAND



The Changing Concept of Hawaiian Residents:

Kanaka Maoli and Kama'aina

In Hawaii, the word “Hawaiian” does not refer to the people who live in Hawaii, unlike the term “New Yorker” or “Chicagoans,” which normally refer to any residents that live in the particular state. Rather, it connotes a similar meaning to the Aborigines or the Maoris: native people who used to live in the land. This is quite intriguing considering that all Hawaiians came from adjacent pacific islands.

-Kanaka Maoli: this is the term that refers to the aboriginal Polynesian people that have resided in the Hawaiian Islands for thousands of years. The notion of Kanaka Maoli allowed the native people to form a strong bond, and became a key feature in rebelling against the western exploitation.

-Kama'aina: Kama'aina is a term that was created that reflects the change of ethnic composition. The non-white plantation workers came to be recongnized, and through this process, the idea of favoring multinational identity, or the famous “aloha spirit” also emerged.

Background Research (06.26-07.05)

Before going to Hawaii, we first consulted our research paper with professor Ratnapalan. Through his words, we were able to narrow down the focus of our research, think more about the definitions of being a true Hawaiian native, and find out the stakes that were related to our research. Hearing about the findings of his recent dissertation was also fascinating, which was about a missionary who lived in Hawaii for his lifetime and even taught English to Hawaii, but was never accepted as a “Hawaiian.”

Quantitative Research (08.01-08.10)

The survey was distributed through the method of non-random sampling by asking our acquaintances to distribute it because of time and monetary constraints. The survey was based on a famous scale of Multidimensional Inventory of Racial Identity (MMRI) developed by Robert M. Sellers and others. As the existing MMRI questions have a total of 56 questions, which is too many, we only selected two questions from the seven categories of the survey. These two questions were repeated in part one and part two. Part one assessed people’s sense of belonging to their race, while part two assessed people’s sense of belonging to their community, or how strongly they feel affection to Kama’aina. These questions were measured by a Likert scale from 1 to 7.

CHARLES PATRANEK | PROFESSOR AT UH



Qualitative Research (07.06-07.13)

1. Local People’s thoughts

Eight people were selected from the neighborhood of Waialae-Kahala through quota sampling, which allowed the interviewees to become more candid when doing a 30-minute interview. Like the word “quota sampling” implies, the interviewees all had a different ethnic backgrounds. A mother and her child were selected amongst native Hawaiians (Kanaka Maoli), Hispanics, Japanese, and Taiwanese-Italian. The format of the interview was drawn upon Chatin et al.’s work, which was also about Cuban, Haitian and Guatemalan’s sense of belonging when they moved to Florida.

2. Interview with an expert

Another interview was conducted with professor Charles Petranek, a Sociology professor teaching in the University of Hawaii. His referral complemented the small sample size of the interviewees, and gave us insight about the general trend in Hawaii.

RESULTS_

Interview & Survey

Survey Results

The survey results reinforced what was seen in the interview; the residents all had an attachment to their ethnic background but was readily embracing the Aloha spirit of the region. Participants also showed more attachment to their ethnic identity compared to their nationality. Unfortunately, we could not add any further details as the demographic was quite small.

Interview Results

Seven out of nine interviewees were able to trace themselves to a certain ethnic group. Only two people, who lived in Hawaii for their lifetime, were unable to give a clear distinction of their ethnic identity, while also considering their heritage to be “mixed.”

Aligning with this result, keeping the traditions of their ethnic heritage also seemed to be a prevalent part of their lives. When asked about important cultural events in their lives, many answers included both the tradition of their heritage and the typical holidays associated with US or Hawaii, which imply the magnanimous aspect of the Hawaiian culture. Examples included Taiwanese-Caucasian daughter celebrating Chinese New Year with the practice of Hongbao (red envelope with money), eating noodles on birthdays, while also mentioning Christmas, a holiday associated with the Western culture. Retaining their culture also stems from the fact that they have regular contact with their homeland to some families, thus reinforcing their bond to their backgrounds.

While ethnic identity was a meaningful part of their lives, this did not mean that their identity as a Kama’aina was rejected. On the contrary, all the participants seemed to identify themselves as Kama’ainas. Though having different standards of accepting a member of the community as a Kama’aina, the concept of Kama’aina was all viewed very positively, welcoming the diverse nature of Hawaii. They also mentioned that the “Aloha Spirit”—referring to the generosity, love and tolerance of others—made the community suffer less from internal conflict.

“When my mother cooks at home she cooks a lot of the Hispanic, Spanish foods.”

I consider myself a Kama’aina [as] I am not a tourist.



"I can see myself living there [my mother's homeland], but I have never given it serious thought."



OUR THOUGHTS_

After the Research



Sae-Hyun Lee

The reason I decided to enter the Global Research Competition is because I wanted to learn something by my own. Considering this, Global Research Competition was a giant stepping stone for me to execute a more active study that is completely different from what we learn in a traditional academic setting. Not only did we choose a topic that we ardently want to learn, but we also got to travel to Hawaii and get to know about the Hawaiian spirit, something we do not have the chance to be acquainted with in our daily lives. Through this 2-month journey, I was gifted with the knowledge to write a thorough research paper, and with precious memories with my teammates in a paradise-like Hawaiian community. Though it is quite unfortunate that the topic of ethnicity and identity is so large that we could not investigate that thoroughly, we sure hope that our research result is sufficient enough for future researchers to be intrigued and continue further study.



Jin-Hee Kim

The Global Research Competition was an exciting opportunity for me to delve into a topic that I had always been fascinated with. I had spent my childhood in Hawaii and this research broadened some insights to the causes of the welcoming atmosphere of Hawaii. Not only that, conducting interviews and meeting with different people was an unforgettable experience in itself. This research had been a chance for me to learn about the culture and history more in depth. It sparked a new interest in me regarding the Polynesian culture and myth. I was most touched by the kindness of the people and was fortunate to find friends in them. While I am sure we were only able to cover all about the complex identity of Hawaiians, I certainly hope we are able to convey the Aloha Spirit of love and tolerance through our research paper.



JIN-HEE KIM | CLC 17

SAE-HYUN LEE | ASD 17



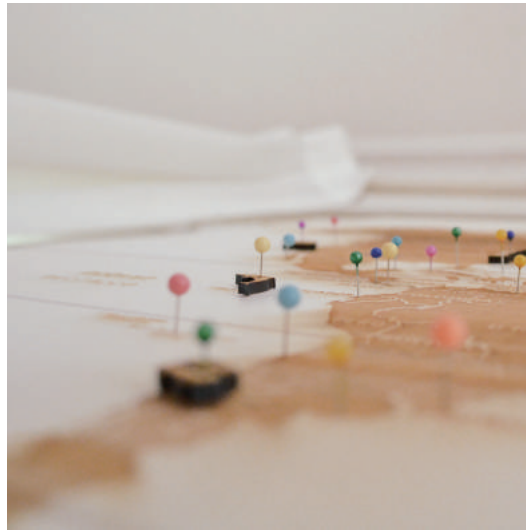
Jung-Youn Lee

The Global Research Competition was the whole new experience for me indeed. From the topic selection to the actual research practice, students themselves were able to participate dominantly, and were responsible for their research and results. UIC curriculums gave a lot of chances to learn about conducting a research and to become well-acquainted with the format. GRC was the perfect opportunity to apply the knowledge I have learned through them. Moreover, thanks to my team members, we came up with a research topic that I never thought of before. Hawaii was a whole new cultural background but as the study was focused on the people's identity and ethnicity, I have enjoyed every part of this program. Despite the busy research schedules, my team members and I had a wonderful time in Hawaii, enjoying the beautiful scenery. The diversity of Hawaii was the most striking part of the whole travel to me. It is a shame that we could not cover the whole aspect and complex images of the Hawaii, but I am sure that someday I will have another great opportunity to understand their culture further. It was a great summer that I will never forget.



JUNG-YOUN LEE | ASD 17

About the Global Research Competition



This research was funded by Underwood International College (UIC) through 2018 UIC Global Research Competition. The annual UIC Global Research Competition provides UIC undergraduates with the opportunity to plan and execute a self-directed research project anywhere around the world. Selected students are granted monetary award of up to 3,500,000 KRW each and are given the privilege to showcase and publish their research under UIC supervision. For further inquiries about the program, please contact UIC academic advisor Professor Hyunsang Kim (jjimkim@yonsei.ac.kr) or refer to the UIC official website (<http://uic.yonsei.ac.kr>).



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