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Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals published online 5 September 2013

DOI: 10.1177/2165143413498412

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Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals
XX(X) 1–11
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Standing Behind and Listening to Native Hawaiian Students in the Transition Process

Kathryn K. Yamamoto, PhD[1] and Rhonda S. Black, EdD[1]

Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to describe how culture, disability, and prospective first-generation college student status influenced the transition decisions of five native Hawaiian students with specific learning disabilities who attended a Hawaiian-focused charter school. Students had strong ties to their history and culture which influenced all facets of their lives including their decisions about the future. Accessing postsecondary education (PSE) was viewed as a means to employment that would enable them to support their family members. The lack of economic, social, and cultural capital may present a larger barrier to accessing PSE than disability. Implications for personnel who are tasked with developing and maintaining culturally appropriate curricula and programs for students are discussed.

Keywords

native Hawaiian, specific learning disability, first generation, transition, college

Culture is at the core of all human activities (Artiles et al., 2011) and encompasses everyday practices such as discrete behaviors, traditions, habits, and customs (Morgan, 1998). In addition, culture is the process of reality construction that allows people to see and understand events, actions, objects, utterances, and situations in unique ways (Morgan, 1998). Because members of cultural groups have different ways of understanding the world and socializing their young, they may also have unique expectations of schools and teachers leading to mismatches between home and school environments (Schonleber, 2006).

Extensive research has been conducted on conflicts between students from minority cultures (e.g., collectivist orientations) and the individualist culture of educational institutions (Ogata, Sheehey, & Noonan, 2006; Yamauchi, 2003). Differences between collectivist and individualist cultures appear in matters such as (a) societal cooperation versus competition, (b) individual versus family or group orientation, (c) time orientation, (d) gender roles and family responsibilities, (e) interaction styles, and (f) self-determination (SD) and autonomy versus family or group responsibilities (Triandis, 2001). TheAmerican culture tends to place value on the individual over the social (Coffman, 2011). Individualist values can be found throughout the federal legislation (e.g., Individuals With Disabilities Education Act [IDEA, 1990]) that guides the domain of special education (SE). Cultural values such as normalization, independence, autonomy, and equity are manifested in SE's emphasis on SD (Trainor, 2002) and oftentimes fall short in meeting the needs of youth from collectivist cultures (Leake, Black, & Roberts, 2004). These differences often create challenges for students from collectivist cultures who must learn to understand, adjust, and perhaps even forgo their own cultural beliefs as they maneuver their way through the U.S. educational system and transition to adult roles and responsibilities.

SE research has often used the terms *culture* and *diversity* as synonyms for ethnicity thus distilling culture down to ethnic traits and assuming homogeneity within groups (Artiles et al., 2011; Trainor & Kim, 2013). One's cultural identity however, is made up of more than ethnic traits. Therefore, cultural identities should be seen as "plural and fluid" (Trainor & Kim, p. 124), with membership in various groups. In this study, we regarded culture as a multi-faceted phenomenon that influences identity and guides transition decisions and goals. We explore three interacting factors: (a) Native Hawaiians (NH) and education, (b) specific learning disabilities (SLD), and (c) first-generation college student status.

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NH and Education

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, approximately 1.2 million people in the United States identified as NH and Other Pacific Islander. This demographic group was found to be one of the fastest growing racial groups in the period spanning 2000–2010 (Hixon, Hepler, & Kim, 2012). Consistent with national statistics, in the State of Hawaii, the population of NH children is the most rapidly growing sector and is projected to double in the next 40 years (Ledward & Malone, 2008).

Approximately 28% of public school students identify as NH/Part-Hawaiian (Office of Hawaiian Affairs Data Book, 2011). NH students have lower standardized test scores, poorer high-school graduation rates, a disproportionately high rate of grade retention, and low rates of enrollment into postsecondary education (PSE) institutions (Benham, 2006). Stressors such as single-parent households, unemployment, poverty, and financial obligations (more prevalent in the NH community than in any other ethnic group in Hawaii) often negatively affect the educational development of this population (Kamehameha Schools, 2009). Historically, NH students have not performed well under a Western-based economic and educational system (Yamauchi, 2003).

The experiences and cultural and linguistic practices of students belonging to racial minorities are often devalued and/or pathologized (e.g., behavior seen as disruptive or resistant; Wortham, 2006). Students and teachers enter the school environment with different expectations, values, beliefs, and practices resulting in reciprocal misinterpretation (Black, Mrasek, & Ballinger, 2003; Leake & Black, 2005). To succeed in public schools, NHs must take on the values and manners related to success in the Western culture. For many NHs, school is seen as a place of conflict and struggle where one must negotiate content, context, values, instructional strategies, and measures of accountability. To address these issues, 17 Hawaiian-focused charter schools have been created where "instruction and learning are grounded in the values, norms, knowledge, beliefs, practices and language that are the foundation of Native Hawaiian culture" (Kamehameha Schools, n.d.).

NH Students in SE

Lowered teacher expectations and the labeling of minority students as educationally disadvantaged have adversely affected minority education services. This has resulted in the disproportionate channeling of minority children into SE (Ogbu, 1990). Although there has been a slow but steady decline in the percentage of NH students receiving SE, NH students continue to be overrepresented in SE accounting for approximately 28% of all public school students, but one third of the SE enrollment (Kamehameha Schools, 2009). Ogata et al. (2006) identified five reasons why NHs were overrepresented in SE:

- Inequalities in facilities and equipment in low-income areas (predominantly inhabited by NHs) combined with high teacher turnover rates have resulted in the neediest students educated in the most poorly equipped schools by the least experienced teachers.
- Although many NH students are raised speaking Hawaiian Creole English as their first language, they are taught by teachers who speak Standard English. Students often perform poorly on standardized tests and consequently, may be identified as requiring SE services.
- Educators and evaluators who determine eligibility for SE services often lack cultural competence. This often results in flawed test results and inaccurate eligibility decisions. Also, most standardized tests did not include NH children in their norm groups. Therefore, these tests may be invalid for this population.
- SE teacher recruits often come from the continental United States to fill vacancies in areas serving predominantly NH. These recruits are in all probability unfamiliar with the NH culture.

Developing a better understanding of possible reasons for the overrepresentation of NH students in SE and unlocking keys to understand and thus better serve students from the NH culture provided an impetus for this study.

Students With SLDs

Key pieces of legislation including the IDEA, the Americans With Disabilities Act, and the Rehabilitation Act have helped to increase the participation of persons with SLD in PSE and employment (Kerka, 2002). Currently, about 47% of students with SLD participate in some form of PSE within 4 years of high school graduation; 16 % at a 4-year university (Newman, Wagner, Cameto, & Knokey, 2009). These percentages drop by about half for those from families earning less than $25,000 per year. However, slightly more than one third of PSE students with SLD (35.5%) identified themselves as having a disability and informed their schools of their disability (Newman et al., 2009). That means two thirds of students did not qualify for accommodations because they did not self-disclose their disability. This is particularly alarming since students with SLD who attend college often enter unprepared for the volume and complexity of the work and have difficulty making the shift from others directing their learning to directing their own learning (Connor, 2012). Newman et al. reported that of the students who had attended but were no longer enrolled in

PSE, only 25% left because they had graduated or completed their program.

First-Generation College Student

Socioeconomic circumstances and family's lack of cultural capital can greatly influence a young person's transition choices. Those who enter PSE as first-generation college students, often straddle the working-class culture of home and the middle- and upper-class culture of PSE (Housel, 2012). Youth with disabilities who have at least one parent with a bachelor's degree are 11% more likely to enroll in PSE than those whose parents do not hold college degrees (Trainor, Lindstrom, Simon-Burroughs, Martin, & Sorrells, 2008). Compared with their peers, first-generation college students are at a distinct disadvantage in many ways: They are less likely to be academically prepared for college, have lower levels of family income and support, have less knowledge about the PSE application process and resources, and have more difficulty acclimating themselves to college once they enroll (Seidman, 2005).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore how three factors (a) belonging to the NH community and culture, (b) diagnosis of a SLD, and (c) identification as a potential first-generation college student influenced the student's postsecondary transition process and goals. The central research question for this study was as follows: How do culture, disability, and first-generation college student status affect the transition decisions of NH students with SLD?

Theoretical Framework

We selected Vygotsky's sociocultural theory to frame this study. This framework prompted the selection of our site and participants, development of research questions, and data collection method and analysis. Sociocultural theory is based on the tenets that human activity takes place in cultural contexts, are mediated by language and other symbol systems, and can be best understood when investigated in its historical development (Vygotsky, 1978). Sociocultural theory emphasizes the interdependence of social and individual processes in the construction of knowledge (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996).

Method

We used a multiple case study approach bound by the physical parameters of the chosen site (Hawaiian-focused charter school), by participant demographics (identification with NH culture, potential first-generation college student, high school student with a SLD), and by time (academic year).

Participants and Setting

To maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms are used for the students and faculty, and the research site and specific citations regarding the school are not shown. All participants are NH and had been identified by the Hawaii Department of Education as having an SLD. *Kainoa* (age 15) has three biological siblings and five nonbiological siblings through his adoptive parents. *Poʻokela* (age 14) lives with his biological parents and two siblings who attend the same school. *Kekolu* (age 15) lives with his parents and two younger brothers. *Puʻuwai* (age 16), the only female in this study, lives with her mother and two younger siblings. ʻ*Aukua* (age17) lives with his extended family.

Na Keiki o Ka ʻ*Āina* (NKKA) is one of 32 public charter schools, and 17 Hawaiian-focused charter schools in the State of Hawaii. This school was purposefully selected for the study due to its large enrollment of NH students (97% identify as NH/Part-NH), the number of students identified as SLD (approximately 25% of students receive SE services), and the interest and support of administrators, school founders, and parents. The school's curriculum integrates core subjects into place- and project-based learning.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection methods included (a) individual semistructured interviews with the five student participants and with the Student Services Coordinator (SSC), (b) observations, and (c) collection and review of artifacts.

Interviews. We conducted two 1:1 interviews with student participants on the school campus after school hours. The location and time provided for confidentiality of the session as well as facilitated student participation. Complementing the communication style of many NHs, we utilized an active, participatory communication style (Gay, 2002) called "talk story" (Au & Kawakami, 1985) to promote and facilitate engagement and spoke in the Hawaiian Creole English dialect. As interviewer and interviewee understood the same ground rules of "talk story" (Affonso, Shibuya, & Frueh, 2007), trust and understanding were easily attained. While continuing a "talk story" dialog, we asked open-ended questions to explore the student's postsecondary decision-making process. We developed the interview questions to seek a better understanding of issues related to the central research question: "How do culture, disability, and first-generation college student status affect the transition decisions of NH high school students with learning disabilities?" Interview questions included (a) graduation-related questions (What would you like to do after you graduate? What things are in place to help you reach your goal(s)? What things might you need help with?); (b) disability-related questions (How would you describe yourself as a student? Do you feel that there is anything that has gotten in the way of your learning?); (c) culture-related questions (What does it mean to be a Hawaiian? How does culture influence your life?; and (d) first-generation college student status questions (Has anyone in your family attended college?).

One of the tools used to supplement the interview process was a Circle of Dreams (COD; Mount, 1992) activity in which we used storyboards to assist the participants to describe their present and future situations. We asked each participant to write his or her name in the middle of a poster board and then to draw three concentric circles around the name. In the smallest circle, student was asked to draw pictures or write descriptions of people, activities, and things that were important to him or her. The process was repeated with the second circle reflecting important events/people during his or her graduation period, and a third circle reflecting events/people at age 21. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. For publication, speech dysfluencies (e.g., "um") are removed and brief translations to Standard English are placed in brackets to clarify statements using Hawaiian Creole English.

Observations and artifacts. The first author observed participants, family members, and NKKA faculty and staff formally and informally (e.g., during school ceremonies, in classrooms, at interview sessions, and at IEP meetings) using an observational protocol for recording information (Creswell, 2007). Observation notes were analyzed along with other data (e.g., documents on participants' involvement in past/present school activities, newsletters, IEPs, school reports, and storyboards) and served to contextualize information gathered from interviews. The artifacts provide a foundation for other data collected throughout this study and supported the study's findings.

Data Analysis

Categorical aggregation was used to analyze and interpret data. We reviewed all information to get a sense of the data as a whole. The first author recorded reflective notes and memos and summarized her field notes. Raw data were organized and coded into conceptual categories (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Open coding was used during the first review of field notes, archival data (IEP), and transcribed interviews. Axial coding was used during the second review of data to provide insight into specific coding categories and to organize the set of initial codes. Selective coding involved scanning the data and previous codes to selectively look for cases that best illustrated themes. Triangulation of data sources was used to support and corroborate findings (Creswell, 2007). In this study, observations in different settings (e.g., school opening ceremony, IEP meeting, classroom), researcher's notes, school documents, and student artifacts (e.g., storyboards) were compared with findings from the individual interviews. The researchers then used cross-case analysis to look for similarities and differences among the cases (Creswell, 2007). After transcribing and reviewing the first set of participant interviews, the first author initiated member checks (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). She met with each participant to review their original interviews to ensure that she accurately described their thoughts and feelings, to ask participants if they felt they wanted to add or make any changes to their storyboard, and to probe further into specific areas of their transition process. Clarification of statements and vocabulary promoted and helped to guide further discussion. Informants (i.e., two school staff) helped clarify and at times, make corrections to collected data (e.g., Hawaiian terms).

The first author met with a peer reviewer on a bimonthly basis to review transcriptions (verbatim accounts) and original recordings to assess interpretation of quotes (Krefting, 1991). Conversations ranged from discussions on how to access and interact with participants in culturally appropriate ways to teasing out thoughts and hypotheses. A helpful strategy was to discuss issues or situations that surprised her because "surprises" may indicate that the researcher has a preconceived notion. For example, the researcher was surprised when no one (faculty and parents) in attendance was concerned that a student chose to attend a school activity versus his exiting senior IEP meeting.

Findings

The findings from this multiple case study provide valuable information to practitioners in the field of education and disability and are shared through the voices of the student participants. First, our study is unique in that the home and the school communities embraced NH culture. This study was conducted with NH students in a Hawaiian-focused public charter school. Therefore, conflict of values between home, student, and the school was present to a much lesser extent than described in other professional literature that views transition for culturally diverse students through the lens of Ecologocial Systems Theory (Trainor & Kim, 2013). Participants' responses are grouped into four categories (i.e., future goals, culture, disability, and first-generation status) and described in the next section with a brief summary in Table 1. Of significance is not the goal identified by the student, but rather how the discussion on goals came about and the reasons behind the selection of a particular profession.

Future Goals

Three of the participants would like a career in professional sports. *Kainoa* and *'Aukua* have dreams of playing for the

Table 1. Participant Demographics, Goals, Transition Process, Influence of Culture, Disability, and Potential First-Generation College.

	Kainoa	*Po'okela*	*Kekolu*	*Pu'uwai*	*'Aukua*
Gender/Age	M/14	M/14	M/15	F/16	M/17
Grade	Freshman	Freshman	Junior	Junior	Senior
Vocational Goal	Pro Athlete- Football	Owner/Mechanic	Pro Athlete- Wrestling	Veterinarian/Nurse	Pro Athlete-Football
Transition Plan	No plan of action	Guided by interests	Tied to family	Tied to family; money	Tied to family; junior college
Prospects of Being a First Generation College Student and Economic Influences					
1st Generation College Student	Bro attended college; did not grad.	Follow own path	Parents want him to be a success	Mother influences PSE choice	Parents want PSE/ avoid distractions
Feelings about going to PSE	Did not discuss	Feels good about self	Positive; wants to attend PSE	Confused and scared	Positive; wants to make mom happy
1st discussed PSE with parents	Did not discuss	Unsure	In high school	Mother initiated discussion on PSE but spoke of costs	When first involved in sports
Role of Economics			Often discussed $ during interview.	Unable to consider PSE options due to $	Wants $ to care for parents
Cultural Influences					
Language	Raise children to learn language	Tied to perpetuating culture		Language integrated into family life	Raise children with Hawaiian as 1st lang.
Family and Community	Importance of halau, show respect	Important to know where you come from	Important to show respect	NKKA promotes heritage/history	
Sense of Place		Land ownership and farming important			Being Hawaiian tied to cultivating taro
Influence of Disability (Specific Learning Disability [SLD])					
Diagnosis	SLD	SLD	SLD	SLD	SLD
Enrolled in SE	Elementary	5th/6th grades	Elementary	Age 8 or 10 yrs.	Elementary
Perspective of SE	Ineffective	Positive Experience	Positive Experience	Helped	
Challenges	Reading; peers	Math	"Book work"	Maintaining attention	Reading & Writing

Note. PSE = postsecondary education; NKKA = *Na Keiki o Ka ʻĀina*. SLD = specific learning disability; SE = special education.

National Football League (NFL). *Kekolu* dreams of becoming a professional wrestler. *Po'okela* envisions becoming a mechanic due to proven skills in the field: "I want to get a good job . . . I guess I'm good in mechanical." *Pu'uwai* states that she wants to become a veterinarian or a nurse, but has not made plans toward a specific job goal.

Postsecondary discussions arose within the context of another activity or event. For *'Aukua* and his parents, a discussion about college came about when he started to play high school football: "I told them my dream was to go [play in the] NFL and they said in order to go [to the] NFL you have to go to college. So I just told them, oh, I like go college . . . " *Pu'uwai* was introduced to the idea of college attendance while participating in a middle school workshop: "We had this thing like in the beginning of the school they would ask you, 'What would you like to be when you grow up?' And then they would give a brief description about college." While all five participants cite a vocational goal, only two participants have taken action toward their goals. *Kekolu* sees his future in terms of sequential steps: "Well, I think I'm going to college. Mostly you go to college like you graduate, and go to job and you can get more money." Although his ultimate goal is to become a professional wrestler, an intermediary goal is to attend college in Las Vegas (his girlfriend recently moved there). He realizes that he lacks work skills and states: "I can work at McDonalds for now." *Kainoa* does not articulate plans for securing a PSE, but instead links college to the possible accolades accompanying playing football: "I really want to probably go college, play football . . . I can like be on TV playing football . . . "

Influence of Culture

In the collectivist Hawaiian culture, relationships are the cornerstone of experience and shape knowledge and how the individual is viewed in the context of one's relationship with family members, with the land, and with the community (Ewalt & Mokuau, 1995; Meyer, 2001). Participants spoke of numerous cultural themes including their love for music and dance (*hula*), *ʻāina* (land), *ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi* (language), and ʻ*ohana* (family and community). These students also value the cultural context of their Hawaiian-focused charter school. Their comments reflect the desire to perpetuate their culture. *Kekolu* states that he feels supported by his *kumu* (teacher) and acknowledges the responsibility of passing on lessons learned: "My teachers hope for me to be successful in life. To see me grow up from what they taught me and to share the knowledge." According to *Poʻokela*: "What it means to be Hawaiian to me I guess [is] to perpetuate my Hawaiian culture." *Puʻuwai* powerfully concurs: "You're not exactly what you say you are, like your nationality, or ethnicity, unless you perpetuate it."

Importance of language. *ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi* (the Hawaiian language) is the window to Hawaiian culture, history, and traditions (Kimura, 1983). A survey of the Hawaiian community found that 73.2% of the families surveyed expressed a desire to take classes to learn the Hawaiian language or to speak Hawaiian better. Although very few families indicated that Hawaiian was their primary language, many (52.8%) reported some use of the language (Kamehameha Schools, 2009). In our study, all five participants speak of perpetuating their culture through the learning of *ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi*. *Poʻokela* states that learning the Hawaiian language is directly tied to "being Hawaiian." *Kainoa* believes that when one learns the Hawaiian language, one "get[s] more knowledge." *Kainoa* and ʻ*Aukua* hope their children will speak *ōlelo Hawaiʻi* as their first language. *Puʻuwai* states that learning and understanding the Hawaiian language is integrated into the daily lives of her extended family. It was also important to the students that a number of their *kumu* speak the Hawaiian language.

Significance of family and community. Participants spoke of family in terms of their nuclear family, extended family, and community groups. Much of the data highlights the value participants place on the family and how they may best contribute to the ʻ*ohana*. This study supports literature which states that in Hawaiian culture an individual defines himself or herself by the quality of his or her relationships with family members and the community (Ewalt & Mokuau, 1995). ʻ*Aukua*'s vocational choice is driven by his motivation to care for his nuclear family, specifically his mother. He wants to play professional football to earn a good salary and buy things for his mother: "My mom she was praying, she was wishing for all kind new stuffs, like new car, bracelets." ʻ*Aukua* sees his grandfather as a role model and appreciates the ways his grandfather "works hard" to care for his family and home. *Kekolu* also values the connection between generations and speaks of his love for his grandmothers: "they're pretty important to me . . . it's kind of good to know where you're from and your geneology." *Kainoa* feels connected to his *hula hālau* (dance troupe). Using the *hālau* as an analogy for the larger community, he states that a dancer must understand and respect the values and rituals one's ʻ*ohana*: "to be Hawaiian pretty much [means] to try to show respect." *Kekolu* hints that there are different levels to learning and that one may get to a deeper meaning through collective instruction. He states, " . . . like we go up another notch. It's like you're learning a subject but then you're learning a totally different subject, like something more higher . . . as a group."

Several of the participants recognize their *kumu* as trusted allies. *Kainoa* reports that he can confide in his *kumu* whenever he feels angry or upset and states that his *kumu* wants the best for him: "[He wants me to] be a gooder [better] student . . . Hold my anger . . . choose the right path." *Kekolu* admires another *kumu* who continues his study of *ōlelo Hawaiʻi*: "He's still in school [takes classes at the university] . . . he comes to school [NKKA] and he teaches us."

A family's economic situation often has a significant impact on children's educational outcomes. To fund a PSE, most students begin by looking at family resources and then choose the institution based on the resources available (King, 2002). For those belonging to families facing financial hardships, the pursuit of a PSE may be unfeasible (Kamehameha Schools, 2009). The influence of the family's socioeconomic status was a factor in this study. For one student in particular (*Puʻuwai*), high school and post–high school decisions are limited by her family's socioeconomic status.

Sense of place. Place links NHs to a shared past and is intertwined with identity. Place is "one light that all Hawaiians share in their spiritual way finding to a Hawaiian identity" (Kanaʻiaupuni & Malone, 2006, p. 291). Three of the participants describe their culture and future activities in terms of a sense of place. *Poʻokela* dreams of owning property to farm and raise animals: "I'd like to own . . . a big land so I can do farming and stuff, like raising animals, planting." *Kekolu* also reports an affinity with the land. He states that since attending NKKA, he is able to identify native plants and to recount their usage. ʻ*Aukua* feels that being Hawaiian includes cultivating taro (i.e., a Hawaiian dietary staple; plays a significant role in mythology and cultural identity): "Living Hawaiian [means to] growing *kalo* . . . working in taro patches."

Influence of Disability on the Transition Process

Although some participants describe the shame of being enrolled in SE classes while in elementary school, having a disability did not present itself as a stigma at NKKA. Perhaps this is due in part to the structure of the participants' current learning environment with its highly interactive (hands-on) curriculum. The SSC feels that the practices of this Hawaiian-culture-based charter school provide a more accepting and inclusive environment for students with disabilities. Here, the school population is small and students are not singled out as receiving "special ed." He continued by stating,

> I think this school is actually a better atmosphere for kids with disabilities than the regular DOE school. No one knows who the SPED kids are here. There's not the bullying, there's not the teasing.

Perception of SE services. All five participants are identified by the Department of Education as having a SLD and received SE services prior to their enrollment at NKKA. While in elementary school, *Kainoa* attended a full immersion Hawaiian language school. He states that during those years he was enrolled in SE classes and described the classes as "junk." The only class he enjoyed was physical education because, "we played games." Although he describes his classes negatively, it was surprising that if given a choice, *Kainoa* prefers to return to and graduate from his former school because "a lot of teachers [there] miss me. They want me to come back and play football." Perhaps this hints at the importance of interpersonal connections found at his past school in contrast to the academic experience. *Po'okela* desired and tried unsuccessfully to secure SE services while in elementary school: "I was trying to get into special ed for my reading and my writing but then I didn't get in to it until I was like fifth grade . . . they kept telling me that I didn't need it." He appreciates his experiences in SE classes: "It was a little bit easier for me. It was better. They [the teachers] would explain it little bit more I guess." On the other hand, *Kekolu* states that he experienced the stigma of being enrolled in SE classes while in middle school.

> I was trying to hide it . . . every day I would hang out with them [students in regular education] instead of hanging out with the other kids that would go to special ed. Like in school, they treat me like different than how the other kids, cuz I was in special ed.

Pu'uwai was enrolled in SE classes since she was "8 or 10 years old." She also felt the stigma of being in SE classes. *Pu'uwai* reflects on how students in regular education viewed her: "I think they totally just totally downgrade you and just make themselves look smarter." '*Aukua* reports that he was enrolled in SE classes while in elementary school: "I was in some other special ed classes but math was just, cuz I was doing good in math, they switched me to regular math."

NKKA offers a fully inclusive curriculum to all students. None of the participants disclosed that he or she had an SLD during initial interviews, however they did discuss disability-related issues throughout the interviews (e.g., having a difficult time reading). It was during the second interviews that participants were more forthcoming about their academic challenges and experiences with SE services.

Academic challenges. *Kainoa* shares that he has a "hard time reading" and believes this may impact his success in college. He also acknowledges that he needs to focus on school because his grades are "kind of low right now." When asked if he is making post-graduation plans, *Kainoa* reports, "I don't know. I just need to catch up with my work now." *Po'okela* states that he has the necessary grade point average for college admission, but that spelling and math continue to be a challenge for him. *Kekolu* denies having academic problems and instead attributes challenges to learning a new teaching style. He indicates that science is getting harder than it used to be because the *kumu* are doing less experiential activities: " . . . it got more hard than it was . . . My first year, science was to go out, like into the mountains. Like this year we got to stay in class and learn about the earth. Yeah, more book [work now] . . . " In his second interview, *Kekolu* was more forthcoming about his academic challenges. He received SE services during his elementary and middle school years. "I think reading and writing was kind of hard for me . . . Every time I take the test, I have problems in reading and writing so they put me in special classes." *Pu'uwai* describes herself as a "good student" and initially stated that funding would be the only thing that would interfere with her participation in college. *'Aukua* reports that he struggled with reading when he was younger. He admits that his present academic status would interfere with college admission: "My grades are not too good and probably my SATs." *'Aukua* states that his social studies and language arts classes are difficult due the reading and writing demands: "My hardest class is . . . *mo'ōlelo* [history] and language arts . . . Cuz [in] language arts, you gotta write plenty papers; essays and stuff and read."

IEP meetings. The first author attended the IEP meetings of two participants (*Kainoa and* '*Aukua*). Minutes before the start of his IEP meeting (attended by adoptive parents, a school administrator, SSC, and three teachers) *Kainoa* asked if he "had to" stay for the meeting and was encouraged to do so. The discussion included a myriad of educational acronyms and it may have been difficult for *Kainoa* and his parents to follow. Very few professionals directed their questions to the student or parents; in most cases, the professionals talked *about Kainoa*.

'*Aukua* describes IEP meetings as helping him address current school problems and to make plans for his future: "like what I want to do after school-high school years. Preparedness for after school and helps me with what I'm struggling on in school." However, he states that he only attended IEP meetings if they did not interfere with his classes. '*Aukua* was not in attendance at his scheduled IEP meeting. This was surprising to the first researcher because he would be graduating within 2 months of the meeting. A teacher reported that ‘*Aukua* chose not to attend the IEP because he was involved in a school ceremony to be held the following day. The individuals present (parents, SSC, three teachers, a counselor, and an administrator) did not voice surprise that ‘*Aukua* was not there; they appeared to accept this reason for his nonattendance.

NKKA faculty did not discuss disability-related issues (e.g., present and future accommodations) during either of the IEPs observed. The first author was also surprised that the school counselor was not aware of the existence of a community college located within a few miles of NKKA and the programs offered there. This raises serious implications as to the quality of instruction and guidance provided to students and their parents. In this study, we have no context to discern whether students simply have not received the information or if they just are not using the information. We do know that due to the small size of the school, there is not a faculty member specifically assigned as a transition coordinator. We also know that students with disabilities have all classes in a general education setting and it is likely that there has not been a systematic effort toward transition planning and disability awareness.

Based on observations, interviews with participants and NKKA staff, and a review of artifacts (including IEP documents), the quality of transition services received by the five participants appears to be inadequate. There did not appear to be systematic, scheduled discussions on PSE or expectations for students to participate in a PSE. According to the Individual With Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, IDEIA, transition planning must begin no later than the first IEP to be in effect when the child turns 16, or younger if determined appropriate by the IEP Team (IDEIA, 2004). It does not appear from this study that the students are encouraged to participate in their IEPs and therefore to develop the skill set necessary to make positive transitions to and participation in adult roles.

First-Generation College Student

In the NH population, the educational attainment of parents is highly correlated with their children’s educational indicators such as absenteeism, disputes with school representatives, and grades earned (Kamehameha Schools, 2009). Many parents at NKKA do not have the cultural or social capital (Dumais & Ward, 2009) to independently initiate or support discussions on the college application and enrollment process. According to the SSC, “I think a lot of the parents didn’t go to college. And a lot of the parents don’t expect their children to go to college.” Venturing into this unfamiliar landscape may be perceived as intimidating or even as unnecessary. All five participants could be the first generation of college students in their households. College attendance was not discussed at home until these students were in high school. For two participants, this discussion began when the student expressed interest in pursuing football as a career. For three of the students, college attendance is not viewed as a way to gain knowledge for a future career but is instead a stepping stone to get to another set of circumstances (e.g., entry into professional football).

Not one of the participants could independently describe the college application process. ‘*Aukua* (a senior) and his mother have worked closely with school staff to apply for a junior college. *Pu‘uwai* participated in a “futures planning workshop” while in middle school, but reports that subsequent discussions with her mother were limited to the cost of a college education. When asked how she would feel going to college, *Pu‘uwai* voices her apprehension, “overwhelmed . . . kinda nervous.”

All participants are prospective first-generation college students. Only one participant (*Kainoa*) has a nuclear family member who attended and enjoyed college, but did not complete a degree. *Kekolu* wants to be the first member of his family to go to college: “They [My parents] want me to be like a success. Cuz they both never go college, so like I told ‘em I was going be the first one for go college and they was happy for that.” ‘*Aukua* desires to go to college so he may take care of his parents. *Po‘okela* reflects on how he would feel being a college student and discusses the opportunities college attendance may bring: “I’d probably feel good about myself that I’m going to college and getting a higher education . . . I’d just feel good that I’m actually moving in my life . . . That way, I know that I can actually do something that I like doing.” Thinking about college attendance, ‘*Aukua* admits that he would be “scared at first and when I get used to the surrounding then I’ll be happy.” *Pu‘uwai* is afraid that she will be “nervous” in college. She also sees her future as one beset with financial obstacles that impact postsecondary choices. When asked if there is anything that might get in the way of her being able to reach her future goals, *Pu‘uwai* responds: “Probably funding. Yeah, probably all money.” She does not voice plans to use her future income for personal gain but instead indicates she wants to take care of her family.

Discussion

The findings from this study bring to light the need to understand and promote cultural compatibility in formal and informal educational environments. In this study, participants do not present themselves as “self-governing autonomous individuals” as described in the SD literature (Lee, Palmer, Turnbull, & Wehmeyer, 2006). Instead, their mannerisms, speech, and choices are reflective of the NH culture and are highly influenced by the ‘*ohana* (the family); displaying interdependence rather than independence. In addition, despite the movement toward SD and other individualistic conventions, when working with students from CLD cultures, the importance of family must be acknowledged. Study participants have a strong identification with and commitment to their families. Many of the participants' choices include visions of financially supporting family members with college attendance seen as a necessary step.

The SE culture and inherent labeling of "SPED student" was not present at this inclusive school setting. In this study, the students were not overtly identified as having a disability by their teachers or their peers and were not pulled out of classes to receive SE services. While the removal of the "SPED" label appears to be a positive feature for students, there also may be a lack of transition planning specific to the individualized needs of each student. Students in this study could not articulate their disability and/or identify needed academic accommodations. Although IEP meetings were scheduled on an annual basis with school staff/administrators, families, and students present, the language of transition preparation and planning was neither detailed nor well-defined. In fact, there were no discernible transition services that taught or promoted self-advocacy and SD that would have helped these youth.

The study reveals that there are, in fact, two PSE transitional processes for these students. First, they participate in the typical transitional process: On leaving their secondary environment, they make decisions about whether to work or pursue a PSE; they decide where they will live, how they will support themselves, and so on. For this study's population, there is a second, concurrent process. These students must leave the womb of their culturally based environment (i.e., Hawaiian-based charter school) and participate in the "real world" which is seemingly void of NH traditions and practices. It will be up to these young people to self-disclose their disability to the appropriate parties (e.g., instructors, employers) to receive necessary accommodations. The student participants in this study lacked the cultural and social capital to plan for and pursue PSE options independently. As first-generation college students, they (and their families) would benefit from a school counselor, financial aid counselor, and/or participation in a mentoring type program to assist with their transition.

Limitations of the Study

The first author was the primary researcher for this study and responsible for all data collection. Although she was "invited" to carry out research at NKKA, she is considered an outsider (i.e., not NH), and was challenged with the task of engaging and informing school staff, and prospective parents/participants in the study. The study was time-limited with data collection taking place over one academic year. The study site was unique as the setting was a small Hawaiian-based charter school. Therefore, results cannot be generalized to NH students or to students with SLD in other public or private schools.

Implications for Practice

Much of the literature about culture and schools has focused on the mismatch between home and school. In this study, the school and home cultures reflected the NH culture and were indeed congruent. In most situations however, a dichotomy between the values of the collectivist NH culture and the individualist U.S. educational system will continue to exist. We must transform the present institutional protocol of IEP meetings where authority figures (e.g., school faculty) present documentation and transition plans are formally discussed to address the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students and their families. Practitioners and future researchers will therefore need to look to find ways that are culturally congruent (e.g., "talk story") that will authentically blend the individualist and collectivist beliefs into a workable framework for these youth.

Although all participants were diagnosed as having a SLD and had prescribed accommodations in their IEPs, none of them knew that they would have to self-identify as having a disability or seek accommodations independently should they pursue a PSE. Students with disabilities facing transition decisions are often introduced to the concept of SD, a concept rooted in the individualist perspective. Many NHs however, ascribe to a collectivist perspective that values skills that are other-oriented versus self-oriented. These students tend to focus on how they can help their family as opposed to thinking about what they want independent of the family needs and values. Therefore, interviews, assessments, interest inventories, and other individual-oriented career assessment tools should not be used in isolation from family and group input.

NH parents of children with disabilities have a significantly different definition of "involvement" when compared with the legal definition of educational decision-making (Sheehey, 2006). In the context of the IEP meeting, incongruencies between the home and school cultures, the skills and behaviors targeted for instruction, and the lack of collaboration at these meetings contribute to the parents' discomfort. We must transform the present institutional protocol of IEP meetings where authority figures (e.g., school faculty) present documentation and transition plans are formally discussed to address the needs of CLD students and their families. During *Kainoa*'s IEP meeting, very few professionals directed attention or questions to the student but instead talked *about* him. *Kainoa*'s parents also assumed a passive role. Perhaps instituting a more culturally appropriate approach such as "talk story" (Au & Kawakami, 1985) would promote participation not only by the student but also by his or her parents. As educators, researchers, and service providers, we need to recognize the values we bring to classrooms, meetings, and other interactions with NH students and their families.

We utilized the COD exercise (Mount, 1992) to initiate discussions with students on their present and future living situations. The COD was a short but effective exercise that prompted the students to think about future goals and dreams. Transition practitioners may consider utilizing a "gap analysis" approach (Hoover & Love, 2011) in lieu of or as a follow-up tool to the COD in working with CLD students (and students with SLD) to show them the "gap" between their current academic achievement and to determine steps needed to move from their current to desired state. The gap analysis will help make for more effective and productive conversations regarding postsecondary goals (Layton & Lock, 2007).

Despite its limitations, the study provides important information to those who serve NH students and other CLD individuals. The dichotomy and resulting conflict between the collectivist view held by many CLD students and their families and the individualist view held by personnel in educational institutions will need to be recognized and multicultural awareness systematically taught in undergraduate and graduate education classes. Not only should we teach about SD and self-advocacy, we recommend teaching pre- and in-service educators about collective-determination and group/community-advocacy. We must provide examples of group systems that demonstrate how an individual's talents and efforts can contribute to the good of the whole. We must consider teaching the concept of collective respect through teaching, counseling, leading, and serving in culturally relevant ways.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should investigate how smaller schools (e.g., those with limited personnel) deliver transition planning and implementation services. Models of effective practices in various types of schools would provide key information on how schools that embrace inclusion plan effectively for transition. Identifying schools that provide effective transition planning for all students (not just those with disabilities) would assist in developing a model that not only promotes inclusion but also sustainability. Ethnographic research regarding the decision-making practices of students with SLD from various cultural groups would enhance our understanding of culturally appropriate transition practices. Perhaps research conducted by indigenous researchers using focus groups to collect data will move closer to a more culturally compatible method of data collection.

In closing, we share the words of a NH poet who reminds us of our place as "outsiders." As researchers and professionals in the field, we must forgo the assumption that we are to lead others, and we must not be so ignorant as to consider ourselves an equal partner. We must instead, put aside our individualist tendencies, reevaluate the concept and goals of SD, and reframe how we communicate with students from CLD cultures. To serve, we must first learn and act in the traditional Hawaiian way by first watching and listening from a respectful distance.

> If to help us is your wish, then stand behind us.
>
> Not to the side, and not to the front. (Kalahele, 2002, p. 51)

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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