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# Expressing the acceptance of cultures through Luau

Michael Carbonell

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Michael Carbonell

“Expressing the acceptance of cultures through Luau”

Organizational Communication Capstone Project

University of Portland

Spring 2014

Supervised by Alexa Dare, Ph.D.

## Abstract

This research focused on Hawai'i student's cultural identity at the University of Portland, which is a catholic based institution. To get a better understanding of how they express their cultural identity to the larger population, the research asked what the significance of Luau was to expressing cultural identity to the students and how it helps to shape their identity. Two students from Hawai'i were interviewed for this research that both had a position or stake in the Hawai'i club and Luau. They were interviewed for around a half hour with questions focused on their cultural identity, how they express it at the University of Portland, and the role of Luau in expressing their culture. The results found that Luau is not just about presenting their culture, but also about how the Hawaiians accept other people and cultures outside of their own and how they aim to be accepted by them.

## **Rationale**

The University of Portland has, for many years, had a constant population of students who grew up in Hawai'i (University of Portland). While Hawai'i is the fiftieth state of the United States, it has a very unique and diverse culture all of its own. This is because of the large mix of the traditional Hawaiian culture, many different Asian cultures, and mainland American culture. This large cultural mix can pose problems for people from different cultures if they interact with someone from Hawai'i. So the ever-constant acceptance of students from Hawai'i to the catholic university in the Pacific Northwest brings up complications in terms of cultural interactions.

The Pacific Northwest has many different cultures as well, especially in the Portland area where many different cultures come together. But many of the students from Hawai'i are proud of their culture and continue to practice many customs that they are familiar with at the university. These kinds of customs range from the special lingo and method of speech that is common back in Hawai'i, the preference for many kinds of unique foods that are popular and common like loco moco, to wearing flip flops or "slippers" for the majority of the year including the winter. This "identity" with their original culture is an important concept to study and understand as it can provide insight towards the growing movement of international students around the world. As cultures begin to mix and interact in deeper levels, it can be difficult for some to continue to stay rooted with their cultures.

That is why this research is important. Many of the students who attend that University of Portland from Hawai'i manage to keep a strong cultural connection with their home. The aim of this research is to have a better understanding of how these students express their cultural identity in a location that is vastly dominated by a different culture. By understanding their identity within the realm of the catholic university, many students from Hawai'i represent what it

means to not only stay true to their original culture, but also how to integrate and represent that culture. This has been accomplished through special cultural displays like Luau. By displaying aspects of their culture through Luau, the students from Hawai'i are not only keeping up with their own tradition, but they are also working to introduce people from the mainland to a different culture from their own that is still a prominent practice from where it originated.

### **Theoretical Framework**

To understand the concept of identity to a cultural background, there are some theories that are applicable to this research. The two most prominent theories that fit into the understanding of identity for a culture are co-cultural theory and structuration theory. To get a better understanding of why these theories are important, this research paper will highlight and discuss in more detail the variable of identity, followed by co-cultural theory and then structuration theory.

For the students at the University of Portland from Hawai'i understand is that working to put on a Luau takes a lot of work and coordination with everyone who wants to be a part to share the culture. While they are not restrictive of who participates in the Luau, the majority of participants are students from Hawai'i. To understand the social structure of the Hawai'i students and how it influences individual behavior will require an understanding of the structuration theory by Giddens. Researchers who use this theory understand "how social structures and human interaction combine to both use and to reproduce or challenge social institutions" (Hoffman et al., 2010, pg. 207). The reason why this theory is essential to understand identity for the Hawai'i student culture is because it helps to give insight into the rules and structure behind the group as they work cohesively to share their culture through Luau. It will help to understand

how their culture influences how the group functions with each other and how they function as an overall group with the university.

To get at the heart of identity after understanding the structure of the students from Hawai'i requires another theory called co-cultural theory. This theory, that was developed by Mark Orbe, focuses directly on the concept of identity for groups of minorities who live in a society that is more dominant in another culture. This theory helps to lend insight into "the process by which members of underrepresented groups enact certain communicative practices in contexts where a person's membership in social groups renders their experiences as marginalized" (Orbe et al., 2004, pg. 42). What this means is that individuals or minority groups will create a way to communicate. But in this research, the individual is really a group, and their means of communicating their marginalized experience is through their Luau event. That is why this theory is essential to the study of the students from Hawai'i. The theory will allow for an understanding of why these students choose Luau as a means of representing their identity as a culture at the university.

This introduction to the theories will be helpful in understanding what identity is and how it is applicable to culture. In this way, the research will be able to more thoroughly explain whether or not the students from Hawai'i find identity to be vital. Following this, the literature review will go even more in depth of the theories being applied to the research.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Identity***

One of the main variables that will be highlighted within this study is Identity. Identity in its simplest form is how every individual distinguishes themselves from each other. Identity goes further when people identify themselves with their own culture. Identity in this regard is more

sophisticated and broader because it encompasses the actions, morals, and beliefs of a group of people. The influence of a cultural identity is seen when people from different cultures interact with one another. In these interactions, “each individual approaches the cultural other with his own patterned way of thinking and unique vision of the world” (Xiao, 2009, pg. 2). Two cultures can be as radically different as two different cultures from around the world, or even something smaller like two different sport cultures.

Identity then is very important to understand when researching about the identity of one culture interacting with another. A cultural identity can be defined as “the result of affiliation to particular beliefs and possibilities which are available to them in their social contexts” (Zeshun, 2012, pg. 27). Identity, however, faces many problems with power control. In a lot of situations, the more dominant ideologies exert more power or influence over the smaller groups, trying to diminish their sense of self-identity (Zeshun, 2012). But this power dynamic seems to be an outdated view because there is a growing understanding that even members of marginalized groups with a different cultural identity can and do influence the social identity of a group. This leads to the fact there no one culture will be accepted universally across the group but instead the dominant culture will have some kind of influence from the minority groups.

The students from Hawai’i have had to work to influence the social identity of the university. The university has a dominant Catholic culture. While the Catholic culture holds the most sway in regards to the education at the school, they have proven to show a low power dynamic in the sense that they are open to the cultures of other students. They allow students who come from abroad to share their culture. In particular, the university has allowed the Hawai’i club to share their culture with the university with Luau for over thirty years.

## **Theories**

### *Co-Cultural Theory*

One of the main theories in focus for this research is the co-cultural theory. As described earlier, co-cultural theory describes how co-cultural group members communicate with others of the group who are in a more dominant culture to the individual. This theory originated by the communicative theorist named Mark Orbe. Orbes began his co-cultural work when he originally was researching the muted group theory that explored to understand marginalized groups and their position in society (Orbe, 2005). Basing his research on the muted group theory, co-cultural theory came about when Orbe wanted to understand “how individual and small collectives worked together to negotiate their muted group status” (Orbe, 2005, pg. 65). His choice for the term “co-cultural” was used to highlight the fact that many different groups co-exist in a set social system (Orbe, 2005).

Through co-cultural theory, a person who is marginalized, or a minority within the larger group, can develop effective communication skills. Generally these skills are self-determined by the marginalized individual where they “strategically enact communication practices that reflect larger co-cultural communication orientations” (Orbe et al., 2004, pg. 42). What this means is that individuals will use communication skills that reflect the larger group orientation towards communicating. But understanding this, it can be assumed that some group members can expect to use or practice more than one of these orientations regularly with others (Urban et al., 2007). These orientations are also determined by how these marginalized group members share their cultural differences with everyone else in the group, even if they are just like them. Marginalized group members range from a variety of groups. These groups include members from different ethnic groups, racial groups, women, homosexuals, and people with disabilities. In other situations, co-cultural theory has been used to “examine how majority groups members adapt co-



cultural practices in contexts where they are in the minority” (Camara et al., 2010, pg. 87). As these group members in their situation establish working practices to interact with dominant group members, they then have to decide which practice will be most appropriate for a specific interaction. This information leads to the first research question:

RQ1: Being the marginalized group at the University of Portland, what is the significance of Luau by the Hawai’i club as a method for communicating with the dominant group at the university?

### ***Structuration Theory***

The second theory that is important to this study is structuration theory. Structuration theory is necessary because it “is concerned with understanding how social structures and human interaction combine to both use and to reproduce or challenge social institutions” (Hoffman et al., 2010, pg. 207). Structuration theory is important for understanding the basic structures in social systems. These structures are the rules and resources that are necessary for these social systems (Hoffman et al., 2010). There is a strong emphasis on duality with this theory. Duality is one of two main concepts surrounding structuration theory. Duality is defined as the “role of interaction and communication in social systems, but it also carries with it implications for creating change in those systems” (Li et al., 2011, pg. 463). What this means is that as people communicate with one another, they help to reproduce the existing social structure while also producing small changes to it as well. Within this context, the individuals are considered as social actors who “have agency to change the social structures that are both enabling and constraining to them” (Li et al., 2011, pg. 463). The reproducing and creating new structures are the duality elements in structuration theory.

After the duality effects take place, systems slowly seem to emerge from them. Systems in this context are “the observable outcomes of the applications of rule/resource in situated interaction encounters” (Rose, 2006, pg. 176). Systems are the ultimate social practices that are observable between individuals. There is a kind of special interest in the concept of the “institutions” that are directly associated with the regular routine that are observed in micro encounters of people (Rose, 2006). These institutions range from a number of variables that affect both parties involved. One such institution described is language. It is understood that “our understanding of (language) should be based on our everyday practice of it in specific social contexts” (Li et al., 2011, pg. 464). Rules about a social system can be learned through the primary language that is spoken. One aspect of language that is important to understand is that language can allow anyone in a social group to participate equally no matter what “level” status they have because with full language competency, everyone is able to understand one another without being manipulated (Li et al., 2011).

From reinforcing to creating structures in social institutions, none of this would necessarily be accomplished without the agents who act in them. Individuals in systems have a role or a position, whether they are the majority or the minority. Positioning is essential to understand for individuals because the “positioning of persons both constrains and enables action but since there are differential distributions of knowledge and resources in social systems, persons are not necessarily situated in equal ways within them” (Rose, 2006, pg. 176). Knowing where people are positioned can be helpful because it will allow for them to adapt or pick up new skills when dealing with group members who are in better positions than themselves. When marginalized individuals of a group understand their positioning, it can help them to better

understand what they need to do to communicate with the majority of the group who are better positioned.

Understanding structuration theory is important for the concept of Hawai'i clubs identity at the University of Portland. Structuration theory provides insight into how the club first understands its position within the university, second how they interact with others at the university, and third how these interactions perform the duality effect to reinforce and create new social structures. Luau is probably one of the most notable social structures created by the club at the university. This social structure creation is intriguing because it has become a major social change to the university, which is predominantly a Catholic institution with no normal connection to the Hawaiian culture. The addition of Luau, a social event that shares the culture of Hawai'i through music and dance, to the university culture leads to the second research question:

RQ2: How does Luau help to shape the identity of the Hawai'i club through the social structures of the university?

### **Methodology**

The proposed methodology for this research project is to interview the heads of the Hawai'i club in charge of organizing the Luau event. The event was held at the university's basketball stadium called the Chiles Center. The event held a large stage where all the dances were performed with tables set out across the entire gym floor for spectators to eat some traditional foods from Hawai'i. This special event only took place on one day, but the preparations for it required months of planning and work. So the scene of this study happened during the weekly dance rehearsals that everyone who has a stake in Luau is a part of. I had insider access to this scene because I am also participated in the Luau in the dances that were performed. I am not a part of

Hawai'i club as I am not from Hawai'i, but I did have a unique position to be a part of this cultural experience while still holding an outside perspective.

Being a part of the dances gave me access to the people who hold office positions within Hawai'i club and thus are at the forefront of trying to communicate their identity to the university. I have a personal association with everyone within the club, so the ability to interview these individuals is more accessible. Still to be safe and formal, I requested a chance to interview any and all candidates that accept via email. To make sure that my research is acting ethically and that they know it is ethical, I gave the candidates full disclosure of the subject of the study and any research material that they requested to view. I had created an informed consent page that I required candidates to sign upon their agreement to be surveyed. If they declined to sign the informed consent then that person did not participate in the survey and a new candidate was sought for. When a candidate agreed to participate in the survey and signed the consent form, then their confidentiality was protected as well. No official names were used in the survey identifying the candidate. This way the candidate felt more secure when participating in the survey and answered the questions truthfully knowing they were not be identified.

### **Analysis**

The first question in relation to identity on the university for this research was: Being the marginalized group at the University of Portland, what is the significance of Luau by the Hawai'i club as a method for communicating with the dominant group at the university? Having conducted extensive field notes and having interviewed two different students from Hawai'i, many interesting themes surfaced. Some of the reasons that were found for how Luau is used to communicate with the dominant group at the university were: (a) it is an expression of culture, (b) it accepts people outside of Hawai'i, and (c) it brings different people together. The second

research question was: How does Luau help to shape the identity of the Hawai'i club through the social structures of the university? The themes that surfaced from the observations and interviews included: (a) the fact that Luau brings the club into the spotlight at the university and (b) it offers a chance for people to learn more about a new culture.

### *Expressing Culture*

One of the first prominent themes that were conveyed in the interviews with Olaf and Elsa, as well as observations in the field, was the expression of culture in Luau. Expression in this research is understood as the displaying of and sharing of one's culture. This theme was the most prominent theme expressed by the interviewees. They both discussed how effective Luau is at sharing their culture. Based from the field notes, culture is expressed in many ways, within Luau and in regular day-to-day interactions. Expression is seen in the clothing style chosen by Hawaiian students, which include tank tops, board shorts, and slippers that are known as flip-flops. It is also seen in the way that the students communicate with each other and with other students who are not from Hawai'i. Within Luau itself, culture is expressed in these same factors, but also in the food, dances, decorations, and interactions. But one of the interviewees, Olaf, describes Luau as an expression to celebrate who they are and of their acceptance into the culture at the university. While Olaf does not generally have it on the forefront of his mind to always be expressing his culture, he does take an active role in expression during Luau because Olaf states, "this is the time that we are expected to express our culture".

The other interviewee, Elsa, shared very similar comments towards this theme because she agrees that Luau is a medium for the students to express who they are and where they came from. An interesting point that she brought up regarding this though was that Luau does not force their culture on people because she states, "people want to be there, it's like a way of showing

people who we are and where we grew up.” The event is held for people who want to learn more about the culture. Elsa believes that expression is crucial for the club, and for people from Hawai’i to not only break traditional stereotypes that people have of them, but also to reinforce stereotypes. Asking further questions regarding this statement, Elsa stated that to help get people to attend the Luau performance, the club does stereotype itself a little bit, like with hula outfits and coconut bras. But in reality no one ever does stuff like that.

### *Accepting other People*

Accepting other people was the second theme noticed during the interviews. A large stereotype that is commonly expressed by non-Hawai’i students, and that the interviewees pointed out, was the stereotype that Hawai’i students only accepted other Hawai’i students. Elsa highlighted this stereotype on the basis of familiarity stating, “people are more afraid of what they do not know, they would rather cling to what is familiar to them”. She emphasizes that this has nothing to do with the fact that Hawaiian students do not choose to be friends with other people, but that they gravitate towards something familiar, especially at the beginning of college. But based on field notes and observations, this kind of behavior does not occur by the students, especially after being on campus and having opportunities to branch out. There were definitely non-Hawaiian students participating in the Luau. Elsa furthers her point on this matter by describing the kind of upbringing people have in Hawai’i. Hawai’i is a large melting pot for many different Asian cultures, Hawaiian, and white cultures. Because of this mix of different cultures, people in Hawai’i are raised to be accepting and nice to everyone.

Olaf shares many of these views both culturally and personally. Olaf expresses how proud the culture of Hawai’i, the students from Hawai’i, is to be accepted by the University of Portland. Not only that, he is proud to accept people by inviting them to the Luau event. Olaf

equates this to a “cultural handshake between two different cultures”. Olaf described an example of his earlier experiences at the university where the friends he made who were not from Hawai’i were very accepting of him and his culture. His initial experiences were very fitting to how beliefs on acceptance because others were just as accepting of him as he was with other people.

#### *Method for Bringing People Together*

Bringing people together was a major concept conveyed by the interviewees. This theme seems to follow suit from the previous one of being accepting of others because in order to bring people together, they have to be accepting of other people. Bringing people together is a major aspect of Luau. Elsa supports this claim by stating, “it’s the easiest way to get people together who want to learn about it.” Because the Hawaiian students are accepting and bring other people together during Luau, these people are able to learn a new culture at their choice. One example that Elsa discussed was the professors from the university. During the actual Luau event, there was a dance for just the professors to perform. These professors who chose to learn about the dances wanted to learn not only the dances themselves, but to be a part of something different and to learn the deeper meanings behind the dances. Another way that Luau brings people together, Elsa stated, is through the combined efforts of other clubs, like Guam club, to help Hawai’i club run the Luau. By bringing in other clubs, and therefore other students who are not from Hawai’i, Luau is able to achieve a greater success by having a larger support group run it. Bringing together different people to help operate Luau is a starting point for bringing together even more people to watch the Luau event.

Olaf went into a more historic aspect of Luau on the basis of bringing people together. He talked about how in the past; the king of Hawai’i would throw a Luau for special occasions. Olaf stated how Luau’s “bring the Hawaiian people together.” But now, after many generations and

different cultures mixing with the traditional Hawaiian culture, Luaus are meant to bring all sorts of people together. His point for bringing up the history of Luau is that bringing people together is the underlying point of Luau because it is a celebration.

During the actual Luau event, there were many different people who attended. A large majority of attendees were parents and family of many of the students of Hawai'i, but another large portion were students, professors, and local families from the surrounding community. Observing from behind the scenes at the performance, many of the student's families were seated amongst tables with the students and other people from the mainland. This allowed for many interactions between different people, following the point of the Luau.

#### *Luau brings the club into the spotlight at the university*

Luau has a significant impact on the whole Hawai'i club itself. The club has been hosting the Luau event for over thirty years now and, seeing as how the event is able to come back every year and continue to bring people together, shows how successful Luau is. But in the beginning, when it was first incorporated, Luau was a means for accepting people and of being accepted by the university as a whole.

Olaf felt that the Hawai'i students over thirty years ago decided to host the Luau because they felt like a minority group; they felt alone at the university. He assumes that they did not want to feel so alone at the university, which led to the decision to host a Luau. This decision, Olaf states, "brought them out to the spotlight, but not in a negative way." He elaborates on the point of it being positive because he states that it wasn't a decision for boasting or a statement of superiority. What he stated was really implied about the decision was that "this is just our way of kind of mentioning that we are here, we are a presence at this school." While the group is still a



minority group, Luau has brought them a stronger position within the university giving them a lot of recognition.

Elsa recognizes the effect that Luau has had on the Hawai'i club. She believes that thanks to Luau, Hawai'i club is one of the largest and most recognized clubs on campus. She believes that from the original incorporation of Luau, it brought the fact that there even was a Hawai'i club to the minds of the students at the university. After the incorporation, it also gave everyone a common topic of conversation that spread from student to student, bringing even more attention for the event. But being a member club, Elsa relates the fact that students have always done all the work setting up and arranging every aspect of the event to bringing it to the attention of others. This is because she says "especially in the way that we have to do everything for Luau, it forces us talk to people we normally wouldn't." This brought more attention to Luau, and tied to the theme of accepting everyone, as the students are branching out, talking to new people, and promoting the club to other students and faculty on campus. The process of working themselves to create the event has also had a positive affect of having others on campus not see them so much as a minority group, but more as equals.

*A chance for people to learn more about the culture*

Luau is a great example of consistency, as each theme seems to correlate with other themes.

Luau is a chance for other people to learn about the culture correlates with the themes of acceptance and of bringing people together. This is because Luau accepts other people to bring them together so that they can learn about the Hawaiian culture.

Olaf relates a personal story of his about some of his earlier experiences at the university. When he first arrived he had an experience where his, now current, friends were hesitant at first of becoming his friend because he was a big guy from Hawai'i. But after spending time with

them, and later after they got a chance to go to Luau and experience it, they were able to learn more about his culture and where he comes from. This gave them a better understanding of who he was personally, which gave them a better appreciation of their friend. While these friends were not originally seeking to actively learn about the Hawaiian culture, they still nonetheless were accepted to come and share in a cultural experience that ultimately enhanced their learning.

Elsa did not have this exact experience, but she completely understands the importance of Luau as a learning experience. The event is an opportunity for those who are interested in learning about a new culture to do so. Not only just to learn about a new one, but also to be a part of it. This in case relates to the professors who had a dance in the Luau. They are not from Hawai'i, at least not the ones who performed, so they were able to get an even deeper experience by learning the cultural meanings and stories behind all the dances being performed. The most important thing that Elsa believed was the takeaway from Luau is that Luau helps to break the assumptions that Luau and Hawai'i club are only for Hawai'i students. This is proven from field observations where there are a small group of students who are actually a part of Hawai'i club that are not from Hawai'i. These same students helped out with the performance as well by setting up decorations, selling tickets, and even taking part in the dances. This acceptance into the club organization itself is a sign of acceptance by the Hawaiian students and is a great opportunity for these students to learn even more about the culture through personal interactions with the students.

### **Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to understand how the Hawai'i students at the University of Portland express their identity through Luau and how the importance of the event. The findings from the research have found that the main importance of Luau is rooted into some of the main

aspects of the Hawaiian culture. By expressing their culture, they can share the aspects of acceptance and bringing people together. Not only that, but Luau at the university has helped to bring a lot of attention to the Hawai'i club by offering a chance for people to learn about their culture.

The most important topic of this research understood the concept of cultural identity. Cultural identity was simply defined by Xiao (2009) as having a specific way of thinking and view of the world. The reason that cultural identity was important for this study was because it offered a framework of understanding the differences between people. The Hawaiian culture is vastly different from the other cultures in the United States. The findings have found that some of the views of the world by the Hawaiian students standpoint included the acceptance of different cultures and the bringing of people together. The Hawaiian culture today is a vast mix of many different cultures, which is why acceptance is such a vital value. The findings supported the assumption that identity is a very important value for the students from Hawai'i because they are able to grow closer to one another and with others at the university by bringing everyone together through Luau. As one interviewee, Olaf, stated, the students from Hawai'i did originally feel like a minority group; they felt alone. But thanks to their decision to incorporate Luau over thirty years ago, their identity at the university has completely changed. They are still technically considered a minority group, but they have so much recognition now that they don't feel alone.

Findings from the research have found that cultural identity is a very personal attribute for many students from Hawai'i. This is because there is a strong connection and love for their home. As such, many practices they do back home, the students continue to do at the university. These practices include the style of dress, which is equivalent to going to the beach, to various slang and phrases that are common in Hawai'i. The majority of Hawai'i students continue to

practice them even if to other people it seems silly, like wearing shorts and a tank top while it is cold outside.

Co-cultural theory plays such a pivotal role for the students from Hawai'i. Co-cultural theory helps to examine how cultural groups interact with more dominant societal groups (Gabor, et al., 2012). This theory was the grounding theory behind the reasons for this research project. To help get a better understanding of how Hawai'i students express their identity to the larger societal group at the university. The findings from the research have found that the biggest method that the Hawaiian students use to interact with the rest of the university is to accept them. What this means is that they accept their differences from how they grew up, relate them to their own, and as a way to reciprocate, they invite them to share in their culture through Luau. Interestingly, however, based from the research and observations in relation to the theory, the Hawaiian students have taken a different route from the theories expectations. This is because in the theory, the focus is to understand how a minority group will try to work to communicate with the dominant group and to negotiate their status (Orbe, 2005). But after interviewing Olaf and Elsa, it seems that the basis of this was accomplished thirty years ago when Luau was first introduced to the university. Today, this theory still stands strong as they are still a minority group communicating with the dominant societal group, but the focus is not on how can the Hawaiian students communicate with the dominant group, but really how can they continue to improve the effective methods that they have already come up with. Research findings have found that the Hawaiian students do not feel like a minority group anymore because of the prevalence of Luau and the growing continuation of Hawaiian students to the university each year. They have one of the strongest presences on campus.

Structuration theory is another theory of importance for the study of Hawai'i student identity. This theory focuses on how people interact with social structures in order to either reproduce or challenge them (Hoffman et al., 2010). The most obvious finding for this theory from the research, even just by assuming it, was Luau. Luau was a major change to the social structure of the university. The research found that when Luau was introduced, it was done so because the Hawaiian students felt alone and underrepresented at the university. In order to change this, the students and the university worked together to put on the Luau. The reason this was a challenge to the social structure of the university was because Luau is a major representation of a completely different culture than that of the catholic based culture at the university.

But after Luau was incorporated the social structure changed to make room for other cultures to express themselves. Following this though, Hawai'i club has continued to grow and to continue to challenge to social structure at the university. The findings from the research have shown that the club has become one of the most popular and well-known clubs on campus. They were brought into the spotlight thanks to Luau and after expressing their cultural aspects of acceptance time and time again. Thanks to Luau, Hawai'i club has grown and the students are proud to identify with their culture while at the university. They are proud to share their identity of where they came from and of how they were raised. The interviewees did express concerns from people who do not know much about the club or Luau as having some stereotypical views on them, but they believe that that is why Luau is so important, so that they can share their culture with these people and help them to understand that they are one in the same, just with a different cultural upbringing.

The findings of this research has helped to understand the significance of Luau for the students from Hawai'i to help them not only to accept the other students at the university, but to share their culture and in turn, to have the other students accept them. This has been the driving force behind why the Luau and the Hawai'i club have been so successful at transforming themselves from a minority group with little representation, to one of the most respected clubs on campus.

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