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**A case study of school reform at Castle High School: An analysis
utilizing Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory of Human
Development**

Furmark, Richard Allan, Ed.D.

University of Hawaii, 1992

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A CASE STUDY OF SCHOOL REFORM AT CASTLE HIGH SCHOOL:
AN ANALYSIS UTILIZING URIE BRONFENBRENNER'S
ECOLOGICAL THEORY OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

IN

EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS

DECEMBER 1992

BY

Richard Allan Furmark

Dissertation Committee:

Melvin Ezer, Chairperson
Royal T. Fruehling
Robert Potter
Neal Milner
Harry Friedman

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Epigraph	v
Preface.	vi
Chapter 1.	1
Introduction	1
James B. Castle High School Basic Profile.	25
Chapter 2.	45
Theoretical Basis for the Study.	45
Description of the Ecological Theory of Human Development.	45
The Paramount Importance of the Social Context	52
Development in Context	54
Social Habitability.	59
Chapter 3.	67
The Ecological Theory of Human Development in the Gold Core Context	67
The Microsystem and the Core Process	67
The Advisor-Advisee Relationship	67
Cooperative Learning	82
The Mesosystem and the Core Process	86
Interim Reports.	88
A Clear, Personable, Direct Communication Matrix . .	90
Core Team Meetings with Parents and/or Guardians . .	97
The Exosystem and the Core Process	103
The Macrosystem and the Core Process	116
Chapter 4.	143
Discussion and Recommendations	143

Notes 195
Bibliography 206

Epigraph

"The theoretical model used as a guide in this study, Bronfenbrenner's model, suggests that individual development can only be understood within a larger context of causal factors at multiple levels of analysis. This opens the way for consideration of many trends and policies within a social setting in terms of their impact on individual development."

"Native Hawaiian Educational Assessment Project
Final Report 1983," p. 21

"A theoretical conception of the environment extending beyond the behavior of individuals to encompass functional systems both within and between settings, systems that can also be modified and expanded, contrasts sharply with prevailing research models. These established models typically employ a scientific lens that restricts, darkens, and even blinds the researcher's vision of environmental obstacles and opportunities and of the remarkable potential of human beings to respond constructively to an ecologically compatible milieu once it is made available. As a result, human capacities and strengths tend to be underestimated."

"The Ecology of Human Development,"
Urie Bronfenbrenner, p. 7

"Further advance in the scientific understanding of the basic intrapsychic and interpersonal processes of human development requires their investigation in the actual environments, both immediate and remote, in which human beings live. This task demands the construction of a theoretical schema that will permit the systematic description and analysis of these contexts, their interconnections, and the processes through which these structures and linkages can affect the course of development, both directly and indirectly."

"The Ecology of Human Development,"
Urie Bronfenbrenner, p. 12

PREFACE

Ever since I have been involved in the educational arena I have been working in large institutions. Here in Hawaii I worked at Makaha Elementary School when the student population leveled off at 1,500 students. The last eight years I have worked at Castle High School, a large school now servicing a student population averaging 1,700-1,800 students.

I have seen first hand how big schools create factory-like lock-step arrangements for students, teachers and administrators alike. At the university level I have been very interested in the various philosophies and theories of education and human development. Being a generalist I believe I have been engrossed in wide-ranging and diverse intellectual pursuits.

From the start my superordinate goal was to somehow and in some viable fashion link the school to the university. I was working in the public school system and I wanted to do something that would take into consideration the status and real world situations of the school system. At the same time I wanted to integrate the depth and breadth of the knowledge I was gaining at the doctoral level. "Theory and practice" was an educational motto I not only heard, but also strongly believed.

As a counselor, I have worked with students who tend to fit into the high risk end of the pupil spectrum. All students may be at risk in today's fast paced and stress

impacted society, but as we all well know, some are "more equal" than others when we view the many factors and background variables that coalesce and intermingle to bring about high risk situations. Although counselors do work with "lower risk" students as well, the majority of our time is spent with the students who come from more high risk backgrounds.

When I worked at Makaha Elementary School, I knew first hand that the school was too big and too overcrowded to adequately meet the educational and psychological needs of the student population. I knew full well that many of the students were coming to school ill prepared to meet the challenges of grade level academic work.

I knew first hand that many entered kindergarten or first grade behind with regard to entry level behaviors--cognitive as well as affective/attitudinal. I knew we were not creating student chances for equal educational opportunity when we had them enter large classes with high student-teacher ratios. Many of these students were coming from poverty backgrounds; some lived with their families on the beach through no choice of their own. Many did not have books or educational toys in their homes. Many did not have parents or aunties/uncles who did well in school. Often their adult role models dropped out of school before high school completion.

To really give these youngsters a fair shake in the educational race, because they were starting behind other

students from other type backgrounds, we would have had to create "unequal educational opportunities" for them. To create a scenario wherein they had a chance to catch up, smaller teacher-student ratios and more adult help and supervision would have been essential ingredients. Instead, they entered a large school with high student-teacher ratios.

Could they get the sensitive, individual support they really needed to offset any deficiencies they may have entered with, in large classes in a big school? Common sense dictates a negative reply. Many start behind and fall further behind as they move through the lock step educational process. By the time they reach high school, too many have fallen too far behind so they do the logical thing--drop out or flunk out. I say logical from a contextual perspective. The system has failed them for years so they just confirm the failure by gaining closure on the situation in the form of an official drop out status.

From a counseling lens, I saw deeply that we could not truly separate the different worlds and domains in which the youngsters found themselves. I had to be blind not to see how powerful an impact family socio-economic backgrounds had on a child's chances of success in school. In general, I saw the strong correlation between family income and occupational status and a youngster's academic report card. There were exceptions to the correlational nexus, but by and

large one could not deny that there was and is a connection between these two areas of a child's life space: home and school.

Bright students who lived on the beach and had to move every two or three weeks to a new beach park site had a tougher educational struggle than the bright (or not too bright) student coming from an intact, stable professional household where education was emphasized and books and learning permeated the home. Thus I saw how homelessness impacts on educational opportunities and one's unfolding life chances.

The student, the family and the school were and are inextricably interconnected. Education does not grow and prosper in a vacuum. I began to see firsthand from my extensive "fieldwork" as a counselor with an educational foundations background that one had also to include the public policy dimension to truly arrive at a more complete understanding of the educational equation.

Was there not a public policy (political) level operating somehow and in some fashion to produce the unemployed, the homeless, the poverty? To truly gain insight into the educational struggle of the poor student coming from the beach, one had to hear how the student saw it--"from inside out," but one also had to gaze far from the classroom door as well: to probe into the myriad forces and factors in the larger world that contributes to and shapes the realities of the poor and/or homeless families.

For a more complete picture one had to look at the micro level and the macro level. In other words, one had to have a multi-dimensional view of things if one truly wanted to gain a clearer understanding of the educational picture. What happens in the classroom and in school is only part of the larger educational picture.

When one focuses on the school renewal movement, I believe that some educators have been caught up in an either/or mindset; that is, some believe that the home and family influence is the one key to educational development, and others believe that the effective school is the one key to the educational development of the child.

From my perspective, the ecological theoretical paradigm, a "both and" approach is needed to do justice to the problem of gaining insightful knowledge regarding the improvement and renewal of the educational process. For quality renewal that is long standing, the individual student, the family and the school, all have to be taken into consideration. To complete the picture we need to add the public policy component as well.

We need to think of education as a four-legged table. The student, the home, the school and the state/federal policy dimension make up the four foundational supports. If all are strong and fully supportive of quality education, then quality education of an excellent nature will ensue for all who are significantly involved in the overall process.

I do not believe we can single out one domain and claim that that particular component of the educational equation is the only one needed to be highlighted for positive results to unfold. To do justice to the magnitude of the problem we need to look at and make changes in all facets of the educational picture.

We should not single out schools alone for improvement and leave it at that; then, again, we most assuredly have to continue to work diligently for school improvement--for to do otherwise would be disastrous and ethically bankrupt as well.

I believe a lot of educators felt and still feel that schools could not do much to effectively educate students coming from poor and/or minority backgrounds.

After James Coleman's study regarding equal educational opportunity was published, many people came away discouraged because some of his conclusions were interpreted to mean that only the family and the socio-economic influence held power regarding educational opportunity. If you were poor and minority, the school cards were definitely stacked against you. If you were rich and white, you had a real good chance of doing well in society regardless of your schooling process.

As a reaction to this sentiment, many educators began to look at the school renewal movement as an antidote to the pessimism engendered by Coleman's report. Ronald Edmonds

and others began to look at schools that seemed to do a significantly better job of educating the poor and minority children than other schools did. They felt strongly that schools could make a real difference.

Thus, we had some educators placing the emphasis on the home and the socio-economic level; others placed greater weight on the schools as determiner of opportunity.

"Either/or" not "both/and." From the ecological theoretical mindset, both of these domains need to be highly emphasized: "you can't have one without the other." The home is the first "school," the school could be the second "home."

In addition to the home and the school, the individual student, the peer group and other important community factors need to be included. The political arena cannot be left out of the total gestalt, for what is determined in the budget process can have great impact on the educational lives of the children. In essence, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, and there are many parts to take into consideration.

Knowing full well that many elements and domains had to be investigated to truly get some kind of handle on the problems facing the schools and the educational system in general, I came to see that no matter what was done outside of the micro school situation, something definitely had to be accomplished within the schools themselves.

Since it was far fetched to think that schools would be deschooled, as Ivan Illich and others advocated, something feasible had to be done with the existing structure. Since no educational "Marshall Plan" appeared on the horizon, things had to be done in small gradual steps at individual schools. The target level for educational reconstruction and renewal became the individual school.

As John Goodlad pointed out, we need to focus on the ecology of schools so that we could better understand the interconnectedness of all the elements and subsystems operating within the school itself. Undergirding the change process itself was the realization that a change in one part of the school would have impact on other parts of the school. Each part and process was inextricably related to every other part and process. The awareness of this basic ecological principle was important in understanding what needed to be done to improve conditions in the schools.

As Urie Bronfenbrenner puts it:

"The ecological environment is conceived as a set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls. At the innermost level is the immediate setting containing the developing person. This can be the home, the classroom, testing room, etc. The next step, however, already leads us off the beaten track for it requires looking¹ beyond single settings to the relations between them.

Bronfenbrenner goes on to state that such interconnections can be decisive for development of events taking place within a given setting. The third level of the ecological environment evokes the hypothesis that the

person's development is profoundly affected by events occurring in settings in which the person is not even present.²

Thus, we see that the ecological theory of human development and learning is based on an expanding and flexible mindset with respect to the myriad levels and meta levels converging and interfacing in the educational process. Of paramount importance is the interaction, the transaction between individual and environment. As Kurt Lewin pointed out with respect to his field theory of human behavior: behavior is a function of the evolving interplay between person and environment. $B = f(PE)$.³

We can look to Lewin's field theory to gain insight into the need for smaller more humane learning milieus. For Lewin, human behavior is determined by the total number of psychological facts being experienced at the time of behavioral manifestation. Things that happen in the home, community, or in the school are major components of a student's life space. As all educators know, a change in the home configuration can have a powerful effect on how one performs in the classroom. A student's concentration and resulting grade pattern can easily take a nose dive when his or her family is going through a bitter divorce. To truly understand behavior, we would need to look at the total gestalt of a person's life space; ideally all the variables

and factors that make up the person's life experience would need to be looked at and analyzed.

For the most part, educators can do little about what takes place in the home or in the community. What takes place in the school is another matter. It is in the educational arena that options exist and alterable variables are present. The student's school life space with all of its multidimensional components and processes can be modified and restructured to bring about more sensitive, caring and supportive educational processes and arrangements. As Robert Ramsey states, "The 'schools within a school' concept rejects a rigid assembly line approach to education and permits the modern comprehensive secondary school to conduct a meaningful and personal program of instruction for each student."⁴

Benjamin Bloom states, "Sociological studies of socio-economic status (which include parent education, occupation, and income) reveal correlation of +.30 to +.50 between such indices and measures of school achievement."⁵ He goes on to state that:

While such studies do demonstrate significant effects of the home on school achievement, they are not very helpful to the schools or the parents because these characteristics are not alterable. There is little the school or the parents can do to alter their level of education, occupation, income, or ethnic characteristics.⁶

With respect to the high risk population, we can view the high risk situation as a continuum. All students are at

risk in today's world; some much more so than others due to the family and environmental forces impacting on their lives. Students entering school from poverty backgrounds with greater family dysfunction in general tend to have a harder time succeeding in school. The magnitude of their at "riskness" is greater due to their background variables.

In today's fast paced, competitive world, where unbridled individualism often drives the society, middle class students are surely not immune to the at risk factor. Especially in Hawaii with the astronomical cost of living element, two parents are required to work full time and more to make ends meet and maintain that middle class lifestyle. This reality has an effect on the amount of quality time parents can spend with their offspring. "If only we had time," has become a common articulation heard throughout all socio-economic classes.

As Harold Howe points out:

Even among more fortunate families, there is a growing gap between adults and children. The need for both parents to work in order for a family to stay in the middle class has been a major cause of this change, and it is simplistic to believe such a trend can be reversed. Ways must be found in families and communities to provide children and youth with the care and attention from adults they need to mature.

Thus the human element, even in middle class families, is considerably reduced due to the economic realities with which the adults must contend. Where does the school fit in to the overall gestalt of the situation? To have students, all at risk to some degree, attend large, bureaucratic,

impersonal institutions can only exacerbate an already tenuous situation. Above all, students need to know deep down that they are known and cared for as unique young human beings, each one special in his or her own priceless way.

One major conclusion of Coleman's study concerned the attitudes of the students in the educational enterprise. He concluded that the major determinants of classroom success had very little to do with the actual content of courses or the amount of educational equipment or even the competence of the teachers, but rather with "the attitudes of student interest in school, self concept, and sense of environmental control,"⁸ in other words, with the student's sense of being at one with the school. The one variable that appeared to significantly correlate with students' achievement pertained to the students' sense of control over their destiny.

This sense of loss of control factor appears to be inversely related to the size of the educational operation. Roger Barker, of the University of Kansas, has done considerable research in various contexts regarding the size of behavioral settings. His research tended to show "a negative relationship between institutional size and individual participation."⁹ Without a sense of participation, students surely can have little sense of control over their educational destinies. Alienation, anonymity and non-participation ensue in large, crowded operational units. In Big School, Small School, Barker

found the following to be evident: "We need to be concerned with the quality of life in the schools. Large schools if they are not broken down into smaller more humanistic houses, tend to be factory like in their orientation."¹⁰

Purkey and Novak present two basic models of school orientation: the factory model and the family model. The factory model leans toward the mass production of education. Students and teachers often have little real power to effect change or modification. In many ways, both are functionaries of a cold, bureaucratic system.¹¹

In the family model schools are more cooperative in nature and more sensitive to the need for solid support networks for all concerned. A deep sense of belonging is cultivated in the family model; this, in turn, leads to greater empathy for others in general. In essence, the house plan strives to bring about more of the family-type model within the larger factory-like comprehensive school. If enough houses are designed and developed, the "alienated bigness" factor will be defused and diminished. In other words, the big factory model will evolve into the smaller family model as more houses are added to the overall school picture.

From one perspective, the house model is a compromise in that small schools, in general, will not be created per se. The larger comprehensive high school will remain with us for some time. Given that fact, breaking the

bigness of it all into smaller, more humane learning families creatively brings about the needed support network so crucial a factor in stimulating student achievement and positive development, especially for the at-risk youngsters.

If the environment can be made more cohesive and supportive the nature of the interplay between person (student) and environment will change. The situation that Eliot Eisner portrays in The Ecology of School Improvement must be modified and restructured:

Fourteen year olds enter high schools of over a thousand persons with no adult formally responsible for their pastoral care. Teachers are focused on other matters; and where counselors are employed, the ratio of students to counselors is often about 1:450. It is unreasonable to expect counselors to provide care to students with whom they have such little contact and cannot really know. We must think of ways to structure the school day so that such care is provided.¹²

For the last eight years I have been a grade level counselor at Castle High School. When I first started my employment at Castle, the enrollment hovered at 2,300 students. At the present time it fluctuates between 1,750 and 1,800 pupils. The present enrollment is a move in the right direction, but it is still too large and massive.

Grade level counselor ratios are usually 400+ to one. The caring element that Eisner discusses is difficult to establish with the student/client ratio that exists in our large high schools. With respect to the importance of caring in our educational system, Dr. Nel Noddings, associate dean for Stanford's School of Education, states:

The single thing children say most often when they seek help is that their parents don't care, their teachers don't care--nobody cares. They are talking about the world in general, of course, but they often target their teachers. If you interview the teachers in school, you find they have a deep concern about the kids and are working very hard trying to help. So then the question arises: Why isn't the caring "coming off"? One problem is that we often consider "caring" a virtue in an individual, but I would rather consider it as an attribute of a relationship. That means that not only is there someone acting as "carer," but there is also a contribution from the "cared for." If you have a structure in which it is impossible to establish such a relationship, then you will have this paradoxical situation in which the kids say they aren't cared for and the teachers say they do care. In high school, one teacher may have 150 teenagers a day. How can you develop a trusting relationship under those circumstances?¹³

When students feel that nobody cares for them, that nobody knows where they are coming from, that nobody understands them or takes the time to even try, frustration, anger and disillusionment are sure to follow. If students are having problems at home and if they feel that no one is really there for them at school, they will often fill that need by associating with peers who perceive things likewise. This scenario is a potential staging ground for failure and anti-social behavior.

When students attend large schools and enroll in large classes, the structure has been set for the paradoxical situation that Dr. Nel Noddings so eloquently describes above. The teachers and counselors are working very hard trying to help, manifesting deep concern and yet the students do not feel it making a difference in their lives. When the schools are too big and the ratios too high, it is

very difficult to establish the caring relationship bonds that are so essential for students to prosper and actualize potentials. This is especially true for high at-risk students.

Educators are employed in a human helping profession. People to people connections from the heart are of paramount concern when young, often troubled and confused youngsters are involved. A basic axiom might be stated as follows: the more at risk the school population, the greater the need for caring relationships to abound in the learning environment. The burning question is how to structure the environment to better facilitate these caring heart to heart bonds and connections.

From a personal and professional perspective, I knew that Castle High School needed to change because far too many students were either failing outright or just going through the motions. The school was too big and classes too large. The status quo was not working for a good number of the students attending the school.

Counselors, because they are not involved in grading and concrete disciplinary actions regarding students, are available to hear how the students are perceiving things going on in their life domains: school, home, peer group and the like. From too many students I heard that things were not going too well at the school. A good number of these youngsters were having difficulty at home and at school.

During the early spring months of 1988 I had been filling in for one of the vice principals who was given an opportunity to work as an acting principal of a Windward elementary school.

During my tenure as acting vice principal, I attended a couple of meetings with members for the Hawaii School-University Partnership. At those meetings, attended by administration and other faculty members, ideas were presented concerning possible ways to reconstruct or reform the present system so as to bring about an overall educational environment that was more success oriented for more pupils.

An old counseling colleague of mine, Tom Stone, was a member of the group extending themselves and their ideas to the high school. I was delighted to hear of these prospective modifications, because I knew first hand that they were more than needed if we were to reach more students.

At the same time that these preliminary events of the change process were taking place I was exploring various theories, research studies and general educational-type literature in Hamilton and Sinclair Libraries. During one of these library searches I discovered the work of Urie Bronfenbrenner. I knew when I began to read his articles that this was the theory for which I had been searching. I knew that his model provided me with the theoretical

background needed to tie together the myriad factors and variables making up the world of Castle High School and the impending changes planned for the coming years.

I knew that my quest to bring together the practice and theory of my educational experience was coming creatively and synergistically to fruition. I not only found the ecological theory that provided me with the framework needed to make good sense of our complex educational arena, but I was also fortunate to work at a high school selected to be part of the Hawaii School-University Partnership renewal program.

In this fashion, my educational goal of tying together theory and practice came into being. This dissertation will describe the change process at Castle High School through the lens of Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory of Human Development. This study brings into consideration the basic tenets of an ecological approach to the change process at a local Windward high school. Four domains of analysis are delineated as they pertain to the case study in school reform: the micro, meso, exo and macro systems. This study offers a structure and a model that can assist and enable us to sort out and get an "educational handle" on the "school within a school" change process unfolding at Castle High School.

Weaving through the fabric of this paper is the all important "thread of connection." Just as teachers can feel

isolated and disconnected in their classroom worlds, the institutions of our society can also be viewed as being separate and divorced from other organizations comprising the macro system.

This dissertation strives to underline the paramount importance of creating viable linkages between teachers and students, classrooms and families, teachers and teachers, students and students, educators and educators, schools and universities, etc. One cannot say enough about the need in today's fast paced, pressure driven world for human beings of all ages and backgrounds to work as "one system" dedicated to promoting excellence in our schools and places of work.

As Albert Shanker states regarding the school/class-size issue:

America's best businesses have abandoned the factory notion of "scientific" management. New philosophies of management focus on how to locate a good corporate culture and how to keep up employee morale, motivation and commitment. That's what the school/class-size issue is about. It's not just numbers and dollars. It's about the need to find ways of making face-to-face relationships, human contact--of connecting teachers and kids and creating a learning "family" or "community."¹⁴

Reform and reconstruction entail the reconnection of people and institutions in ways that promote care, compassion, challenge, involvement and support. This study looks at the connection and reconnection of the systems and the people who make up those systems of our larger educational ecology. It endeavors to emphasize the power of

connections and linkages inherent in the ecological orientation.

Castle High School's effort to bring about and shape a learning "family" surfaced because of the involvement and connection of the evolving "learning community" made up of school, university, legislature and private agencies. I hope to show that all levels of the ecology of educational change (micro, meso, exo, macro) are needed, not only as a catalyst to elevate it off the ground, but also to sustain and expand the change process for the long road ahead.

From a more personal context, I would like to especially thank my committee members for their help, clarification, understanding, support, professionalism, and human friendship. Special heartfelt appreciation is extended to Professor Mel Ezer, my chairperson. In the unique micro dyad of the mentor-mentee relationship, Professor Ezer invited me into his "office," the "office of the mind and the heart," to support, probe, challenge, facilitate, foster, clarify and give substantive shape to my unfolding scholarly plans and ideations. His humanity gave me the needed "human touch of support" that enabled me to truly actualize a long simmering potentiality.

I would also like to acknowledge Tom Stone for his time, assistance and ideas regarding my research endeavor. His door was always open. He was extremely helpful in pointing out studies, journals, books and papers that may

have been of help to me. It was nice to work with a "caring colleague" who actually practices what he "preaches."

I cannot say enough about the love and support of my family. My daughters, Lena and Kara, always encouraged me to stick with it, to remind me of a "bit" of family lore that I have shared with them over the years: "Remember, Dad, Furmarks never give up." When I reminded them about the importance of reading as opposed to too much television, or the need to focus in on their homework assignments, they, in turn were equally there to remind me to reconnect back with my homework, my paper, my studies, my dissertation. "What's good for the daughters is good for the Dad."

Bonnie, my wife--much love and thanks for sharing her life with me. She has been instrumental in her unconditional support of my quest to reach my "educational mountain top." At times of doubt and uncertainty, Bonnie was always there to instill confidence and promise to my personal educational journey. She always saw things in me that I did not always see in myself. Through all the changes and vicissitudes of our time together she has been my best friend and my "main person" in life. By her very presence and being, she has kept my "resolution from within" determined and alive. My "most personal of microsystems" has been significantly and substantially enriched and sustained by her vital connection to me--mahalo.

As I write this, looking out on the beautiful blue and white sky hanging peacefully over the Ewa plane, I reflect back to my mainland roots. In doing so I want to convey my deepest love and appreciation to my parents who made it a point to emphasize the importance of creating a strong, warm and caring family. Without their love of family, their strength of character, the "curriculum of the mean streets of Brooklyn" most probably would have, as it did so many, kept me from pursuing my dreams in the larger "ecological college of life."

I cannot say enough about the importance that my tightly knit family micro system played in giving me and my two brothers and sister the psychological foundation so necessary to withstand the concrete blows of the hard, urban tenement reality. Being the youngest member of my family of origin, I benefitted greatly from the guidance, love and caring support of my older siblings.

This dissertation emphasizes the importance of creating "small schools" that are pervaded by a caring, supportive and challenging educational milieu. The more they look like and reflect good, solid family characteristics and attributes, the closer we will be to creating schools of excellence for all of our young people, for all of the diverse families making up our larger ecological community.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The process of educational reform can operate at myriad dimensions. This dissertation will focus upon one high school on the Windward Coast of Oahu: Castle High School. In today's market place of ideas, much is heard about educational school reform in general and about high risk students in particular. High schools, as they are presently structured, reach certain types and percentages of students. Countless other students drop out, turn off, or barely squeeze by. Too many surely do not leave high school with the necessary tools to succeed in society and/or actualize their potentials.

As Arthur R. King, Jr. and Thomas G. Stone of the University of Hawaii, Honolulu, state:

Secondary schools in America are far more successful with one half of their student base than they are with the other. They do well with students from middle class and professional families with effective homes, good personal-social infrastructures, and reliable health and other human services; they do poorly with students from lower socio-economic class families, with ineffective homes, excessive family (hence, school) mobility, and an unreliable infrastructure of health and other human services.¹⁵

What can be done about this formidable problem? Can anything be done to deal with a problem of this magnitude? At Castle High School, an attempt has been made to restructure part of the school to bring about tangible modifications in the direction of school reform. This

dissertation will concentrate mainly on the change process that took place in the school year 1989-90.

Can restructuring part of a school organization bring about significant educational gains in the students involved in the change process? In other words, can the change to a core or house plan, a "school within a school," yield gains in areas of educational development deemed crucial by educators and parents alike, or is the change process delineated here "more of the same" cosmetic type tinkering in a different guise and thus a waste of time, energy and resources?

In general, it is well known that too many students have not been succeeding at the "school game." To keep the status quo would amount to an acceptance of present day patterns of unequal educational processes and outcomes. The winners will stay winners, and the losers will remain losers in the "school game."

Reform and reconstruction have been in the air for a long time. Reports have been written and discussed at all levels of the educational playing field. National reports such as "A Nation at Risk" and "Turning Points: Preparing American Youth in the 21st Century" have called for sweeping changes in the nation's schools. These reports for change emanating from the macro level have been substantiated in their call for reform by local reports such as the "Berman

Report--The Hawaii Plan: Educational Excellence for the Pacific Era."

In the "Berman Report--The Hawaii Plan: Educational Excellence for the Pacific Era," the following goal statement for the public schools is outlined:

Hawaii public schools must enable all students, without exception, to learn to their potential and to master the knowledge, skills and values needed for social and economic success in the 21st century.¹⁶

The authors go on to state that:

Goal statements like these have often been proclaimed by school systems. They generally are not implemented, however, because to do so might require a fundamental restructuring of schooling. The people of Hawaii now appear ready to consider restructuring as a real alternative. The issue is how to do it.¹⁷

This dissertation will describe and delineate the why and how of a restructuring change process at one local Windward high school. As this dissertation delves into the case study of this particular school's efforts at reform, the author will also be undergirding his case analysis with theoretical foundational cornerstones developed from Urie Bronfenbrenner's model: The Ecological Theory of Human Development.

The theoretical underpinnings of Bronfenbrenner's model, along with the ideas of other theorists with ecological perspectives, will be utilized to help clarify the change process as well as assist the reader in gaining insight into the "ecology of student learning," a most important feature of the educational enterprise.

In essence, this study concerns itself with ecological changes at the school and classroom levels. In addition, it looks at developments, actions, and modifications at levels and domains far removed from the individual classrooms and school. From an ecological perspective all levels near and far have considerable impact in the change process.

When the ecology of the school and classroom changed, did individual gains ensue for the students enmeshed in the change process? Did students, in fact, do significantly better in the experimental core group, then students randomly assigned to the control "at-large" group? Did this particular form of structural change bring about significant educational and social gains for the learners involved in the new educational alignment?

If we are a nation adrift educationally, if we are drowning in a sea of mediocrity, if we are losing far too many students, especially high risk students, we need to know if particular attempts at reform such as the core plan do make a real difference. If attempts like the core approach do not make that much difference after all, then other creative and innovative designs and models of school reform need to be implemented in the nitty gritty world of today's troubled high school.

A main contention of this case study is that significant improvement in educational goals did result from changes in the educational ecology in the classroom(s) and

the school. From a different perspective, by changing the behavioral and environmental regularities that impinged upon the students in the core plan, learning and pro-social behavior increased as a result of the newly designed evolving ecology inherent in the change process that unfolded at the school.

Some of the regularities referred to are as follows: large classes, large impersonal school-social system climate, the predominance of the lecture method as the primary means of conveying information, student passivity and disinterest, student alienation, teacher isolation from colleagues, top-down administrative structure, the philosophy of students changing to fit the schools as opposed to schools changing to fit the diversity of the student body, low teacher expectation for certain students, the over-emphasis on competition in the classroom, the lack of a substantive caring-guidance approach to working with today's young people, the obsession with control and order, etc.

With respect to the later point, Thomas Toch in his book In the Name of Excellence: The Struggle to Reform the Nation's Schools: Why It's Failing and What Should Be Done states:

The repressiveness and anonymity of many public secondary schools has transformed them into joyless, uninspiring places. Rather than encourage the natural enthusiasm and intellectual curiosity of adolescents, many schools suppress it.¹⁸

With regard to school social climate, James Garbarino quotes Moos, who points out:

Research on social climate has found that optimum environments offer a combination of warm and supportive relationships, an emphasis on specific directions of personal growth, and a reasonably clear, orderly, and well-structured milieu. These environments have a high expectation and demand for performance.

Garbarino goes on to mention that, "The schools impersonal social climate results in inadequate observation and monitoring of student behavior. The key is the lack of personal feedback, without which the schools cannot function as support systems for prosocial behavior."²⁰

The repressiveness, anonymity, impersonal social climate and the like are psycho-social forces and organizational elements that appear to be embedded structurally, in particular, educational ecologies. These component aspects and other similar structural features of large secondary schools, exacerbate the already uncertain self concepts, tensions and personal situations with which many marginal students enter school. By the very nature of their structures, large impersonal schools can contribute to the failure rate of our young people, especially those young people who come from troubled backgrounds.

This study addresses, in case study format, one school's "ecological experiment" regarding school reform, the ultimate goal of which was to increase the student success rate of those involved in the ecological experiment.

This dissertation study endeavors to analyze the change process by making use of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory of Human Development. This entails bringing into the equation four domains of analysis: the micro, meso, exo and macro realms. The ecological theory presents us with a paradigm that is holistic, dynamic and heuristic.

The ecological theory offers us a multi-dimensional lens that enables us to gain deeper insight into how interconnected various dimensions and diverse levels or social reality really are. This study stresses the importance of linkages between systems as of paramount importance in the school renewal movement. All four levels of the educational ecology of change must be included if the analysis is to have sufficient depth and breadth.

If the schools remain large, overly bureaucratic, and impersonal in nature, the schools will continue to fail a great number of students. If the micro classroom status quo remains the same, many youngsters will have a most difficult and trying time succeeding in school. This is especially true for students coming to school from dysfunctional families.

If the micro world of the family is troubled by poverty, unemployment, lack of educational resources, divorce, abuse and the like, it becomes that much more imperative for the micro world of the classroom and the mesosystem of the school to change.

As Michael Rutter comments in relation to prevention interventions:

Since human development is a question of linkages that happen within you as a person and also in the environment in which you live. . . . The hope lies in doing something to alter these linkages, to see that kids who start in a bad environment don't go on having bad environments and develop a sense of impotency.²¹

By keeping high schools, and schools in general, large, impersonal and overly bureaucratic, the bad environments that Rutter expounds upon continue to be perpetuated. All students, but especially highly at risk students who often enter school from impoverished homes and neighborhood environments, require good, personalized, supportive caring and challenging school environments. To shape those crucially needed good school environments, the large, alienating high school needs to be restructured.

This study looks at what alterable variables, within Bronfenbrenner's Theory of the Ecology of Human Development, have been modified to bring about concrete movement towards the creation of a more supportive, sensitive, personalized, and challenging educational ecology.

It must be emphasized that at the heart of this doctoral study lies the basic premise that significant ecological organizational and structural modifications must be made or little if any improvement concerning student learning and development will ensue, especially for the more at risk youngsters.

By emphasizing an ecological field theory systems approach to understanding school and learning problems, we can gain a deeper and broader insight into the myriad factors and forces that interface with and impinge on today's students and teachers. The theoretical framework utilized in this doctoral study is the same model used by the Native Hawaiian Assessment Project of 1983.

As stated in their final report:

The framework proposed by Urie Bronfenbrenner provided a useful approach to the ecology of human development. It offered a structure to sort out the phenomena, highlight the issues, ask questions and integrate data about socio-educational-cultural risk. It encouraged analysis of patterns of educational needs and the formulation of hypotheses of causal relationships.²²

The ecological field-theory model helps us gain a deep perspective regarding the interrelatedness of all the systems and subsystems impinging on and embedding our teenagers. Just as "no man is an island," no student experiences growth, development and education in isolation. Often not enough time or energy is spent trying to make sense of what happens in a youngster's world and, therefore, we miss the boat regarding ways to improve their situations and settings.

The ecological field-theory system helps do what Gardiner Murphy recommended psychologists and educators learn: "How to look inside and how to look outside; how to recognize the reciprocities of inner and outer through

methods that are as far-ranging and as deeply human as is the human stuff that is being studied."²³

As Arthur Combs states:

Persons are composed of chemical elements found in the soil, the rivers and the mountains of their world. They are part of the universe, part of a vast and magnificent organization. Like rocks, rivers, plants, animals, planets, and suns, as parts of this great organization, persons participate in its processes. Like everything else in the universe, persons are affected by the organization of which they are a part.²⁴

Combs goes on to state that each person is an organized system within the larger organization or system of the universe in which he or she exists. Each person is himself a system within a whole series of systems leading outward from himself to the larger universe.²⁵

We are, existentially speaking, made up of subsystems that are in turn embedded in larger supra systems ad-infinitum. To gain a viable sense of what goes on in today's schools, we must look at the realities at the interface between various organizational systems. Students are affected by the organization of which they are a part. If the organization of the large bureaucratic high school is not working for many of the students involved, then significant modifications of that organizational structure need to be implemented to set the stage for the ecological facilitation of needed positive change.

Just as students do not grow and develop out of context, changes and modifications in the classroom and in a

larger part of the school do not grow removed from a more inclusive contextual field. From an ecological perspective, the reform effort undertaken at Castle High School can only be understood when looked at from all four domains of analysis: micro, meso, exo and macro.

This study, in general, explores the linkages between systems such as individual classrooms, families, the school level, the University of Hawaii, the Department of Education, the state legislature, the macro-national level developments and the like. These subsystems are inextricably intertwined with each other. The study endeavors to emphasize the holistic nature of the change process.

More specifically, the core of this dissertation focuses on the first year of the "school within a school" movement at Castle High School. In that year Castle High School, with the assistance of the Hawaii School-University Partnership, implemented, in Bronfenbrenner's terminology, an ecological experiment.

Bronfenbrenner defines an ecological experiment as:

An effort to investigate the progressive accommodation between the growing human organism and its environment through a systematic contrast between two or more environmental systems or their structural components, with a careful attempt to control other sources of influence either by random assignment (planned experiment) or by matching (natural experiment).²⁶

This dissertation endeavors to describe and analyze in case study form, the ecological experiment implemented during school year 1989-90 at Castle High School.

This dissertation employs the ecological perspective as a descriptive and analytic mapping device. It helps us comprehend relevant phenomena, as well as gain a deeper, more penetrating understanding of the multi-leveled complexity inherent in school change processes. By utilizing Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory of Human Development, an analysis can be made that is much more insightfully luminous regarding the core program change process undertaken at Castle High School in the school year 1989-90.

By contrasting the ecological properties and processes operating in the core ecological experiment versus those properties and processes at play in the control or "at-large" ecology, important knowledge can be gained regarding the design and creation of educational ecologies of excellence for all involved in the day to day realities of the place we call school.

Castle High School's endeavor to reconstruct part of the school as a beginning step to bring about substantive reform, received impetus from the Carnegie Foundation Report, "Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century." That influential report called on educators to redesign schools so that they become smaller, more

personalized and psychologically supportive learning environments.

The report emphasized the need for schools to be organized in ways that would be conducive towards the creation of closer relationships and bonds between students and teachers. As stated in the report, "Young adolescents have a great need for intimacy, yet we put them in large impersonal schools. Young adolescents need increased autonomy, yet we put them in environments of review and rote learning."²⁷

The report prepared by the Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents called for specific modifications in how schools are structured. The Task Force made definitive recommendations to turn around what the report referred to as the "volatile mismatch" between "the organization and curriculum of middle grade schools" and the "intellectual and emotional needs of students 10-15 years old."²⁸

The Carnegie Council study made the following recommendations for changes in the ways schools structure the learning environments of adolescents:

- Increase intimacy by creating schools within schools, containing 200 to 300 students.
- Assign every student an adult who "has the time and takes the trouble to talk" with the student.
- Build on adolescents' preoccupation with social relationships by allowing small groups of students to work together on projects.

- Organize teachers into interdisciplinary teams with discretion to modify curriculums, schedules and other aspects of learning to meet changing student needs.
- Encourage volunteer work and other²⁹ means of getting students involved in the community.

In his analysis of traditional educational research, Bronfenbrenner pointed out that, "Most of our scientific ventures into social reality perpetuate the status quo. . . . We are loathe to experiment."³⁰ Bronfenbrenner strongly called for new transformative designs which would involve:

. . . the innovative restructuring of prevailing ecological systems in ways that depart from existing institutional ideologies and structures by redefining goals, roles, and activities, and providing interconnections³¹ between systems previously isolated from each other.

The "school within a school," or core plan, implemented at Castle High School in school year 1989-90 was a reconstruction effort geared to bring about a smaller, more student supportive and centered learning milieu for all youngsters selected to participate.

The core plan was a venture into a school-social reality. This educational reform attempt endeavored to alter a part of the status quo encountered at a large high school in Kaneohe. The change process undertaken at Castle High School utilized the recommendations of the Carnegie Foundation Report as educational foundation underpinnings.

Those recommendations were used as the guidelines of the change process. Goals, roles, and activities were

redefined in the core plan, also known as the School Success Program. In addition, interconnections between systems previously isolated from each other were actualized.

For example, the core plan was essentially a school within a school project involving 120 freshman of the class of 1989-90. These freshman were randomly selected for inclusion into the pilot group. Known as the Gold Core, these students were basically selected from the mid stanine group, 3-7.

In addition, every student was assigned an advisor. That advisor was the first period core teacher. These educators were inserviced on the importance of creating positive psychological bonds between themselves and their advisees. They were encouraged to be available for students who needed to discuss more personal matters, or just to be there to "talk story."

Also, teachers were organized into a team--The Gold Core team. This teaming development was a crucial component in the overall improvement of the educational milieu for teachers and students alike. As Stone and King relate:

Core teams decentralize authority and responsibility by creating smaller units within the larger school. In these smaller units, schooling can become more personal without sacrificing the advantages of a large school's facilities and programs. Core teams allow groups of teachers to cooperate in planning, organizing, teaching, and evaluating school programs and progress within them.³²

Another recommendation put into effect in the School Success Program was the introduction and incorporation of cooperative learning lessons, exercises and projects into the curriculum process. By including cooperative assignments, a more diverse and multidimensional classroom curriculum context was established for the heterogeneous group.

In Bronfenbrenner's comments concerning reconstruction, he mentions the need to provide interconnections between systems previously isolated from each other. The core project afforded members of various systems the time to engage in face to face discussion, planning, and action meetings.

With respect to school restructuring efforts nationwide, J. David points out that, "Those schools that have made the most progress have external conditions that support change."³²

The exosystem provided Castle High School with ongoing support. The external support that David discusses came in the form of an evolving assistance matrix involving the university, the district, and the legislature.

Without ongoing support from the external (exo) domain, change processes in high schools are more difficult to sustain. As David clearly states:

To sustain and expand this wave of grass roots efforts, districts and states must change the way they do business. Specifically, districts and states must provide an invitation to change, authority and flexibility, access to knowledge, and time.³⁴

In regard to the core plan, an invitation to change was extended by the members of the Hawaii School-University Partnership. From an ecological perspective, human linkages were built between the exosystem: university, district, private school; and the mesosystem: Castle High School.

Without the reaching out, without the open invitation to the high school faculty, a cooperative network support system would not have been established. The invitation in the form of a presentation to the entire high school faculty was the catalyst of change. As David comments regarding the paramount importance of the invitation:

An invitation to change is perhaps the most critical aspect of leadership at the state, district, and school levels. People need both a reason and the opportunity to change what they are doing. An invitation signals that the goals and rules have changed; it is no longer to be business as usual. Risk taking, experimentation--even failure--are invited.³⁵

The educators from the Hawaii School-University Partnership initially presented their invitational ideas, concerns and tentative plans to the school faculty in the fall of 1988. They were the first group of representatives from the University of Hawaii, Kamehameha Schools, and the Department of Education to address the faculty as a whole.

Although individual professors may have spoken to individual teachers and individual classes at the school in the recent past, the Hawaii School-University Partnership presentation was the first formal communicational exchange

between university level personnel and the entire Castle High School faculty.

These individuals, such as Tom Stone and Art King, essentially acted as linking pins, connecting two subsystems of a larger educational ecology. In addition, Stan Koki from the Department of Education attended and added his input and support from the Department of Education's perspective. A representative from Kamehameha School also attended.

At that initial meeting with the school's faculty, representatives from four systems interacted and discussed educational problems and plans for potential change. Although these systems may not have been totally isolated from each other in the past, they were surely far removed from each other regarding specific and collaborative endeavors.

Before this meeting, these systems were essentially alienated and disconnected from each other. Although Castle High School is a part of the Department of Education, no representative from that exosystem ever sat down with the faculty to discuss and dialogue on the need for changes to be made at the school. No one from the University of Hawaii ever came to the school to have a brainstorming session with the entire staff on the pressing need to make some real structural changes. The same could be said for Kamehameha School.

That meeting in the Fall of 1988 was a catalyst that started the change process in motion. Ideas and concerns were presented. Literature regarding big schools, alienation, and the "school within a school concept" was handed out. Minds started churning. Faculty started to get interested. Personal chords of attention and motivation began to resonate. Curious and interested teachers signed up to take part in the next informational meeting to be held in the near future.

Naturally, if every teacher felt that Castle High School had no real problems, or that Castle High School was structured in the best way possible to assure optimum student/teacher growth, development and actualization, no teacher would have come forth to sign up for the next educational and informational meeting. The Hawaii School University-Partnership personnel would have had to search for another school to bring their ideas and services to.

In other words, this was not a top-down mandated type of an implementation scheme. No one power tripped their way into the meeting and said this is the way we are going to structure the ninth grade class in the year 1989-1990, like it or not! On the contrary, teachers came forth because they felt some type of change was needed for the school, the students and for themselves as professional educators.

The Hawaii School University-Partnership selected Castle High School because there was a need for change at

the school. The Windward District agreed to the Hawaii School University-Partnership presentation because the District also felt that a change of some type was needed at the school level. The District would eventually have to set aside funds to support the program.

As Stewart C. Purkey, assistant professor of education at Lawrence University in Wisconsin, states:

It's no secret that schools in the last few years have been subject to fairly intense criticism. School districts have felt the need to do something on the one hand genuinely to improve the education available to children, and on the other hand to convince the public³⁶ that they are doing something to make schools better.

In our culture there is a saying that "you get what you pay for." For new programs and new structures to get started funding support needs to be allocated to give these new developments a chance to start on the right foot. New or reallocated funds must be offered to send school staff members the message that the program and structural design is important. In addition, providing them with resources they can use as they see fit for staff training and release time is also of paramount importance in the beginning phases of any change process.

The core program was partially funded by the Windward District's funds. Involved teachers received an extra open (coordination) period. Monies were allocated for teachers to attend workshops and visit other schools on the mainland, schools that were involved in a core type process. As time

progressed, core teachers were given the time to visit other schools in the State of Hawaii to share the overall concept behind the structural modifications, as well as have time to relate their own personal experiences being a part of the change process.

A key thread running through the fabric of change involves the interconnections between systems and the collaborative effort of the systems. As John Goodlad states in Common Schools for the Common Weal: Reconciling Self Interest with the Common Good, "The concept of the school as the center of change must not be interpreted to mean that the school can do alone what is necessary." He goes on to say that, "the school exists as part of a larger ecosystem."³⁷ In that context of analysis, Goodlad mentions that there is a real need for a supportive infrastructure involving the surrounding community, the district office, colleges, and universities, and the several divisions of state educational governance and leadership.

When we translate Goodlad's comments into Bronfenbrenner's language, we see that he is talking about a supportive infrastructure involving the diverse elements of the underlying ecological field. He is talking about the inextricable linkage between systems: micro, meso, exo, and macro.

Benjamin Bloom defines the environment (ecology) as:

Conditions, forces, and external stimuli which impinge on the individual. These may be physical, social, as well as intellectual forces and conditions. We conceive of a range of environments from the most immediate social interactions to the more remote cultural and institutional forces. We regard the environment as providing a network of forces and factors which surround, engulf, and play on the individual.³⁸

For too long teachers have blamed students, students have blamed teachers, schools have blamed families, families blamed schools, colleges have blamed high schools, high schools have blamed intermediate schools, intermediate schools have blamed elementary schools, preschools, home situations and the like.

As long as everyone places a finger of blame on an individual, or an individual subsystem, everyone will continue to be alienated victims and thus contribute to the overall dysfunctional ecological field. As long as systems view other systems as being separate from the whole, and, therefore, an easy mark on which to place blame, true solution behaviors to our problems will not be forthcoming. As Gareth Morgan puts it in discussing various images of change:

"The perspective of mutual causality develops a related viewpoint, encourages us to give particular attention to the nature of relations and interconnections and to manage and reshape those relations³⁹ to influence patterns of stability and change."

By looking at the "nature of relations and interconnections" among the various systems, we can better manage and reshape those linkages so as to bring about patterns of influence that result in meaningful change for all the significant human beings involved in the overall process. The connections between the various systems are of paramount importance; to gain a deeper insight regarding the change process we need to focus on the interrelationships of systems and their impact on each other.

In the foreword to The Ecology of Human Development, by Urie Bronfenbrenner, Michael Cole states the following:

. . . the explanations for what we do (assuming we achieve serviceable descriptions) are to be found in interactions between characteristics of people and their environment, past and present. As Bronfenbrenner says the main effects are in the interaction. He would also follow Kurt Lewin in suggesting that if we want to change behavior, we have to change environments.⁴⁰

Royal T. Fruehling in a paper entitled Social Change and the Mission of the School comments:

Sarason is probably correct when he suggests that for too long we have focused on the psychology of the individual to the neglect of the social setting of roles, relationships, organizations, and structure in which the person operates. He is correct if by "psychology of the individual" he means spending too much time in people's heads and too little in the environments in which they live.⁴¹

Fruehling goes on to state that the basic psychology of change entails a transactional process involving people and their social and psychological environments. The behavioral regularities are not reified and unchangeable; regularities

can change when the environmental expectations and environmental structures change.

In the same paper Fruehling discusses Anthony Wallace's revitalization process. He states:

Anthony Wallace has coined the word "revitalization" to describe the process by which a deliberate organized conscious effort is made by the members of a society to create a more satisfying cultural system with which to replace one that⁴² they have come to feel is unsatisfactory.

If we substitute school for society and educational for cultural we can see that an "educational revitalization process" is slowly being undertaken at Castle High School.

We are seeing an educational revitalization process take place because a deliberate and conscious effort is being made by internal members of a particular school to create a more effective and satisfying educational system for students, teachers, counselors, administrators and parents. This school level effort to promote an ecological revitalization process of educational reform was stimulated and enhanced by concerned educators of other external systems; i.e., the university. The interconnections and communications between systems were and are of quintessential importance in the ongoing effort to reconstruct large impersonal "at risk" schools.

Before going into a more detailed analysis of the core program from Bronfenbrenner's ecological perspective, a basic profile of James B. Castle High School is presented.

James B. Castle High School Basic Profile

James B. Castle High School is named after James B. Castle, one of Hawaii's prominent builders and civic leaders. James B. Castle's son, Harold Castle, donated the land surrounding the high school to the territory of Hawaii as a memorial to his father. Located on Kaneohe Bay Drive in Kaneohe, Hawaii, Castle High School now services approximately 1,750 students.

In January of 1951 the first pool of students moved from Benjamin Parker Elementary and High School to Castle High School. During that first year of operation, approximately 750 students enrolled in grades 7-12. At that time Castle High School was comprised of 11 classrooms.

In June of 1952, one hundred eight seniors made up the first graduating class of James B. Castle Intermediate and High School. In 1965 Castle became a high school servicing grades 9-12. Grades 7 and 8 were then served at King Intermediate School, also located in Kaneohe.

In 1976 Castle High School's population skyrocketed to 2,800 students, making it the largest high school, student population wise, in the State of Hawaii. From 1973 until 1982 half of the ninth graders remained at King Intermediate School because Castle High School lacked enough classroom space to adequately house and service the full ninth grade classes.

Initially the school was built to house 1,400 students. Through the years overcrowding has been a problem, especially when the school enrolled 2,800 students in 1976. New buildings have been constructed over the years and this fact has helped alleviate some of the overcrowding. With 1,750-1,800 students at present, Castle High School is still designated as a large suburban high school.

Castle High School is part of the Windward Castle Complex which extends from Kaneohe to Kualoa. Included in the complex are: Kaneohe ("bamboo man"), Heeia ("washed away"), Ahuimanu, Kahaluu ("diving place"), Waiahole, Waikane and Kualoa.

Kaneohe has changed over the years from a rural country area to a suburban bedroom commuter neighborhood. The area now includes single family houses, shopping malls, condominiums, light commercial industries and two low-income housing projects. Approximately 94% of the adult population works outside of the Kaneohe area. At present, 50,000+ people reside in the area.

In 1986 the median family income ranged from \$23,043 to \$36,198. Six to seven percent of the overall Kaneohe population can be considered poor. Approximately 23% of the adult population have completed four years of college level studies.

Hawaiian and part-Hawaiians make up 33% of the Kaneohe-Kualoa regional population. Americans of Japanese ancestry

comprise 24%; Caucasians of various ethnic backgrounds 15%; Filipinos comprise 9%; other groups comprise 19% of the population. This overall pattern mirrors the make-up of the school population. Of the school's graduates, 30-35% enter a two or four year college program.

Castle High School has been designated as A Learning Center of Excellence for the Performing Arts. This Center, under the direction of Mr. Ron Bright, has produced a number of quality plays and performances over the years. The Diary of Anne Frank, The Sound of Music, Flower Drum Song, Teahouse of the August Moon and Grease are a few. Students from other districts and schools attend Castle on district exceptions based on their interest and desire to be involved in the learning center.

For the past three years a troupe of performing art students have travelled to Muncie, Indiana, to take part in Ball State's International Thespian Festival. Castle's Performing Arts Center has thus been recognized, not only locally, but nationally, as a program characterized by excellence. As symbolic of the overall quality of the performing arts theater program, two former students are performing roles on Broadway.

The school campus is framed by the beautiful and majestic Koolau mountain range which encircles, at a distance, a good portion of the campus. With these awesome mountains as a backdrop, Castle's graduation ceremony, held

on the football field, always appears to be embellished by a mystical aura. The overall natural beauty of the area most definitely helps take the edge off the day to day pressures encountered at a large high school.

The school itself is made up of single story buildings spread out over approximately 35 acres of land. Included in the building makeup are a library, auditorium, gymnasium, cafeteria, administration office, counseling center, transition-vocation center and registrar's office. In addition, there is a football field, a baseball field and a farm area.

Approximately 80% of the buildings are over 35 years old. Due to the age of the buildings and the frequent rain on the Windward side of the island, the school has often appeared weatherworn and somewhat run down. The gymnasium, in particular, is in need of replacement for it is old, run down and termite ridden. Due to the condition of the gymnasium, Oahu Interscholastic Athletic basketball games, both boys and girls, are played at the King School Armory gymnasium.

As stated in the Castle High School Accreditation
Criteria Approach Form 1987:

We have a gymnasium which was built during the second increment of the school's construction in the early 1950's. Our gymnasium is obsolete in terms of its adequacy to accommodate our present enrollment and the demands that are being placed on its use for intramural and interscholastic activities. The courts do not conform to present rule regulations; there should be more courts to accommodate more games played at the

same time. The seating for spectator viewing is extremely limited. Our basketball teams are having to travel across town to use the King Armory for practice and league games. The scheduling of our practices and games also become a problem because other community organizations also demand the use of that facility.⁴³

Although many of the buildings are old and have seen a brighter, better day, the school and community have worked hard to upgrade the overall appearance of the high school. In the last couple of years most of the buildings have been repainted. New landscaping work has been accomplished throughout the campus area. Faculty-community clean up days have helped spruce up the general campus appearance.

As with most large high schools, Castle High School has its share of problems. Relatively speaking though, these problems have been diminished in part due to the enrollment decline. Common sense dictates that a school of 1,750 students will have fewer problems than a school housing 2,800 students. As stated in Castle High School's 1990-1991 Secondary School Recognition application form:

This decrease in enrollment made the operations of the school more manageable and lessened many of the negative activities which plagued the school--violence, truancy, vandalism, discipline problems, drug and alcohol use.⁴⁴

Juvenile arrest data as compiled by the Honolulu Police Department Annual Statistical Report provides relevant background information regarding the negative behavior patterns mentioned above (Castle High School's 1990-1991 Secondary School Recognition application).

In a 1980 proposal paper submitted to the Office of Juvenile and Delinquency Prevention by the Youth Development and Research Center, School of Social Work, University of Hawaii, the following information was shared:

Juvenile Arrests: An important data source regarding the extent of juvenile delinquency in Hawaii is the Honolulu Department Annual Statistical Report which contains juvenile arrests by schools. Analysis of data available for the last five years (1974-1978) indicates that juvenile arrests for Castle High ranked 7th highest among high schools in 1974 (N=200) increasing to 2nd highest in 1977 (N=290) and 1978 (N=302), an increase of 29.6%. Waianae High School located in the Leeward District consistently ranked highest in each of the five years. Waianae surpassed Castle in 1978 by a meager three arrests (N=305). The trend for Castle High appears to be continuing increase in the future while the opposite is true for Waianae High. If this trend continues, which is highly likely, Castle High will rank highest in juvenile arrests in 1979 and in ensuing years.⁴⁵

Regarding vandalism and thefts, the proposal paper includes the following data:

<u>Thefts/Loss:</u> Castle	<u>Vandalism:</u> Castle
1977 - \$13,176	1977 - \$7,095
1978 - \$11,404	1978 - \$129,733
	(*malicious fire loss)
1979 - \$6,325	1979 - \$58,443
	(*malicious fire loss set at \$49,824)

In school year 1978-79 the following types of incidents were reported: purses or wallets stolen - \$125; vehicles hit by vandals - \$1,500; burglary - \$8,800 (property stolen: hand tools and meters, power tools and equipment, weight-lifting equipment, guitars, typewriters, tape records,

musical instruments); vandalism toward school property - \$7,500 (graffiti, broken doors, broken tile wall, broken plate glass windows, broken toilet bowls, broken urinals, broken louvers, drinking fountains damaged); numerous incidents involving gambling, smoking cigarettes and other substances, fire work usage, fights.

The proposal paper of 1980, prepared by the School of Social Work, stated the following regarding the negative behaviors displayed at Castle High School:

The school personnel have indicated that these patterns of deviant behaviors are typical from year to year. Incidents of more serious acts have been reported in the past (pre-1977) including 1) the stabbing of a teacher, 2) shootings of students waiting at the bus stop, and 3) involvement of students in murder, rape and other serious crimes.⁴⁶

Regarding academic achievement, the proposal paper entitled "Castle Complex Alternative Education Program" commented as follows:

While a significant proportion of Castle High School's current student population of 10th to 12th graders have achieved high academic standards, others, notably those in the target population--non-white or non-orientals and who came from middle and/or low income, broken or disorganized families--have not.⁴⁷

The students who did not fair that well at Castle High School at the time of the proposal paper tended to come from middle to low income area elementary schools: Kahaluu, Kaneohe, Parker, Puohala, Waiahole. Students who did better at Castle High School tended to come from the following elementary schools: Ahuimanu, Heeia, Kapunahala. These schools are located in the more affluent neighborhoods.

This pattern appears to have maintained itself throughout the ensuing years.

The "Castle Complex Alternative Education Program" proposal paper aimed to create an alternative education program for students manifesting delinquent and pre-delinquent behaviors: severe deficiencies in basic academic skills, academic failure, frequent absenteeism, frequent referrals for disciplinary action resulting from insubordination, violation of school behavior conduct rules and regulations and/or law violations, etc.

The need for a comprehensive program that would provide maximum support and maximum challenge for students manifesting troubles in school and out of school was more than evident from the statistics reported earlier. As stated in the proposal paper:

The problems cited in the previous section of this proposal identifying specific areas of need that require comprehensive efforts to curtail the increasing trend toward greater school failure, alienation, and delinquency within the Castle complex schools.⁴⁸

In addition to the students manifesting the more severe "at-risk" patterns, the target group also included a secondary target population comprising students exhibiting "passive" behaviors, high achievers displaying "boredom" with the school process, "average" students who appear to just go through the motions and therefore just pass and students who frequently cut out of class for varied reasons.

The proposed alternative program had many component features including but not limited to: remedial academic work, alternative learning activities, community-based career education, tutoring assistance, a buddy program, ethnically oriented activities, etc.

A list of ten needs was articulated in the proposal paper. Three needs were of particular interest because they link up congruently with the ecological experiment--the core plan, implemented during the school year 1989-90. These are as follows:

Need 5: There is a need to provide for individual needs on an individual basis; that young persons, particularly those deprived of adequate support systems in the home and school,⁴⁹ require personalized attention on a continuing basis.

Need 7: There is a need to help school personnel develop the sensitivity to meet the academic and social-emotional needs of all pupils without regard to their⁵⁰ ethnic, socio-economic status and academic abilities.

Need 10: There is a need to secure greater involvement of all persons in the citizenry to actively participate in the decision-making process as well as the provision of adequate and appropriate education to all children of the community.⁵¹

Need 5 emphasizes, in ecological language, the importance of creating more supportive and personalized microsystems, especially for students coming from troubled home microsystems. Without a strong and sensitive school social support system, "at-risk" teenagers may never bond with the learning process no matter how intelligent they might be. Need 5 implies the pressing importance of a

school-wide mesosystem that is coherent, consistent, and above all, caring.

Many, and quite possibly most, of the troubled at-risk students coming from difficult home microsystem situations turn off to school if they feel in any way disparaged, singled out in negative fashion, and/or perceive lack of positive regard from their teachers.

Need 7 emphasizes the importance of having teachers who are attuned to the psychological side of the students with whom they work. Teachers who believe that they should only be concerned about how well students succeed regarding their subject matter lessons and assignments fail to see their students in more humane and holistic perspectives. The core plan makes use of the teaming approach to help increase teacher awareness, communication and sensitivity with respect to understanding their students as complex human beings with unique backgrounds, personalities and learning styles.

In addition, teacher training and educational workshops have emphasized the importance of providing all students with a strong, caring and supportive network. The human side of education is strongly emphasized in the core plan. As will be explained later in this paper, the advisor-advisee relationship of the core plan is an essential component in the overall social support network for all students. Need 7 relates in ecological language to the micro and meso systems.

Need 10 maintains that the involvement of persons outside of the school is of paramount concern in today's efforts to reform and reconstruct schools. The work of the University of Hawaii personnel has been instrumental in helping Castle High School begin to provide a more adequate and appropriate education for the students attending the school. From an ecological perspective, the initial help from "persons in the citizenry" came from what Bronfenbrenner calls the exosystem. By reaching into the school from domains outside of the classrooms and the school in general, the change process could begin to unfold.

The invitation to take part in the change process known as the core plan came from citizens of institutions two levels removed from the face to face interactions of the students and teachers. Castle High School, like any other large institution, became "set in its way." Often the impetus for change has to come from outside the tradition-bound set way of doing things prevalent in large high schools such as Castle High School.

In this case study that impetus and invitation to engage in a reconstruction change process emanated from what Bronfenbrenner designates as the exosystem. The work and decision-making of the exosystem (University of Hawaii, Department of Education-Windward District, Hawaii State Legislature, Kamehameha School) was essential in stimulating and sustaining the "small school" movement at large Castle High School.

In general, the "Castle Complex Alternative Education Program" proposal paper written by School of Social Work personnel of the University of Hawaii portrayed a high school servicing a growing percentage of troubled youngsters. Due to a lack of grant funding, the well-thought out proposals were never implemented.

In recent years the problems have been somewhat lessened, not only as a result of the enrollment decline, but also due to new educational features such as the Student Mediators Program: student run dispute resolution teams who work helping the student population reduce conflicts. In addition, Teen Care, a drug prevention and intervention counseling program funded by the Department of Health has been instrumental in helping youngsters experiencing chemical related problems.

A transition center has also been established at the school. This center works specifically with youngsters who will most probably enter the work world directly after high school. The transition center provides career-job information, career shadowing placement, and related occupational awareness-skill development exercises and lessons.

The school also has on board an Alu Like counselor who works with part-Hawaiian youngsters showing college interest and potential. That individual works with these students by counseling, guiding and prepping them regarding college

requirements and placements. Field trips and guest speakers are arranged throughout the year.

In spite of these and related improved supportive services at the school, Castle High School can still be categorized as a school experiencing "at-risk" type problems. As Sue Hansen states regarding Castle High School in a paper entitled "Inviting School Success in Hawaii," "There is still, however, a sense of a school under siege. There are an estimated 20% of students who achieve very poorly, and it is these who cause the most upset in the school and who the school feels it is failing."⁵²

The schooling crisis that is state and national in scope, strongly impacts Castle High School. Students manifesting behaviors and attitudes characteristic of the alienated low-achieving, at-risk students are a major concern of the educators working at the school. Baseline data for the 1987-1988 Castle High School Improvement Plan include the following:

47.5% of the 9th graders received grade point averages below 2.0

39.4% of the 10th graders received grade point averages below 2.0

33.9% of the 11th graders received grade point averages below 2.0

31.7% of the 12th graders received grade point averages below 2.0

Core subject percentages are as follows:

37% of all students in Language Arts received D's and F's

41% of all students in mathematics received D's and F's

33% of all students in social studies received D's and F's

33% of all students in science received D's and F's

The figures regarding the school's "at-risk" population for the school year 1989-1990 are as follows:

Total eligible for outreach services:	624
Met "alienated" criteria:	487
Met "severely alienated" criteria:	137
Special motivation students:	87
Served by the outreach counselor:	127

As the statistics point out, Castle High School most definitely does not reach all of the students attending the school. One third of the students attending receive D's or F's in the core subjects required, not only for graduation, but also for gaining the requisite cultural and academic literacy needed if young people are to contribute and succeed in society.

Of the ninth graders, 47.5% received grade point averages below 2.0. A 2.0 grade point average is required for student participation in extra curricular activities

such as athletics. When almost one half of the freshman class receives an average grade below a C, it indicates dramatically the need for change.

This pattern of high percentages of ninth grade students receiving grade point averages below a 2.0 obtains in the previous three school years. In school year 1984-85, 47.5% of the ninth graders received less than a 2.0 grade point average; in 1985-86, 43.6% received less than a 2.0 grade point average; and in 1986-87, 51.5% of the ninth grade class received less than a 2.0 grade point average.

The ninth grade year is a transition year for the students. They leave the relative security of the junior high school to become the "new kids on the block" of the large, sprawling campus of the high school. The demands are greater, the support less pronounced, and the reality more stark. Some never recover from the "transition knockout blow" they face at the large impersonal high school.

When the attendance data is brought into the educational equation, a strong correlation is noted with respect to absences and failures. For example, first quarter data for the 1987-1988 School Improvement Plan showed that 60% of the students receiving failing grades had ten or more absences. Whether the failures caused the absences or whether the absences caused the failures is really a moot point; they both fed on each other to produce a very real and trying school/community problematique.

Statistics also showed that the group experiencing academic problems garnered more detentions and in-school and out of school suspensions than the more successful student subpopulation.

This school profile indicates a school that is troubled and "at-risk." As stated in the Project Proposal Abstract, Chapter 2, Developmental Grant, 1989-90:

In order to nurture the academic and social improvement of students not performing satisfactorily at Castle High School, as reflected by the data on "at-risk" indicators, it is necessary for the school to depart in rather substantive ways from traditional practices. A superficial or bandaid approach simply will not help the school in significantly changing the below average performance of students in basic skills which has been relatively constant for so many years. Neither will it reverse the increase in retentions among students in all grades, or dramatically alter the suspension rates at the school. Significant, innovative changes are needed.

With respect to the 1989-90 data regarding outreach services, over one third of the school met criteria to be eligible to receive these services. These statistics were generated by looking at the Comprehensive School Alienation Program criteria. Students meeting CSAP criteria such as ten or more absences, two or more F's in a quarter, teenage pregnancy and parenthood, suspensions, etc., are classified as alienated or severely alienated depending upon how many CSAP criteria the students manifest in their day to day school existences.

The Department of Education's Comprehensive School Alienation Program includes the following definitions:

Alienated Student: is one who needs to overcome social-personal problems which interfere with successful performance in school. This student lacks motivation to achieve in school. The student's feelings are often displayed in such negative ways as defiance of authority, poor school attendance, disruptive behaviors and substance abuse. The primary indices used to identify alienated students are:

1. 10 or more unexcused absences
2. Academic failure in 2 or more required subjects
3. 3 or more disciplinary referrals.⁵⁴

A severely alienated student is described in the following manner:

Severely Alienated Student: manifests all of the characteristics of the alienated student and, in addition, exhibits extremely disruptive behavior detrimental to self, peers and school. This student generally requires an educational setting away from the regular school campus. The indices used to identify the severely alienated student are:

1. long term school non-attendance
2. frequent fighting or other disruptive behavior
3. other anti-social behavior which result in disciplinary transfers, suspension, or dismissal.⁵⁵

In addition to the above listed indices, alienation status is also determined by looking at family court involvement, grade-level placement, mental health status and the overall level of family and school functioning of the student.

At the weekly school evaluation committee meetings, placement of alienated students are made. Generally speaking, after mainstream in class and in school modifications have been tried to no avail, placements in the special motivation classes at the school are made. If the

student does not do well in the SMC classes, placement off campus in one of the alternative learning centers is contemplated and often arranged.

Students who display more severely alienated profiles may be placed directly in alternative learning centers off campus. Each case is different and unique. The school evaluation committee discusses each student referral and tries to make the best determination for the most sensitive placement.

In the beginning of the year, placement decisions are fairly easy to come by because openings in all of the placement locations abound. As the school year progresses, placement locations begin to fill up and the meetings become more trying and testy.

Students who manifest alienation type behaviors and/or attitudes later in the school year may not be serviced by CSAP programs because they are filled. In addition, all of the students exhibiting alienation type behaviors, whether moderate or severe, cannot be served regardless of the time of the school year because there are not enough CSAP personnel to take care of the overall school need.

When we realize that over one third of the student body qualifies as alienated based on definitive data utilized statewide by the Department of Education to help determine the "at-risk" situation of the schools, Castle High School appears to be easily designated as an "at-risk" high school.

Six hundred twenty-four alienated and severely alienated students comprise a significant number of students at odds and estranged from the schooling process. These statistics represent a serious situation, indeed.

Of the 624 students eligible for outreach services, 214 were serviced either by special motivation placement or by placement by the outreach counselor. Of the 410 students not serviced by the SMC class or by the outreach counselors, a percentage may have received assistance and support from other programs on campus such as Teen Care or other on campus group counseling efforts. The real danger is the number of students who are alienated and not receiving adequate support counseling, care, programs and direction. A major premise of the dissertation is that in the large school, the social support system cannot be as humane, tightly knit and effective as in smaller, more personalized settings.

When a large high school, such as Castle High School, has so many students who are truly not succeeding at the "school game," change becomes imperative. When the school has a large percentage of students eligible for Comprehensive School Alienation Program services, concrete changes in the very structure of the institution need to be visualized and implemented.

To better comprehend the change process undertaken at the school, we need to review some of the basic definitions

and propositions of the Ecological Theory of Human
Development as they apply to core plan-ecological experiment
implemented at Castle High School.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL BASIS FOR THE STUDY

Description of the Ecological Theory of Human Development

Briefly stated, the ecological environment is conceived topologically as a nested arrangement of concentric structures, each contained within the next. These structures are referred to as micro, meso, exo, and macrosystems. These are defined as follows.

A microsystem is a pattern of activities, roles, relations, and psycho physical features experienced by the developing persons, in this case the students and their teachers, in a given setting over a particular period of time. A setting is a place, such as a classroom, where the participants can engage in face to face communication.

A mesosystem comprises the interactions among two or more settings in which the developing person becomes an active participant. Interconnections between home, classroom and peer group are examples. Interconnections between classrooms and classroom teachers would also be an example of a mesosystem embedded in the overall school.

An exosystem is an extension of the mesosystem involving settings that do not themselves contain the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect that person. A parent workplace, the teachers' union, the school board and university

developments would all be considered exosystem activities and undertakings.

In this study, the most important exosystem developments have been those involving the Hawaii School-University Partnership. Without the linkage between the high school and the university, modifications in the structural processes at the high school, would not have been undertaken, at least not the processes of change related to the house or core plan of educational renewal.

Developments at the district level and at the state legislature are also exosystem activities that although two levels removed from the students, have profound impact on the capacity of schools to meet the needs of their students. In this particular case analysis of reform, the district level impact and support was essential for the program to have a chance at even a modicum of success.

From an ecological perspective, what happens at levels and domains removed from face to face interactions of high school students have a powerful impact on the growth, development and learning of those particular students. School improvement happens within the school, in the micro classrooms of the school. School improvement also takes place because of activities, discussions, and developments that occur two-plus dimensions away from the micro settings.

The macrosystem involves the overarching patterns of cultural stability and development. What makes one country

or society different from another involves belief systems and lifestyles. These higher order imprints or archetypes, if you will, act as templates or blueprints of the larger society or culture. With respect to education in our society as a whole, classroom learning and teaching patterns can be very similar in nature, whether you are in Hawaii, Colorado, Alabama, or New York.

There are differences to be sure, but for the most part, similarities abound: the lecture method, the 50 minute bell schedule, the 8-3:00 o'clock day, the three months off in the summer, the hierarchy of the top down managerial system, the credit format, the bell shaped curve, the disciplinary referral system, the winners and the losers, the tracking into the academic, vocational, and general groups, the lock step progression through the grades, etc.

Educational reports such as "A Nation at Risk," emanate from the macro-domain. Since that report came out in 1983, discussions, dialogue, and change processes have taken place in many states and communities. Since that report discussed the mediocrity of our nation's educational enterprise, diverse steps have been taken (or not taken) by states and communities throughout the nation. How substantive these discussions and attempts at change have been is open to debate and question. The point of contention here is that

macro level actions filter down and impact on the micro world of individual students and their families.

In essence, human development and learning never takes place in a vacuum; it is always embedded in ecological contexts. To bring about educational reform and improvement, the contextual features and components of an environment have to be altered and modified. If the school, as it is presently structured, is not adequately meeting the needs, learning styles, and potentials of all of its students, then that structural environmental ecology has to be changed. To do more of the same is tantamount to the perpetuation of the mediocrity that abounds.

The beauty of the ecological theory of human development is its holistic and multifaceted nature. To do justice to the developing youngster we need to be aware of the many dimensions that impact on that youngster. Context, linkages, networks, support systems, micro settings, partnerships, reciprocities between subsystems, the big picture, the teacher-student dyads, and the like are of paramount importance in gaining a handle on school reform in the late 20th century.

This paper centers on the micro and mesosystems of the core population. It emphasizes features and aspects of the core approach that are different from the "at large approach" to schooling. The basic elements and processes of the core approach will be contrasted with the "at large

approach." At the heart of this dissertation is the basic proposition that when one changes the contextual environment (at least certain essential aspects of that contextual environment), the stage is set for more productive gains on the part of the students and teachers alike.

To gain deeper insight into the "school within a school" or "core process" implemented at Castle High School, the Ecological Theory of Human Development provides us with the theoretical framework needed to highlight and underscore the complexity of the change process undertaken at the high school. By utilizing the four main components of the theory, the micro, meso, exo, and macro domains, the interested reader will gain a broader understanding of the transactions and interconnections linking up the major aspects of the change process of educational reform at the local high school level.

By bringing into the overall picture the levels far removed physically from the student target population, we can see how important decision making and concrete actions are at those more distant levels of analysis.

In an article entitled "The Experimental Ecology of Education," Bronfenbrenner comments that there are three basic requirements that must be met if progress is to be made in understanding educational systems and processes. These requirements are as follows:

1. Our researches cannot be restricted to the laboratory; for the most part they must be carried out in real-life settings.

2. Whether and how people learn in educational settings is a function of sets of forces or systems at two levels: (a) The first comprises the relations between characteristics of learners and the surroundings in which they live out their lives (e.g., home, school, peer group, work place, neighborhood, community.); (b) The second encompasses the relations and interconnections that exist between these environments.

The scientific study of both sets of relations as they affect learning constitutes the ecology of education and represents a major and necessary focus for educational research.

3. The strategy of choice for investigating person-environment and environment-environment is the ecological experiment, defined as a systematic contrast between two or more environmental systems, or their structural components with a careful attempt to control for possibly confounding influences, either by random assignment or by matching on subject characteristics or other relevant factors.⁵⁶

The core process or school within a school development implemented at Castle High School meets the three criteria discussed above. To begin with, the coring process was

implemented in a local high school located in Kaneohe, Oahu, a "real-life educational setting."

Secondly, the core process of educational reform involved looking at the relations and interconnections between the learners and their environments and the interconnections existing between the environments themselves.

Thirdly, the core process of educational reform meets Bronfenbrenner's definition of an ecological experiment in that it involved "a systematic contrast between two or more environmental systems, or their structural components, with a careful attempt to control for possibly confounding influences."

The core process implemented at Castle High School was an ecological experiment in educational reform. It involved 120 freshmen of the graduating class of 1993. These freshmen were randomly selected to be members of the coring process known as the Gold Core. These freshmen received an educational experience that contrasted from the traditional "at-large" educational process experienced by the non-core members of the graduating class of 1993.

Before looking at each of the four domains, the micro, meso, exo and macro, as they each pertain specifically to certain main features of the core plan, a general discussion of the paramount importance of the social context is in order.

The Paramount Importance of the Social Context

The ecological paradigm emphasizes the importance of viewing and understanding human behavior as a function of the interaction between organism and environment. To truly understand human behavior and change in human behavior the social context of the overall behavioral equation has to be powerfully highlighted. We cannot just look at the individual act and leave it as that; we must include the influence of the situational context on the behavior and actions of the individual.

This should not be interpreted to mean that individual attributes and characteristics do not mean that much. They most assuredly do. What it does stress, though, is that it is the interactions between individuals and their environmental contexts that strongly influence beliefs, actions and changes in beliefs and actions. As touched upon earlier, the emphasis on the individual in society impacts on how the psychology of change is framed, dissected, analyzed and interpreted. Often we lock our assessments "inside the skin" of the individual and greatly downplay the general impact and shaping power of environmental contexts.

If educational reform and reconstruction endeavors are to prove effective and viable, knowledge of interventions that include the individual and the social context is extremely important. A knowledge base regarding how changes

in social context settings elicit and evoke intended behavioral changes in individuals is of paramount concern.

A comprehensive and holistic view of educational change brings into consideration a both/and perspective involving changes and transactions between individual and social context. Regarding the development of interventions based upon ecological conceptualizations, Kelly points out:

My interest in developing principles of intervention from an ecological conception of adaptation is derived from the conviction that most programs of individual or organizational change focus on either organizational behavior or the activities of specific individuals, with only slight consideration of the interdependence of individuals and the organization or the benefits and costs of any intervention for individuals or organizations. What this research is aimed toward is the creation of empirical knowledge of the interdependence of societies and their members. It is my belief that without knowledge of the process of adaptation to varied environments, it will not be possible to evolve a science of interventions.⁵⁷

An ecological perspective is not an either/or conceptualization. When analyzing change, an ecological model strives to include the depth and breadth of the social context in its overall calculus. How the social context undergirds, impacts, and impinges on the unique and complex individuals engaging in that particular social context with its definable features, components, and processes is of utmost importance if we are to truly gain viable insights into creating educational interventions that actually promote and induce the positive behavioral changes deemed of value by our society.

To better understand the power of social context as it transactionally impacts on individuals the following two ecological principles need to be described and discussed.

Development in Context

From this perspective individuals are not just a product of their genetic packaging, predispositions and potentialities. Nor are they end results of their particular dispositions or demeanors. There is a reaction range to human behavior, learning, and development that must take into analysis the environments, contexts, or ecologies within which human beings find themselves ensconced.

From the ecological point of view, children, youth, students, are strongly impacted upon and shaped by the environments in which they find themselves embedded: peer groups, classrooms, schools, communities, cultural forces and the like. The same can be said for teachers, parents, workers, etc.

Student motivation and "stick to-itiveness," for example, cannot be looked at only from an intrinsic point of view. External environmental forces can exert powerful pressures and influences upon a student's sense of persistence regarding meeting academic challenges and goals. The type of interaction and bonding in the family, the emphasis on learning in the home, the quality of the teacher-student dyad, peer interests and influences, classroom structure and the like can strongly shape a student's sense of motivation.

In other words, variables and factors emanating in the environment have to be taken into consideration when looking at student motivation regarding academics. The same could be said for motivation regarding music, sports, or any other human endeavor.

Lewin, whose ideas and psychological framework, considerably influenced Bronfenbrenner, placed strong emphasis on the interactions between individuals and their environments regarding the shaping of human behavior. With respect to understanding motivation, for example, Bronfenbrenner writes:

The most unorthodox aspect of Lewin's schema is his treatment of motivational forces as emanating not from within the person but from the environment itself. Objects, activities, and especially other people send out lines of force, valences, and vectors that attract and repel, thereby steering behavior and development.⁵⁸

Educators are often concerned about the motivation that students display in the classroom. To become more fully aware of potential positive environmental forces and factors may go a long way to improving the "motivational states" of more students involved in the educational process. In other words, it is important to realize that student motivation develops and manifests itself in environmental contexts; motivation, like so many other human characteristics, does not grow and mature in a vacuum.

In general we are becoming more attuned to theories of intelligence that emphasize multiple aspects, potentialities and configurations. Howard Gardner has promoted a wider

appreciation of the diversity of human development and intelligence.⁵⁹ To help cultivate the unique potentialities and predispositions of individuals, environmental contexts need to be designed in ways that will be conducive to the actualization of these varied and unique potentialities.

What potentials, talents, motivational patterns, interests, etc., surface and come to fruition often depends upon the particular environmental contexts in which a person finds himself and in which a person develops. From a cultural contextual perspective, a large, strong male growing up in Japan may look to Sumo wrestling to express those physical attributes; whereas strong, large males in the United States often channel or are shaped to channel those physical qualities in the direction of the football field.

To gain a "wider view" of human nature and development, the contexts and systems of life must be heavily taken into consideration in the final analysis. As Garbarino states:

Bronfenbrenner has described the individual's environment as a set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls. As we ask and answer questions about development at one level, this ecological framework reminds us to look at the next levels both within and beyond the immediate setting to find the questions to ask and answer. For example, to understand the conflict of husbands and wives over lost income, we must look outward to the economy that puts the husbands out of work and welcomes the wives into the labor force, and to the culture that defines a person's personal worth in monetary terms and blames the victims of economic dislocation for their own losses. We must also look inward, to the parent-child

relationships that are affected by the changing roles and status of the parents and to the temperamental characteristics of the individuals involved. Further, we must look "across" to see how the several systems involved (family, workplace, and economy) adjust to new conditions over time. These interlocking social systems are the stuff of which ecological analyses are made.

To understand student-teacher conflicts, the ecological model can help the reader become more sensitive to the "wider picture" embedding the "actors." For example, one may want to look at the style of teaching versus the style of learning manifested in the classroom. One needs to take into consideration the size of the class and the size of the population the teacher deals with throughout the work day. One needs to look at the level of support and collaboration the teacher receives from colleagues.

Is the teacher more competitive and achievement oriented? Is the student more cooperative and affiliation centered? Are there supportive linkages between the class and the home? Are there dissonances and conflicting messages and perceptions about the problem occurring in class? Has the size of the counselor-student ratio impacted negatively on the amount of counseling and consultation the counselor can extend to the student/teacher conflict? Is the student bringing problems from home and displacing and projecting those feelings and troubles on the teacher?

Is the teacher on edge due to family pressures or worries about possible staff reduction due to lack of funds from the legislature? Is the talk of budget cuts and staff

reduction connected to the recessionary economy? Is the teacher a part of a school and school district that is virtually stuck, paralyzed with respect to structure, programs, innovations and reform movements? Is the teacher essentially isolated and on her own? Is she part of the school that has not been involved in the change process initiated by outside private and public agencies? Is she an integral part of the change process at the school?

By emphasizing the paramount importance of the contextual fields as they impact on student and teacher alike, we can become more sensitive to the complexity and the multi-dimensionality of the difficulties, problems, disagreements, disputes, etc., that surface in a classroom. Likewise, we can also become more enlightened regarding the elements, dynamics, features and interconnections comprising ecologies of excellence and promise. Knowing more about the power of interlocking social systems to shape individual behavior can help us significantly in our efforts to design quality educational interventions.

The power of the transactions between systems and subsystems as they impact on individuals is stated dynamically by deLone:

To the large developmental contexts of class and caste one must add more intimate ones of which school, neighborhood, and family are clearly among the most important. For young children, especially, it is through these intimate contexts that contact with the broader dimensions of class, race, and the social and economic order is made. Again, it is important to stress that all these smaller contexts and the larger

ones surrounding them interact and affect each other. The nature of a society at a given time shapes the structure of social classes; social class influences the nature of family life and experience; racial membership influences likely occupation; through income, occupation helps determine neighborhood. Neighborhood determines where one goes to school, and not only is family background associated with how a child does in school, but it may influence how the school treats a child and the ability of the child and family to manipulate the institutional ropes of a school. Schooling in turn influences subsequent social class standing, and to some extent the skills that the population as a whole develops influence the contours of economic activity, and so on in a series of permutations, combinations, and feedback loops. In the midst of this complex, breathing organism called social structure is the child.

Social Habitability

The ecological outlook places great importance on the "quality of life" as perceived by the individuals as they experience various ecological contexts. The "quality of life" index will be strongly evident in families that are loving, supportive, and sensitive to the developmental needs of the family members. Homes where the parents are solidly employed and encourage their children's interests and efforts in school and in play promote the quality of life in the household. Families that spend quality time together, who share the precious moments of life's specialness enhance the habitability of the home ecology.

When the home environment is non-supportive, non-protective, depriving, fragmented, stressful, abusive and the like, the habitability of that context will leave a great deal to be desired. In extremely dysfunctional home milieus, the quality of life will be quite low and

depressed. Students entering school from troubled and distressed families more often than not exhibit attitudes and behaviors that try the patience of the best and most sensitive educators.

The habitability of the classroom and the school can go a long way to balancing the effects of the students coming from low "quality of life" homes. This issue is of paramount concern in today's world because so many youngsters are attending school from "at-risk" families and backgrounds. In "The Unfinished Agenda: A New Vision for Child Development and Education," by the Committee for Economic Development, the following is stated:

The warning signs are clear and compelling. More children are being born into poverty and single-parent families than ever before. Between 1970 and 1987, the poverty rate for children increased nearly 33 percent. In 1989, close to 25 percent of children under the age of six lived in poverty, and one-fourth of all births were to unmarried women. When multiple risk factors, such as poverty, family structure, and race are taken into account, as many as 40 percent of all children may be considered disadvantaged.

Educationally, the United States remains a nation at risk. More than 25 percent of all students fail to graduate from high school each year, and in many major cities, half of all poor and minority students routinely drop out of school with poor skills, few job prospects, and limited opportunities in life.⁶²

This "nation at risk" scenario may not be as pronounced and as pervasive in Hawaii as it is in the inner cities on the mainland, but a severe degree of "at-riskness" prevails in the state. This scenario is especially troublesome in areas along the Leeward Coast and in sections of Kalihi.

Special needs schools have been designated, especially along the Waianae Coast, to reflect the pervasive academic and behavioral troubles of those schools.

Regarding special needs schools, Governor John Waihee commented that, "Some of our schools will need more help than others if they are to achieve their full potential. Such schools are generally those where there are a large number of students at-risk and chronically underachieving."⁶³

Ten schools have been designated as special needs schools. These ten are the most troubled schools. How many other schools fit the profile of a troubled, under achieving school, or nearly fit that profile, is a question to ponder.

If students in great numbers are not attending, failing too many classes, being truant, getting suspended, testing low, abusing substances, etc., the school paradigm needs to change. These negative results and features of the school as it is structured today can be viewed as "anomalies" of a paradigm that no longer works for a good percentage of the student body.

As the Committee for Economic Development states:

The traditional school mission of teaching basic and advanced academic skills has generally been most successful when the student population is relatively similar in their level of preparation for school, when children's lives are reasonably stable and secure, and when families, educators, and community have high expectations for their children and hold them to high standards. Where children's lives are chaotic, where parents feel alienated from the school system, where families and educators do not expect children to achieve, where communities do not support education, and where resources do not match needs, the traditional

school model has failed to educate effectively. Nor are schools equipped to provide children with emotional, physical, and moral support more appropriately provided by a stable, nurturing family. ⁶⁴

When the habitability of the homes of so many youngsters is in such deep trouble and uncertainty, schools more than ever need to change to better meet these real and pressing student need dispositions. The schools, as they are now structured, are not able to provide the emotional, physical and moral support needed by so many "at-risk" youngsters attending schools today.

The "small school" movement is an attempt to change the habitability of the school environment. If the students feel distanced and alienated from the schools, the schools need to change to bring the student back into the positive "embrace" of the schools.

Since education is a "people business," a "helping profession," the human element should be of paramount concern in the overall process. As William Glasser states, "We should work toward making high school a warmer, more personal place for the student. This isn't coddling the students; on the contrary it is both simple humanity and common sense. ⁶⁵

Regarding high risk youngsters, Bowman tells us:

If you provide nurturing, supportive people in school who help the child figure out what is happening and help with it, they will get better. If you make the school a quality experience, they have more choices. They don't have to blindly follow the path that leads to school failure, drug abuse, unwed⁶⁶ pregnancies, criminality and welfare dependency.

The habitability or school quality of life index concerns itself with the human ambience of a place. Do students feel good to be there? Do they feel understood and cared for? Do the educators try to see things from the students' point of view, to "walk a mile in their shoes"? Is there ample support for students experiencing learning difficulties and personal doubts? Do students feel appreciated and respected? Clearly, the school's "quality of habitability" is an essential feature that needs to be underscored when judging and evaluating the schools and educational milieus of today.

The question of habitability focuses on the "quality of everyday reality" of the schools as they are presently structured and as they could be if they were structured differently. As Robert Coles poignantly words it:

The issue is, then, not the absent aspirations of parents, or the devilish inertia, or unruliness of children, the issue is the everyday reality which both parents and children, not to mention teachers, have to face in countless school districts across the land--the awful and disheartening disparity between what might be and what is, all too exactly noticed and understood by our children, whom we keep calling our future, yet treat as if we care not what that future might be, ought to be.

An ecological analysis of school patterns and school changes must include accurate descriptions of the "quality of life" or social habitability of the school contexts. Until recently, failure rates, under achievement patterns, and drop out statistics, have been located within the students themselves or within their family of origin.

Schools, for the most part, were left "off the hook" regarding negative school learning outcome data.

Calvin R. Stone states the following with respect to the placing of blame regarding student failure:

Typically, educational planners have assumed that educational disadvantage, under achievement, and dropping out are problems that originate solely within the individual student. Until recently the literature on high school drop outs was dominated by litanies of personal characteristics (i.e., large family, single-parent home, low income, minority group status, problem with authority) associated with leaving school before graduation. These litanies in effect blamed the victims. Seldom did one find mention of an association between educational practices and drop out rates. Therefore schools by omission were portrayed as innocent bystanders within a growing national problem.⁶⁸

To balance out "the equation of blame" newer orientations look to include the school itself in their viable attempts to create more sensitive assessments of the "failure syndrome" so pervasive in our schools of today.

From the ecological theoretical perspective, it must be remembered that the interactions between students and their school and classroom ecologies are of paramount importance in our human-learning calculus. For too long the larger portion of the blame for student under achievement and failure rested upon the shoulders of the students and their families. For the most part schools were either minimally held accountable or left out entirely from the assessment procedure.

To arrive at a more dynamic and holistic account of the pervasive "student failure syndrome," the school context

needs to be fully included if we are to arrive at a true ecological analysis. As King and Stone comment:

A newer perspective assigns a major part of the pathology to the school, rather than to the students. The school size, design, organization, policy-setting mechanisms, curriculum, psychodynamics, communication structures, evaluation practices, leadership, teachers, and commitment are all examined. This view assumes that far too many students, either unattracted to or discouraged by school programs and processes, drift away from school into an unwelcoming job market and general society.⁶⁹

In this newer paradigm, the impact of the school ecology is of paramount importance in the shaping of student behavior and attitude. The school is no longer left out of the accountability analysis. This new framework underscores the importance of improving the "quality of life" index in the school. The "social habitability" index is heavily weighted if one wants to understand the ecology of educational change.

This new model does not forget to include individual student characteristics and family background variables in the overall educational analysis equation. These variables, when added to school structural and habitability features, provide us with a more inclusive, multivaried and indepth analysis.

In essence, in the ecological perspective, the dynamic interactions between the students and the immediate settings they are embedded in are crucial if one is to provide a holistic picture of the difficulties, challenges,

opportunities and struggles they are faced with in their daily lives.

In addition, we need to take into consideration general systems that interact with and impinge upon immediate worlds. If the meso, exo, and macro dimensions contribute to the enhanced habitability of student microsystems, then support and opportunity will be that much more viable, visible and prevalent for more students involved in those microsystems.

If the meso, exo, and macro dimensions contribute more negative "blueprints" and structural patterns, student growth and development will tend to be less pronounced in their microsystems. Student learning does not grow in a vacuum and it does not mature linearly from uni-dimensional foundations. It emanates and manifests itself from processes involving the interaction of student and environmental systems, as well as from the transactions between environmental systems near and far. Surely the school as a system needs to be implicated and held accountable if we are to establish holistic gleanings of analysis.

CHAPTER 3
ECOLOGICAL THEORY OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
IN THE GOLD CORE CONTEXT

The Micro System and the Core Process

In this case study of school reform, the microsystem is the immediate environment or setting containing the student. What takes place in the classroom is of paramount concern with respect to the microsystem and the core process. Three main elements of the microsystem are the activities, roles, and relationships engaged in by the significant individuals making up the microsystem: the students and teachers.

A primary contention of this case study is that the positive results of the core population were directly linked to the contextual modifications engaged in by the teachers and students comprising the Gold Core at Castle High School. This study looks at important elements and variations making up the new educational agenda experienced by the students and teachers living out the day to day reality of the coring process.

The Advisor-Advisee Relationship

In the core program, the teacher's job description changed to include the advisorship role. Each of the four core teachers became an advisor to his or her first period students. The advisorship role provided the teachers with an opportunity to manifest a counseling and guidance

orientation. For those first period students, the advisor acted as counselor, guide, mentor, friend and the like.

The advisor-advisee relationship approach does not, by any means, imply that the psychological-social bonding between student and teacher takes precedence over the academic orientation of the core. What it does do is recognize the importance of eliciting positive connections between the two main "players" of the "educational game," that being the teacher and student.

The advisor-advisee relationship definition represents an ecological change in the microsystem of the classroom. By stressing the advisor-advisee relationship as of paramount importance in the overall schooling process, insight into the interplay between psychological and educational forces in the overall learning process come clearer to light.

What the advisor-advisee relationship does from a foundational point of view is recognize explicitly that marginal students especially need to feel wanted and listened to at the school level or progress in course work may be slow, haphazard, or not come at all. The point is stated well in "The Way Out: Student Exclusion Practices in Boston's Middle Schools":

Obviously schools must teach skills in math and language and in creative thinking and problem solving. However, educators are finding more and more that students will not learn basic skills if they feel no one in the school cares about them, if they feel lost or invisible in a large bureaucracy, or if they are

distracted by needs to check out what other students are wearing or by concerns about who they will sit with at lunch. Teachers working with these needs rather than pretending they don't exist can free up student's attention for learning.

As long as students feel lost and alienated at school it will be difficult for them to freely and coherently invest themselves and their energies in the assigned tasks and processes. As long as students feel that there is no adult at the school level to turn to when problems are besetting them, whether they emanate from home, neighborhood, peer group and the like, crystallized focused attention to the tasks at hand will not be forthcoming on a consistent basis.

When students begin to fall behind due to non classroom micro factors such as peer micro pressures, or family micro problems, care and support at the micro classroom level is crucial if student improvement is to ensue. If no one is there psychologically for the students experiencing these traumatic situations, the downward spiral of not keeping up in school will more than likely degenerate even further into deep seated failure patterns.

In the core program, the teacher-advisor is expected to exhibit more personalized care and concern for each and every advisee in his or her group. The advisor-advisee relationship reduces the psychological distance between student and teacher. From a student's perspective, knowing that a teacher cares for you as a teenager, as a person, and

not just as a "subject-matter pupil," can go a long way in assisting that student to sustain his motivation and effort as a "subject-matter pupil."

In the larger school, the psychological distances are greater between teachers and students. As Barbara Smey-Richman states, "Secondary students perceive school as a place where there is limited teacher-student contact."⁷¹ She goes on to state that, "Students who do not understand and who perceive teachers as uncaring withdraw from class and make less and less effort to respond."⁷²

If the explicitly expected caring mode is not built into the relationship definition, as it is in the core program, the micro world or the classroom can deteriorate into teacher-student relationships characterized by Brookover as "mutually reinforcing cycles of alienation."⁷³

As we know, most high school teachers are especially subject oriented in their approach to their careers. They pride themselves on being experts in their respective domain of knowledge. They know their field and they expect students to respect their expertise and knowledge. They also respect students who respect them and who try hard to learn and master some of the content of the subject so valued by the subject oriented teacher.

Teachers feel rewarded by students who achieve highly and appear sincerely interested in the course being taught. Students who do not achieve well and who appear

disinterested and/or preoccupied with other non micro classwork matters, present non reinforcing situations for the teachers.

Unless high school teachers make a conscientious effort to constantly create learning invitations for the low-achieving students, the teachers can find themselves disengaging from the teacher-learner dyad. If the low-achieving student appears to show little enthusiasm for lessons, why should the teacher? The teacher has only so much time in the day, what with 30-plus students five times a day. Teachers can rationalize away this orientation by claiming that their relationship definition with their students focuses on subject matter categories and not on other non classroom micro vicissitudes.

The relationship definition that obtains in the large school, so important from an ecological perspective, can be too one dimensional and thus insufficiently supportive of marginal "at-risk" students. In the large, bureaucratic high schools the teacher's role definition can be construed as segmented off into a tunnel vision, subject centered mindset. The teachers perceive the low-achieving students as not achieving; the low-achieving students see the teachers as cold, strict, inflexible and non-caring.

Smey-Richman explains it in this manner:

Teachers get their greatest rewards from working with students who are responsive and high achieving; they withdraw and do less when working with low achievers.

As teachers' commitment to teaching low achievers declines, they externalize responsibility for difficulties by blaming administrators or the low-achieving students themselves."⁷⁴

The marginal students who most probably entered the class behind in their knowledge of the rudiments of the course to begin with sense the growing impatience of the teacher with respect to their lack of achievement in the course. They perceive the teacher to be uncaring and unsupportive to their particular unique plights. They begin to feel that the teacher shows favoritism toward certain types of students in the micro classroom.

The teachers feel that they can only do so much with certain students. They also feel that they are in this negative alienation spiral alone--that is, nobody really understands their predicament having to deal with so many students who appear to have real difficulties keeping up with the set structured curriculum course work.

The spiral tends to play itself out in the following manner:

Getting no response, teachers become more lethargic or impatient and verbally abusive. Low achievers' alienation increases, which leads to poorer academic performance and then disruptive behavior. These student behaviors further reduce⁷⁵ teacher commitment and the alienation cycle continues.

As the cycle progresses, the student gives up on the teacher and the teacher gives up on the student. The student has failed, the teacher has failed, the system has failed. Low-achieving marginal students who could have been given a psychological life support line in a differently

structured micro-meso system give up on themselves, the school, and too often, society.

As Gary Wehlage comments regarding students who eventually quit school, "The process of becoming a drop-out is complex because the act of rejecting an institution as fundamental to the society as school must also be accompanied by the belief that the institution has rejected the person."⁷⁶

The advisor-advisee relationship connection personalizes the student's educational environment. This relationship, built on a growing and maturing sense of psychological support and trust, works to "reject" the rejection and alienation process found too often in large secondary schools. The inclusion of the advisor-advisee relationship as an integral component of the core approach to education has considerably enhanced the microsystem involving educator and student.

This component of the core approach made it more supportive for each and every student in the core. With this variable in place students had a better chance of getting advice and help, and thus not winding up falling through the school's safety support network. In essence, the school's support network became tighter and more protective. If consultation was needed, the advisor would make it a point of contacting the grade level counselor for more in-depth assistance.

Before the creation of the advisorship, teachers, for the most part, would usually not follow up on students because they had too many students to be concerned about. The first thirty or thirty-five were no different from the last group of thirty-five. In the "at large" design no one teacher was assigned or made responsible for a manageable number of students. Accountability was uncertain in the "at large" system. The larger the school, the greater the chance that more high risk students would fall through the cracks. The sheer number of class sections, students, teachers, course offerings and the like contributed to a lack of consistent follow up and follow through. The structure, the large disconnected ecology of the "at large" system, contributed greatly to the shaping of the inconsistent support and followup of students.

It goes without saying that certain teachers in the "at large" design often took it upon themselves to manifest consistent concern and care for troubled students. Others did what they could in their classes, but in reality, had little or no time for the needed follow up on the more high risk students. At any rate, in the "at large" approach, advising of a manageable group of students was not a planned component embedded in the overall fabric of the "at large" design. With the "house plan," the advisorship was a fully thought out and well-planned component of the overall organizational design configuration.

In order to enhance the school as a potent pro-social support system, Garbarino, a colleague of Bronfenbrenner, states the following:

Create a social climate in which personal observation, accountability, and feedback flourish. There is no substitute for the "cop on the beat" in the community at large. Likewise, there is no substitute for enduring, personalized relationships between staff and students. Schools must operate as support systems.

In the core program, the advisor-advisee relationship element helped create a social climate characterized by personal observation, accountability and feedback. The advisors diligently conveyed a supportive, trusting, and invitational message to all advisees.

With respect to the importance of viewing education as an invitation to others to learn and develop together, Mike Rose states:

A friend of mine recently suggested that education is one culture embracing another. It's interesting to think of the very different ways that metaphor plays out. Education can be a desperate, smothering embrace, an embrace that denies the needs of the other. But education can also be an encouraging, communal embrace-- at its best an invitation, an opening.

A struggling student needs to know that his teachers are there to help him get a better grasp of the situation. They are there to offer him ways to improve the situation, to give him hope that things can improve. They are there to openly invite him to make the effort to improve his lot. The teachers must convey to the students that they will give them the needed support and assistance that will help them start carving out their paths of success.

Sensitive and student-centered support is of paramount importance in today's fast paced, pressurized world. This is especially true for youngsters coming to school without the needed support and familial grounding from the home microsystem. As stated in the Action Plan for Hawaii's Educationally At Risk dated June 14, 1990:

Successful students learn school and life-success models from their parents, peers, school programs and school associates, churches, neighborhoods, and total life experiences. These provide a support system for the students. At-risk students often lack this support system at almost every level of their experiences. In secondary schools, they are usually grouped with other at-risk students in tracked or special programs, reflecting and amplifying neighborhood segregation.⁷⁹

What the advisorship-advisee relationship process does is significantly contribute to the creation of more stable and consistent support foundations at the school level. If many students are not receiving strong, sensitive and positive encouragement in their other micro environments, then it becomes all the more imperative that the educational micro milieus improve and enhance the support framework offered at that level. In common sense terminology, if a student is coming to school with a negative mindset due to lack of positive parental/guardian support and other related variables (non-alterable variables, or at least not as readily alterable variables from the school's perspective) and that same student feels adrift and essentially non cared for and supported at the school level, then that negative

mindset will become that much more ingrained in the mindscape of the youngster.

As pointed out in the Action Plan for Hawaii's Educationally At-Risk, June 14, 1990:

Successful students perceive their school as friendly and supportive, they have faith in their own abilities as well as the help available in the school. At-risk children do not see the school as a friendly and supportive place. They received a much larger share of negative messages about themselves and what they have done than successful students. They are not at all confident that they have access to the benefits of the good life in school.

The restructuring of a large bureaucratic school into a smaller, more caring and supportive micro educational domain can but only help all students coming from the high risk world in which we all live. Naturally, the more "at-risk" students need that type of a setting more so than students from lower risk backgrounds. Generally speaking the more support one has in the home micro system level the easier it will be to shake off the effects of the large bell driven, lock-step regimented high school.

The high risk youngster who gets little backing and "listening with the third ear" type understanding at home will find it extremely difficult to maintain his ego strength and integrity when confronted with a "failure ridden," "put down," easy to "slip through the cracks" type schooling process. The "cult of efficiency" type mentality so often found in large, impersonal institutions can

contribute to depression, anger and despair in even the strongest of high risk people.

The core approach is one of many paradigms or models that can help educators begin the arduous task of reshaping our educational institutions to reflect the field-theory systems perspective of human behavior and development. Knowing intrinsically that the home field system affects deeply the student who enters the school field system will enable educators to take to heart what Eliot Eisner says about structure in our schools:

The existing secondary school structure not only separates teacher from teacher and divides what is taught into small units with virtually impenetrable boundaries, but it also exacerbates the anonymity of students. Reflect for a moment on the fact that in America today about one out of six students comes from single parent families. Not only has the nuclear family weakened, but, given the mobility in our nation, the extended family is largely an abstraction. Many students come from homes where the single parent with whom they live works, where relatives are often hundreds or thousands of miles away, and where neighborhoods lack a sense of community.

In short our students often have limited contact with caring adults who know them well. Given these circumstances what do we offer them in high school? We replicate the conditions they encounter at home.

The schools are not working for many because of the way they are structured. They replicate, for many, the at-risk situation they find at home. In other words, the present structure of many of our high schools compounds and magnifies the tenuous, unsteady microsystem self that many students manifest and display when they enter the school system.

The Hippocratic oath states "above all else do no harm." Educators should adopt the same message as their own. Attempts have to be made inside the classroom and inside the school to "above all else do no harm." And yet, by maintaining the status quo structure, a structure that replicates the negative non-supportive home environment faced by so many, educators confirm the "small-future road" that will be believed in and taken by too many. By maintaining the large, impersonal structure of our big schools, we, in fact, do harm to the struggling self of the "at-risk" youngster. Eventually, too many give up on school, give up on home, give up on society, give up on themselves, and give up on "life's longing for itself."

When the experiences of the home system are negative and when the school system experiences are negative, the self system itself will be colored negative. No one is "born to be bad" as some tattoos and bumper stickers state. Everyone is born with a genetic package of myriad potentialities and predispositions. Some surely are more musically inclined or athletically gifted than others. Others are better suited for more abstract analysis yielding fruitful achievement in the field of mathematics, computer programming, scientific discovery and the like.

We are coming to realize that there are multiple intelligences, multiple domains for human achievement and actualization. Many students are excellent with their

hands. They have an intelligence regarding machines that is remarkable. Others seem to manifest an ethical and moral intelligence that rises above others. Excellence knows no bounds. It can come in all types of work, all types of careers and all types of play.

What blocks a youngster's drive and struggle for mastery in life, for a sense of achievement and industry, for love for his fellow human beings and the home planet earth, is the accumulation of negative experiences perceived by the developing human being in the diverse micro systems in which he finds himself.

Marian Grambau puts it well when she says:

Experiences start to accumulate. School begins to become a safe place or a hostile place, a place that provides satisfaction or causes pain and stress. Then, somewhere along the way, a student decides that graduation may require more than he can give. The student will not take any more risks. Goals of graduation that most students still carry are thrown aside and forgotten. It is then that we would hope there is an alternative program nearby, where students can rediscover themselves, re-examine their values, re-energize their goals, and recommit themselves to graduation and a contributing position in society. 82

From what Grambau points out, one might ask why each and every student cannot discover themselves, examine their values, energize their goals, commit themselves to graduation and a contributing position in society--as a matter of course, as a function of the way things are in the microsystem of the classroom. Too many of our young people lose themselves as they become drained by the realities they face at school and at home. They become losers in the

educational game when all should be able to "sing a winner's song."

If many students of a high risk (moderate risk as well) are not receiving the type of loving, caring, and achievement-type modeling at home and they do not receive it at school, then one needs to hope for alternative solutions wherein they can rediscover, reinvest, re-energize themselves. If we only had the foresight and the proper planning we might be able to prevent or at least greatly reduce the need for the re-evaluation of our despondent young people.

The core plan's advisor-advisee component is of paramount relevancy regarding the need to create and shape safe, caring and supportive learning micro milieus for all students. The more disturbing and stressful the circumstances in the home micro setting, the more imperative the need to design education micro domains built upon the foundational bedrock of psychological flexibility, support and humane concern.

As Goodlad comments in Common Schools for the Common Weal: Reconciling Self-Interest with the Common Good:

There is no question that circumstances outside of schools such as family mobility have much to do with student dropouts. But it is also true that most schools simply do not provide environments congenial to students who fail to adapt to the conventional expectations and regularities of schooling. Many teenagers, in particular, find themselves at the margins of their school's culture. From here, it is easy and sometimes compelling to walk permanently into the world beyond these margins, more often than not

with negative consequences for both the individual and society.⁸³

Goodlad goes on to state:

The casualness with which school authorities and segments of the community have accepted this drift towards the margins is scandalous. In-school-data on the course of the drift and steps to alleviate it are almost always absent or if available, still require collation and interpretation.⁸⁴

The core program attempts to modify the uncongenial environment of the large, bureaucratic high school. One regularity changed in the core program was to include the advisor-advisee relationship process as an integral feature of the teacher-student dyad.

In the "at large" mode of orientation, teachers and students basically define themselves from subject and grade centered concerns. If there is no one available to discuss personal uncertainties and environmental stressors which impact so significantly on the student's academic chances, the margins of the school's culture will surely expand to include even more teenagers than it does today.

Cooperative Learning

The core program utilized more cooperative learning processes and activities in their classrooms than did the "at large" program. Cooperative learning endeavors are structured so that small groups of students work together to answer questions, finish projects, complete classroom activities, etc. The members of these teams are encouraged

to work together in a cooperative fashion to reach a common goal.

The inclusion of cooperative learning processes meshes well with the developmental stage teenagers operate and orient themselves to the world from. Human beings are social beings; teenagers may be the most social of all the age group phases. To be with their classmates and friends is a powerful motivation for teenagers. They want to talk with them, share time with them and interact with them.

Traditional competitive structured methodologies tend to go against the grain of how ninth graders transact with the world. There is a place for lectures in the classroom methodology, but often in the traditional model it is overdone. Students are expected to keep still, keep quiet, take notes and basically remain isolated from fellow age-mates. Their natural inclination to interact with their fellow age-mates is frowned upon in the "at large" approach. Talking, sharing and human information exchange are often interpreted as acts of insubordination especially if these behaviors are perceived and analyzed by the more authoritarian-type teachers.

A course curriculum that includes a variety of educational methodologies and approaches to the teaching/learning process is more apt to provide incentives for a greater percentage of the students in the class. If the individualized and competitive structure of the class is

too strongly emphasized "at-risk" and marginal students will be adversely affected.

"At-risk" low achievers often receive many negative messages about their academic abilities and potentialities as they move through the grades. By high school too many are hanging by very thin threads of self esteem.

Classes that strongly emphasize an individualized achievement norm as well as a highly competitive grading posture present real problems for students emanating from more affiliation and cooperative type socio-cultural backgrounds.

Part-Hawaiian and Polynesian students, in general, manifest more affiliation and cooperative modes of interaction with others and with the overall environmental settings that encompass them. Cooperative learning activities would appear to be the type of educational process better matched to the need dispositions and learning interactional styles as presented by these students.

Thus we see that ninth graders, in general, are peer oriented to begin with. Peer involvement and peer interaction are important facets of being for this age cohort. This age group derives a great deal of ego identity from the consensual validation and affirmation of their fellow classmates.

Interactions, discussion groups, group projects and the like, are cooperative processes that elicit and evoke modes

of orientation that seem to come naturally to this age cohort.

This mode of orientation appears to be even more pronounced in Part-Hawaiian and Polynesian students. Affiliation orientations are highly valued in students coming from Polynesian backgrounds. Achievement press is not as strong a motivating force in Hawaiian, part-Hawaiian youngsters. Taking care of siblings, doing group activities, working with one's ohana are especially important for these young people. Again, cooperative, sharing activities appear to be natural avenues to pursue in the formal classroom.

As stated clearly by Kagan, et. al.:

Given that some individuals and groups came to school with a high value on competitive rewards and others with a high value on cooperative rewards, it is unfair to set up a class structure that provides exclusively or even primarily competitive rewards. When achievement is equivalent to "winning" in a competitive social-comparison situation, individuals and groups who place a high value on winning will be more motivated to achieve than those who do not value⁸⁵, or who negatively value, obtaining more than others.

Competition is strongly emphasized in traditionally structured high schools throughout the nation. The "at large" program at Castle High School is not different in that respect. Individual teachers may incorporate cooperative learning projects at times throughout the school year, but they are haphazard and based on individual teacher preference. Many teachers hardly ever use cooperative activities.

As Kagan comments regarding structural features of traditional high school classes:

There is a pervasive reliance on competitive and individualistic task and reward structures in the U.S. public schools. Most of the class day is spent in a whole-class structure in which students work at their seats independently. Teachers spend most of their time as emitters and directors, rarely as targets of student communication or as resource persons. The use of groups or teams is extremely rare, occurring almost exclusively in physical education and elementary reading instruction, and even in the rare cases where grouping of teams are used, there is very little systematic use of cooperative reward and task structures.

In the core plan, cooperative learning activities added to the overall curriculum package. By including cooperative learning activities, the core teachers provided a more diverse and varied approach to curriculum development and expansion. Students at the ninth grade level love to interact and "talk story" with each other. Part-Hawaiian and Polynesian students, in general, appear to emphasize cooperative endeavors more so than competitive ones.

By increasing cooperative endeavors in the formal high school classroom, the core plan provided these students with more opportunities to learn and engage in types of activities with which they appear to feel more comfortable. In this manner, equal access to knowledge may be more equitable and fair minded.

The Mesosystem and the Core Process

With respect to school organization, Egan and Cowan state the following:

It is helpful to see the school as a mesosystem itself; that is, as a network of personal settings in which relationships and the sources of influence on individuals are more complex than those of a personal system such as the family.

As mentioned previously, the mesosystem includes the interconnections among the main settings in which an individual finds himself embedded. In this case study of school reform, the main settings making up the mesosystem of the students and teachers are the linkages between the classrooms of the students, and the linkages of the classrooms and the homes of the students.

In the coring process the teachers meet on a daily basis for one period a day. Since they have two open periods, one coordination period can be devoted to core concerns and the other prep period be devoted to individual teacher concerns. By meeting daily, the four teachers had the opportunity to discuss particular students and some of the problems they may have presented in their respective classrooms.

In addition, the grade level counselor tried to attend once a week to hear about student concerns, offer feedback and link up other school and/or community resources depending on the situation at hand.

In the traditional "at large" approach to education, the counselor usually gets informed about certain students through a written referral format. In the core approach, an on-going forum is structured into the overall educational

process thus allowing for substantive dialogue and face to face interactions and exchanges of the significant adults involved in the unfolding educational process.

As James Garbarino states in Successful Schools and Competent Students, "The richness of the mesosystems for the child is measured by the number of links, by value consensus, and by the diversity of the microsystem."⁸⁸ He goes on to state:

In general, we would expect enhanced development in cases where this mesosystem was characterized by a lot of interaction between parents and school personnel, where more was known to members of both settings and where home and school communicated frequently.

The core process enhances the overall mesosystem of the child and the teacher. In the core process, the number and quality of links are explicit, structured, consistent and supportive. In the traditional "at large process, the mesosystem is often implicit, non structured, inconsistent and lacking in concerted support and feedback mechanisms.

In the core approach to educational reconstruction, the communicational nexus between teachers and students, and teachers and the home, is more pronounced and more widely utilized. The following are important elements of the mesosystem of the core process.

Interim Reports

Interim reports were sent to every single student in the core program. Interims are sent home to inform the parents and/or guardians about their youngster's progress or

lack of progress in their respective courses. In the traditional "at large" approach, for the most part, only negative reports are sent home. If a student is doing well in a course, a report is usually not sent home. In general, there is no built in consistency in the "at large" approach.

With the modification in the core mode of operation, parents can look forward to positive reports and comments. In the traditional "at large" mode, a letter from the school could only mean "trouble" for the youngster. In more than a few cases those reports never got to the parent or guardian because of the interception of those interims on the part of the anxious students. Overreaction on the part of the parents to the negative reports was also known to occur in certain homes.

With the core approach, a student could very well be intercepting a report indicating progress and determination on the student's part. With this small modification, the chance for school-home communication has been improved and enhanced. At least now a student had a greater chance of receiving a more balanced school interim report. For example, a student now could be getting some, if not all, interim comments that were positive whereas before he would pretty much know that an envelope from the school around interim report time meant only one thing--a negative assessment on the part of some if not all of his teachers.

With this modification in the core mesosystem, parents could expect four interim reports and four report cards. In this regard, they always knew that they could anticipate interim reports--good, bad or indifferent--for all four core subject courses: math, English, social studies, and science. Thus, the consistency in reporting between school and home is a feature that is explicitly embedded in the communication structure and process of the core mesosystem.

A Clear, Personable, Direct Communication Matrix

Closer communication between the core and the home regarding absences and other concerns was of paramount concern to the program.

As Stone and King state:

Attendance at school was an early and consistent goal. The teams organized themselves to record all absences from school, or from a particular class. Teachers took the responsibility as special counselors to all students assigned to their first-period classes, gathering information, phoning parents at home or at work, and insisting in every reasonable way that the students be in school. ⁹⁰

It is axiomatic that learning and passing grades will not occur if students are not attending on a regular basis. If students are absent too often, they inevitably fall behind in their studies. Generally speaking, the more they are absent the more difficult it will be to keep up and catch up. If the home and school are not in communication regarding attendance patterns, and problems, the chance of underachievement, academic failure, and alienation are that much more probable.

The sooner a parent knows about questionable absences, the sooner that parent can discuss the questionable absences with his or her son or daughter. The sooner the parents or guardians are notified, the sooner the clarification process can begin.

By calling home or the parent's work, the teacher-adviser opens up the lines of communication. By getting in touch, the teachers are reaching out to the parents in a positive and caring manner. They are showing their concern regarding the student who appears to be manifesting attendance and/or personal problems. By calling, the teachers are personalizing the school-home mesosystem. They are increasing the opportunities for positive linkages and feedback loops between the micro world of the classroom and the micro world of the home.

The chances of nipping potential problems in the bud are enhanced by frequent and consistent communication between teacher and parent. By conveying heartfelt concern, the teachers are acting as human bridge builders linking up microsystems that have too frequently been distanced from one another.

As Bronfenbrenner states in hypothesis form:

Once he or she enters an educational setting, the capacity of the child to learn will be enhanced to the extent that valid information, advice, and experience relevant to that setting is presented in the other contexts in which the child lives out his life, notably in the family.

Thus by increasing the flow of intersetting knowledge between the educational setting and the familial setting, the capacity of the student to have opportunities to learn will be that much more pronounced. If the student is missing classes, cutting out, or not showing up at all, formal learning opportunities, as provided by the school, will be infrequent or non existent.

In the "at large" schooling process, teachers, ideally, are encouraged to call home and let parents know if absences are presenting problems. In reality, calls are often not made or they are made on an inconsistent basis.

This situation regarding lack of intersetting communication regarding attendance may be due, in part, to the large number of students with which teachers work. Teachers often work with 150-190 students per day. Unless the teacher is also a department chairperson, he or she has only one prep period per day. Usually that prep period is devoted to lesson planning, exam and assignment corrections, and related classroom curriculum matters. The time to make calls is minimal and the calls are often not made.

In addition, as mentioned earlier, high school teachers tend to be subject centered in their approach to the schooling process. They are mainly concerned with presenting the subject matter curriculum to the students attending their respective class periods. From this perspective, student absences are of a lower priority than

are concerns of lesson presentations to students showing up to class.

Teachers may refer attendance problem students to the grade level counselor for follow up. Again, the "numbers game" surfaces regarding the prioritization of role allocated work demands. The grade level counselor who has 400-plus students assigned to himself often relegates attendance concerns to a lower level priority. Other types of teacher referrals and a walk in student population take top billing: students presenting family problems, anger control problems, acting out behaviors, boyfriend-girlfriend troubles, gang concerns, suicidal ideation and the like tend to dominate the counselor's time frame. Referral forms, court forms, and incidental paper work cut into counselor time availability.

The outreach counselor who links up the school-community workstudy/alternative learning center mesosystem may be called in to assist with students manifesting negative attendance profiles. His follow up time to this type of referral is quite limited due to the consultation type referrals emanating from the four grade level counselors.

Having to coordinate the linkages between the large high school and the off campus placements consumes a considerable amount of time and energy. Requests for follow up on students who are not showing up to class or who are

attending inconsistently tend to fall on the back burner.

In addition, the outreach counselor is responsible for linking up King Intermediate School and outside agency placements. Thus, his time is even more diffused because he is responsible for linking up not only Castle High School, but also King Intermediate School. Adding up the caseload of the two schools allows little time to adequately follow up on students who are not showing up. There is not enough time in the day to handle all of the referrals regarding students who are experiencing in-school troubles, who are basically coming to school but not succeeding and, therefore, presenting problems to the teachers in specific classes and in the school in general. "Out of sight--out of mind" becomes an unstated *modus operandi*.

In the light of this inconsistent meso communication pattern regarding student absences, the school has implemented a computerized attendance calling system. If a student is marked absent from any period during the day, a recorded message will alert the home about the student absence.

Since it is a recorded message with minimal information regarding any specifics of the attendance situation, questions, uncertainties, and doubts are often elicited in the home front. Oversights by the teacher, the attendance clerk or student aides, have resulted in calls going home

communicating a student's absence from class when that student was, in fact, in every class.

The computerized calling system is a trade-off when viewed from the large, crowded high school-social context. Before the system was installed, students could be out for weeks or more before the home microsystem became attuned to the situation. From this perspective, at least an attempt is made to notify the home about a son or daughter's absence from class (marked absence).

Without the computerized system, the large school structure and large school population precludes close classroom-home mesosystem communication linkages. With the computerized system calls are made home, albeit in a generalized recorded message format. In this manner the communication is basically brief and unidirectional.

Questions of clarification regarding the message cannot be made at the time of the recorded call. Parents have to wait until the following day to address concerns regarding the computerized message.

Since there is no attendance-truancy staff member assigned to the school, calls are frequently referred to the grade level counselor for follow up. Calls like the following are not uncommon:

Which one of my children was marked absent--the recorded message only mentions "your child"?

Which period was he or she absent?

My youngster is never absent. There must be a mistake. Can you check?

I believed the recorded message and grounded my son/daughter over the weekend only to find out that the school made a mistake. I'm fit to be tied about this calling system!

In certain circumstances the actual recorded message never gets through to the parents/guardians because the call is received by the student (or sibling) who has been absent or cutting class. Since the recorded message is only made once, if the adult is not home to receive it, the communication linkage, mechanical and impersonal as it may be, never connects.

With respect to intersetting communication, Bronfenbrenner states:

...we propose that the functioning of a mesosystem is enhanced as a function of the extent to which these interconnecting processes are reciprocal; i.e., involve exchange in both directions. With respect to school effectiveness, this proposition leads to the following hypothesis:

The operation of the school as a learning environment is enhanced to the extent that processes of interchange between the school and other settings are bidirectional. This principle applies in all areas of interchange including intersetting participation, indirect linkages,⁹² communication, and availability of knowledge.

The personable calls from the teacher-advisor regarding attendance, progress, behavior, and the like opens the way for quality bidirectional exchanges. By calling home, the teacher-advisor can share specifics of the situational context in which the dyad of teacher/student finds itself

embedded. The availability of knowledge can be shared and expanded upon via the conversational linkage developed over the phone. Phone conversations either initiated by the teacher-advisor or parent (bi-directionality) led to more shared face to face meetings when warranted.

Core Team Meetings with Parents and/or Guardians

If the situation deemed it appropriate, the four core members met with the student and the student's parents. These meetings, usually set up during the team's open coordination period, were arranged to increase the communication between the microsystem of the classroom, and the microsystem of the home.

At these meetings, often attended by the grade level counselor and the grade level vice principal, concerns, information, encouragement, positive comments, improvement plans, progress reports, grades and the like were shared and discussed. Parents shared information, experiences, and knowledge from the home microsystem.

In the core plan more meetings were set up than in the "at large" group. When all four major subject area teachers have the same open-coordination period, the structure of the scheduling lends itself to more easily facilitated parent core meetings.

In the "at large" mode of schooling, the four major subject areas teachers may have totally different prep periods. Meetings usually have to be arranged after school

or during A-period, a time usually set aside for student-teacher tutorial assistance.

By virtue of the lack of structural/scheduling continuity inherent in the traditional organization, meetings are not easily set up or facilitated. Each teacher in the "at large" group can be viewed as being somewhat uncoupled, dissociated and disconnected from other teachers. The structure of the large school shapes the "individualization of effort" that appears to permeate the more massive educational contexts.

By arranging the schedule so that core team members have the same open periods (one prep period and one coordination period), meetings with parents/guardians could readily be facilitated by the student's teacher/advisor. The role of linking agent, in the person of the teacher/advisor, is in place for every student in the core before the first day of class. Thus, the opportunity to foster a more tightly knit mesosystem by incorporating the classrooms and the home is made viable and sustainable by the nature of the core plan structure and schedule.

In the "at large" approach to schooling the structure is diffuse, nebulous, and poorly interconnected. The grade level counselor is often the person designated to coordinate and arrange parent-teacher(s) conferences when they are assessed as appropriate, either by teachers, administrators, counselors themselves, or parents.

When the grade level counselor is responsible for 400-plus students during the school year, arranging parent-teacher conferences can be tedious and time consuming to say the least. The loose-coupling nature of the "at large" structure, in general, and the uncoordinated system of designated prep periods in particular, make it more difficult to have all the main academic (and elective) teachers readily meet with parents.

Depending on the particular case or situation, meetings may have to be held with some of the teachers who are able to attend; others who are not able to attend during the designated time period, may send in updated progress reports to be read at the meeting. During some meetings reports are not shared with parents because the progress updates are turned in too late due to the many other pressing needs faced by classroom teachers operating in a large school with large student-teacher ratios.

As Boyer comments regarding conditions contributing to negative teaching contexts, "The basic problem is the distressingly frustrating working conditions of the teacher: too many students in a single day, too little time for preparation, too much paper work, and too many mindless interruptions."⁹³

The nature of the structure of the "at large" system and the "bigness factor" that permeates large schools in general contributes significantly to the inconsistent and

relatively amorphous communication linkages within school. The lack of a strong, tightly knit classroom to classroom mesosystem, precludes the cultivation of a strong, tightly knit classroom(s) to home mesosystem.

With respect to the separation of social systems in today's post-industrial world, Bronfenbrenner writes the following:

Socialization systems in the United States are more dissociated from each other. In terms of Lewinian theory, they tend to be systems in abscission, cut off from each other. Thus the home is separated from the school, the peer group from the family, the school from the neighborhood, and all of these settings lack connections with the world of work.

This dissociation of social structures has been increasing rapidly in recent decades and has been accomplished by a parallel deterioration of socialization processes and outcomes. Hence experiments that undertake to reverse the process by constructing and strengthening interconnections between ecological systems offer promise both for scientific understanding and for social policy.⁹⁴

The core plan of Castle High School is an ecological experiment of an educational nature. A structure and process was designed to create a small student-teacher centered learning environment. If bigness often begets alienation and anonymity, smallness could beget integration and association. By creating a "small school" within the large school, an ecology conducive to the growth and development of reciprocal interconnections between subsystems was made viably possible.

As stated in the "Action Plan for Hawaii's
Educationally At-Risk":

It is critical to create attractive school campuses and a school environment and climate that foster close personal relationships and respect among students, teachers, administrators, and parents. Smaller schools provide the opportunity for the principal and teachers to know the names of every student. The depersonalization that often comes with large schools should be reduced by consideration of programs such as schools within schools.

By arranging more face to face meetings with students, teachers and parents, closer interpersonal associations and shared meanings can come to fruition. The lack of connections and the dissociation that Bronfenbrenner points out as increasing in our society is most troublesome. With the core system, consistent efforts to reach out and link up important microsystems such as the classroom and the family are more readily apparent.

The deep underlying concern for each and every student in the core process fueled the motivation of the teacher-advisors to act as human conduits between the home and classroom. In this respect clearer and more personable avenues of communication were opened between the homes and the classrooms.

In this regard, it should also be mentioned that teacher-advisors often called home to speak to the students who were absent from classes. They called to convey their concern about those students who missed school that particular day. In doing so they engaged in a humanistic

reaching out behavior. Those calls were calls of support, concern, and encouragement.

During the calls, classroom information, test information, homework, etc., were shared depending on each student's situation. Calls of this nature go a long way to personalizing and humanizing the educational/schooling process. By taking the time to make these types of calls, the teacher-advisors manifested an ongoing "caring connection" to the students and their families.

In discussing a longitudinal study of youthful alienation and delinquency, conducted by Finnish psychologist Lea Pulkkinen, Bronfenbrenner comments that, "She found 'guidance'--a combination of love and direction--to be a critical predictor of healthy development in youngsters."⁹⁶

The "guidance" pattern that Pulkkinen found so critical in supporting young people to cope with life's stresses, is of course, of paramount importance in the family life of a youngster. The core plan strives to implement a "guidance" type approach at the school level. If growing numbers of young people are entering high schools with less than ideal "guidance" patterns at home, "small school" arrangements like the core plan can, at least, strive to create viable and sensitive "guidance" patterns at the school level. To prosper young people need to find this "guidance" principle to be operational in at least one microsystem.

If it is operational in the home, the school and the peer group, a sound, caring ecology has been set for those youngsters fortunate enough to experience such a wide and deep "guidance matrix." For those not so fortunate, schools that work diligently to provide that "guidance matrix" at least at the school level, may be enough to give troubled youngsters the needed love and direction they so desperately need to keep themselves on personal paths of positivity and self actualization.

From what we are learning about today's at-risk world, to do any less at the school level would be tantamount to increasing the alienation they already perceive and feel. The core program was deliberately designed to prevent the spread of alienation for students, teachers and parents alike.

The Exosystem and the Core Process

As Bronfenbrenner states:

An exosystem has been defined as consisting of one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in that setting.

Exosystems go beyond the most immediate settings of students and teachers. They are on the periphery in terms of place and position but not in terms of the power they have to strongly influence what takes place in the classrooms, teams, clubs, organizations, and the like making

up the school. Decisions and actions taken at the exo-level impinge upon the more proximate micro and mesosystem worlds.

From the perspective of a young child growing up in a family, his or her father's work place developments are exo-leveled. The young child rarely, if ever visits the work place; he rarely, if ever interacts with the individuals making up the work place. The child is surely not an active participant in the everyday happenings engaged in by his father and the other individuals at the work location.

If the youngster's father takes a pay cut, gets fired, or gets laid off, the ramifications of that event will resonate powerfully in the family and personal life of that youngster. Due to the loss of family income the youngster's mother may have to work longer hours herself to compensate for the reduction in household earnings due to the layoff. Human quality time for bonding between mother and child will surely be impacted upon if she has to spend more time outside the home as a wage earner.

If there are older brothers and sisters in the family attending high school, they probably will have to enter the work world or if they are already working, add more hours to help with the family finances. More time at work will impact on their ability to study for exams, complete assignments and be fully rested for the classroom activities and lessons.

Naturally, each family constellation will handle, or not handle, job loss and income loss in their own unique way. How each micro unit accommodates itself to the changes emanating from the exo-level depends upon a great many mediating factors and intervening variables. The point being articulated here is that developments and changes in the exo domain impact powerfully upon the more immediate and pressing micro milieus.

When one goes beyond the immediate settings and when one extends beyond the mesosystems, the third circle of the exo dimension opens up to wider, ever evolving formal and informal contextual settings. To gain a measure of perspective on the diversity of the exo realm, Bronfenbrenner states the following:

This section (The Exosystem: Learning Settings in Context) takes us beyond the immediate settings containing the learner to the level of structures encompassing or impinging upon these immediate settings. Such exosystems are both formal and informal: examples include the nature and requirements of the parents' work, characteristics of the neighborhood, health and welfare services, government agencies, the relations between school and community, informal social networks, transportation systems, law enforcement practices, shopping facilities, means of communication, patterns of recreation and social life, and a host of other ecological circumstances and events that determine with whom and how the learners spend their time; for example, the fragmentation of the extended family, the separation of residential and business areas, the breakdown of social networks, the disappearance of neighborhoods, zoning ordinances, geographic and social mobility, growth of single-parent families, the abolition of the apprentice system, consolidated schools, commuting, the working mother, the delegation of child-care to specialists and others outside the home, urban renewal, or the existence and

character of an explicit national policy on children and families.

Child-student development and learning is context bound. To gain a deeper insight and a more pregnant understanding of the power inherent in this ecological principle, we need to look at settings and systems operating beyond the immediate settings directly embedding the child-student. In other words, we need to include in our overriding gestalt, higher order exosystem effects that emanate from regions more removed than the micro and meso regions.

As Bronfenbrenner states regarding exosystem dynamics:

. . . their place and purpose in our theoretical scheme is essentially heuristic: to alert researchers to aspects of the larger environment that may be critical in the process of making "human beings human."

In proposition form Bronfenbrenner comments as follows:

Research in the ecology of education requires experiments that go beyond the immediate setting containing the learner to the examination of larger contexts, both formal and informal, that affect events within the immediate setting.

Decisions made at levels beyond the immediate classroom settings of the individual students in the core program have had a large impact on the lives of those students. The work of the Hawaii School-University Partnership was instrumental in the design and implementation of the core program.

The plans, decisions, and actions taken by the Hawaii School-University Partnership in general and the Curriculum Research and Development Group of the University of Hawaii

in particular were made at exo-level settings. These exo-level deliberations were generated in systems removed from the very students and teachers who were to be impacted upon by the proposed core plan.

Yet as Ernest Boyer points out:

High schools do not carry on their work in isolation. They are connected to elementary and junior high schools and to higher education, to industry and business, to state and federal governments that provide support, and above all, to the communities that surround them. In the end, the quality of the American high school will be shaped in large measure by the quality of these connections.¹⁰¹

The decision making made at the exo-level strengthened and reinforced the quality of the connection between the exo-level component of the Hawaii School-University Partnership with the micro-meso classroom/school component. Without the linkage between systems no ecological-core experiment would have been implemented. The linking agents of the exosystem acted as catalysts of change. They stimulated and elicited organizational and behavioral changes at Castle High School.

With respect to change in the schools, Hall and Hord state:

Essentially, the linkage model is concerned with establishing communication networks between sources of innovations and users via an intermediary facilitating role either in the form of a linking agent or a linking agency. . . . The key function of the linking agent is to facilitate the work of persons involved in change and improvement activities. The objective is to help these persons to acquire and use relevant ideas, products, and related sources.¹⁰²

The linking agents set the stage for the change process to unfold. The linking agent crossed the boundaries between the university, district, private school (Kamehameha), and the public school (Castle High School). By lending direct, consistent, substantial support and direction to the school, the "exosystem influence" significantly helped shape the quality of the reform process crystallizing at the school.

In hypothesis form, regarding intersetting communication, Bronfenbrenner points out the following:

The positive impact on learning and communication between the school and other settings is enhanced to the extent that the communications are personal (e.g., in descending order: face-to-face, phone, letter, announcement.)¹⁰³

The communication patterns among the members of the Hawaii School-University Partnership were multifaceted. Many face-to-face meetings were arranged and carried out, in both the planning stage and in the implementation stage. Consistent and multi-directional communication channels were established throughout the network.

To assure clear and open communication so crucial to the enhancement of the evolving core learning process, a linking agent, in the person of Tom Stone, made frequent visits to the targeted school. He would attend weekly meetings of the core group to lend his support, facilitate discussions, share pertinent research, and, in general, be a visible team member.

Too often change and reform efforts are not sustained because of a lack of follow up and a weak, inconsistent communicational matrix. Without close, ongoing and substantive communication connections between the various subsystems involved in the change process, the sense of momentum initially generated by new programs easily dissipates. The core plan ecological experiment placed strong emphasis on the need to establish and maintain ongoing personalized communicational linkages between the high school and the other agencies, especially the Curriculum Research and Development Group.

Current reform proposals, policies and programs frequently originate and emanate from the exo-macro dimensions, as did the core plan. Site-based management, schools of choice, national examination requirements, and the like, are some of the developments often talked about in educational and political circles. These reform movements differ from the core plan in a number of ways. For one, they do not specifically offer direct assistance to teachers and students. Their suggestions, recommendations, and policies are often targeted to more abstract levels of the educational arena.

With regard to many reform proposals and efforts, Pauly points out the following concerns:

They all may have a role to play in responding to the failure of American education, but their proponents are surprisingly silent when confronted with a classroom

discipline problem or an alienated, bored class. The school reform movement has failed to give us policies that provide direct, immediate assistance to the people in our classrooms who do the daily work of teaching and learning. What we need is a different approach to education reform--one that offers policies that are designed with teachers' and students' daily struggles foremost in mind.¹⁰⁴

The core plan grew out of the national call for school reform; it is tied, through the Hawaii School-University Partnership, to the National Network for School Renewal. The core plan centers mainly on changes in the microsystem classrooms and the mesosystem linkages of those microsystem classrooms, via the all important team concept. In addition, the classroom-home mesosystem is strongly emphasized as a paramount linkage nexus.

The core plan also integrally involves the exo-level dimension comprised of the Department of Education, Kamehameha Schools, and the University of Hawaii, specifically the Curriculum Research and Development Group (CRDG), a group affiliated with the College of Education.

The partnership involving these three exo-level organizations resulted in the formation of a task force originally called the Student At-Risk Project. Due to the possible negative connotations and sensitivities that may have been evoked in students and families as a result of being labelled at-risk, the name was changed to the more positive sounding School Success Project.

As Hansen writes:

A strength of the Hawaii School Success Project has been the partnership concept, which has brought together people already working separately, within their own organizations, in the field of school renewal and answering the needs of the at risk student, given them a chance to collaborate outside their organizations, and at the same time provided a strong public face.¹⁰⁵

The partnership concept permeated not only the exo-level organizations, but also the micro-meso dimensions being cultivated in the school. The core plan spanned and intertwined the micro, meso, exo, and macro ecological levels. This effort at reform was directed at the school and classroom levels. Unlike other reform ideas, the core plan focused on the needs of students and teachers. Structural changes were made to create a sense of renewal for students and teachers. The changes proposed and implemented at the exo-level were made in the hopes of shaping more humane, supportive and inviting mini ecologies for students and teachers alike. They were not overlooked or forgotten; they were foremost and most prominent in the ecological equation of educational change.

Regarding the importance of the human equation and partnership principles in improving schools, Seeley articulates the following:

More courses, more hours, more services, more pay, and more equipment can improve public education marginally, but they do not confront the real problem: the human equation. The people involved in public education are too often not put together in productive relationships. That is why reform movements come and go without significantly changing what happens in

classrooms or in student learning levels. The reforms work the old system harder, but they seldom deal with the faulty relationships between people.

These relationships are defined by the basic structure of the system, and they are hard to change. Our rhetoric calls for better and more productive human relationships, parent involvement, students' assumption of more responsibility for their own learning, and more autonomy for teachers (and more responsibility to go with it). But nothing much will come of these noble wishes so long as the basic relationships dictated by the structure of the system pull in the other direction.

In this structure, teachers are low-rung functionaries of hierarchical public bureaucracies, accountable to layers of officials "above" them, who in turn are politically accountable to the public through school boards, legislatures, and state boards of education. The primary role of parents is to pay taxes and hold the system accountable. Students are the passive recipients of professional services.¹⁰⁶

Central to Seeley's analysis is the importance of the structure in shaping and defining the relationships obtaining in the schools. The structure of the system needs to be changed if any significant change in relationships is to come about. The School Success Project reaches into the structure of the school in order to change or alter important features of that structure. The operating imperative is: change in ecological structures yields changes in relationships.

Exosystems can enhance student development and learning, they can be neutral to a certain extent if we interpret that to mean keeping the status quo, or they can bring about increased risk regarding student development and learning.

An example of exosystem risk would be a decision by a local school board to make major cuts in the extracurricular programs in the school system. That type of a decision would impact adversely upon the students and parents looking for well-rounded and holistic educations.

The School Success Project is an example of an exosystem enhancer in that individuals working in that project task force are advocates for the improvement of conditions surrounding students in their immediate environments. Exosystems, such as the School Success Project, demonstrate that decision-making bodies at that level can powerfully generate change processes that benefit both students and teachers.

If the School Success Project decided to wait for more data concerning "at-riskness," no action would have been taken from the exo-level. In that scenario, the status quo undergirding the educational system structure would have been supported. Structures, processes, and relationships would have been left undisturbed. Things would have gone on as always and the usual patterns of failure and alienation would have persisted unabated.

Exosystem influence and direction were instrumental forces integral to the change process. Decisions made at levels two steps removed from the individual students randomly selected to take part in the ecological core

experiment have had very real and powerful impact on the lives of those students.

With respect to the exosystem as a causal context of influence, Bronfenbrenner states:

It follows that to demonstrate the operation of the exosystem as a context influencing development it is necessary to establish a causal sequence involving at least two steps: the first connecting events in the external setting to processes occurring in the developing person's microsystem and the second linking the microsystem processes to developmental changes in a person within that setting.¹⁰⁷

In the "school within a school" core plan implemented at Castle High School, the exosystem was, indeed, a context influencing student (and teacher) development. Decisions and plans made at the exosystem level were brought into the mesosystem of the school and the microsystem of the classroom.

The students' (and teachers') microsystem changed by virtue of the structural changes made at that level. A more personalized and student-supportive classroom microsystem was established in the core ecological experiment. The inclusion of the advisor-advisee role definition relationship was an essential element of that newly designed core ecology. Cooperative learning was introduced and put into effect on a more consistent basis in the core ecology. The classroom microsystem became more inviting, cooperative and supportive in nature.

The teaming of teachers reduced the teacher isolation so prevalent in large, bureaucratic high schools. By meeting daily, teachers were able to receive ongoing support from their teaming colleagues. Student concerns were shared and curriculum ideas exchanged. The team provided each teacher with a strong, supportive, tightly knit, cooperative school mesosystem.

As King and Stone comment:

Core teams are believed to give the structure, order, familiarity, and caring that students need. They foster the success of students by providing stability in everyday routines, familiarity with classmates and teachers, and consistency in discipline, homework, classroom management and accountability.¹⁰⁸

In addition core teams:

. . . decentralize authority and responsibility by creating smaller units within the larger school. In these smaller units, schooling can become more personal without sacrificing the advantages of a large school's facilities and programs. Core teams allow groups of teachers to cooperate in planning, organizing, teaching, and evaluating school programs and student progress with them.¹⁰⁹

This sense of cooperation that permeates the core program reduces the sense of alienation for both student and teacher. Regarding teachers' sense of efficacy in the classroom, that is, their perception of their ability to increase their students' learning achievement, Ashton and Webb put forth the following:

After all, if we could change teachers' attitudes, we might also alter teachers' behavior, their students' behavior, and ultimately student achievement. However, our interviews with teachers and our observations in their classrooms convinced us that the logic of such a

reform effort is flawed at its root. Teachers' efficacy attitudes are not simply mistaken ideas awaiting correction, and are not likely to be changed by preaching a gospel of positive thinking during in-service training sessions. Teachers' attitudes regarding their ability to teach and their students' abilities to learn are but a part of the multifaceted compromises teachers make with the social and organizational structure of school life. We have come to believe that low efficacy attitudes are caused by a whole complex of systems and events that ultimately alienate many teachers from their work. Thus, attempts to adjust the attitudes of low-efficacy teachers, without first (or simultaneously) altering the structural causes of alienation, are likely to fail.¹¹⁰

By proposing and implementing the more personalized and more cooperative core-team approach to formal schooling, the influence of the exosystem has been substantial in altering and restructuring the microsystem of the classroom and the mesosystem of the small school.

The core microsystem classroom modifications impacted strongly on the students involved in the change process. Attendance, academics, and behavior improved in the core program. By shaping a more personalized micro/meso system, both students and teachers benefitted. Thus, the "operation of the exosystem as a context influencing development" was demonstrated in the school within a school change process undertaken at Castle High School.

The Macrosystem and the Core Process

Bronfenbrenner defines the macrosystem as follows:

The macrosystem refers to consistencies in the form and content of lower-order systems (micro-, meso-, and exo-) that exist, or could exist, at the level of the subculture or the culture as a whole, along with any belief systems, or ideology underlying such consistencies.¹¹¹

Brim states the following regarding macro-structural influences on child care and development:

We need national policies for child development, and so we must add now a concern with the macro-structural influences on child development. As knowledge from the behavioral and social sciences grows, we can raise our aspirations and progress from amelioration to intervention and to the sophisticated concept of linkages between child development and society's macro structure.

Our blueprint for child development work in the decade ahead must include the great social forces--technology, the law, the mass media, economic and social discrimination--which affect our child care institutions--the family, the school, the clinic, the day care center.¹¹²

The macrosystem is the large, more pervasive ecological, cultural and social context that permeates and shapes the exo, meso, and microsystems. To gain a wider and deeper perspective regarding the development and implementation of the core program, a discussion of the macrosystem and its influences is of paramount importance.

The great social forces sweeping through the nation are having a tremendous impact on the lives of the youngsters of the United States of America. For many young people, life itself has become so high risk and so overwhelming that they give up early on the possibility of more positive futures for themselves. Macro forces powerfully impact and shape individual and family circumstances and everyday realities. Those realities, for too many, are bleak and unpromising.

As Richman comments:

If the well-being of its children is the proper measure of the health of a civilization, the United States is in grave danger. Of the 65 million Americans under 18, fully 20% live in poverty. 22% live in single-parent homes and almost 3% live with no parent at all. Violence among the young is so rampant that the American Academy of Pediatrics calls it a public health emergency.¹¹³

He goes on to paint a frightening and disturbing picture:

The loss of childhood innocence is a recent phenomenon affecting all income levels and all ethnic groups. Playground fights that used to end in bloody noses now end in death. Schools that once considered talking in class a capital offense are routinely frisking kids for weapons, questioning them about drugs. AIDS has turned youthful experimentation with sex into Russian roulette. A good public education, safe streets, and family dinners--with both mother and father present--seem like quaint memories of a distant past. The bipartisan National Commission on Children wrote in "Beyond Rhetoric," its 1991 report, that addressing the unmet needs of American youngsters is a national imperative as compelling as an armed attack or a natural disaster.¹¹⁴

For a great and growing number of children, childhood has become one crisis situation after another: poverty, violence in the homes and on the streets, drugs, divorce, gangs, the television wasteland, latch-key status, hunger, both parents working, alienation, depression, anger, availability of guns, etc.

As James Comer comments, "Social problems are being created at such a rate, it's going to be very difficult for schools to catch up."¹¹⁵ He goes on to state:

Many have not had the kind of family experience which would allow them to grow and have the ability to sit still and concentrate. . . . And if they don't get it,

their chances of being successful economically, as family members, as citizens is very small. They're on a downhill course from kindergarten forward. ¹¹⁶

Macro-social trends and problems like the following underline the gravity of the national situation:

- Every day, more than 25% of women giving birth, 2,900 in all, will have received no prenatal care in the first trimester of their pregnancies. 25% of that group will not have any care at all. These babies are at greater risk for low weight, premature birth, learning disabilities and infant mortality than babies who have consistent and timely prenatal care throughout the course of their womb environment development.
- Children under 16 make up the largest group of Americans without medical insurance. 56% of kids without health insurance live in households with incomes above the poverty line. The U.S. infant mortality rate, 9.8 percent per 1,000 live births, is higher than that of 19 other industrialized nations.
- The parents of nearly 2,750 children separate or divorce each day.
- Every day more than three children die of injuries inflicted by abusive parents. 90 children a day are taken from their parents' custody and added to the overburdened foster care system.

- Mothers of children under 6, the fastest growing segment of new entrants to the labor force in the 1980's struggle to find child care solutions for their 11 million children. Approximately 1.3 million latch key kids ages 5 to 14 are left to fend for themselves for much of the day.
- The average 14-year-old watches three hours of television daily but does just one hour of homework a day. During an average school day, more than 2,200 kids drop out. These youngsters are 3 1/2 times more likely to be arrested and six times more likely to become unmarried parents than those who graduate.
- Every day over 500 children ages 10-14 begin using illegal drugs, and over 1,000 start drinking alcohol. Almost half of all middle-schoolers abuse drugs or alcohol, or engage in unprotected sex, or live in poverty.
- Over 1,400 teenage girls a day--two thirds of them unmarried--become mothers. Only 60% of these teen mothers will earn a high school diploma or a GED certificate.
- Among 15 to 19-year-olds homicide by firearms is the third leading cause of death (after motor vehicle crashes and suicide) for whites and the leading cause of death for blacks.¹¹⁷

These and other macro-social trends and forces are contributing to the growing numbers of young people who are troubled, stressed out, angry, disenfranchised, despondent, frustrated, and alienated from mainstream society's structures, goals and guidelines. "To be alienated," Bronfenbrenner tell us, "is to lack a sense of belonging, to feel cut off from family, friends, school, or work--the four worlds of childhood."¹¹⁸

As young people reach the teenage years, many often go through periods and phases where they feel misunderstood by the adult population. They may feel that others, especially adults, are "living" in different worlds, operating from dated mindsets and prejudicial personal perspectives. As they search for a sense of who they are and what they can become in life, questions abound but meaningful answers pertinent to their particular and unique life styles and situations are not easily found. Experimentation and a testing of the limits are patterns of behavior manifested by many teens as they strive to gain a more solid grounding of ego identity.

If one has a solid and sensitive micro family unit to turn to when uncertainty surfaces, needed support, empathy, and clarification from family members can go a long way in assisting a young person through personal, peer, or school related troubles.

If one is experiencing some difficulty in school with particular classes or teachers, solid peer support and friendship can facilitate the development of positive strategies one can utilize in improving one's school situation.

An understanding and caring teacher, counselor or advisor can be a big help to students who feel at odds with family or peer group members. That particular educator can be instrumental in eliciting pro active student behaviors in the home and in other micro settings.

Young people who are fortunate to be involved in positive work settings under the guidance and direction of successful adult mentors can fall back on that role relationship when peer pressure gets too heavy or when school demands appear too much to take. A solid and compassionate adult role model from the micro work domain can be the primary human factor that keeps an at-risk or a potentially, at-risk youngster, on the path of personal actualization.

The more supportive, caring, consistent, sensitive and fully functioning the microsystems are, the greater the chances and opportunities for successful and competent individual development. If the microsystems are fragmented, overburdened, dysfunctional and nonsupportive themselves, the circumstances surrounding the youngster will more than likely promote negative behaviors, attitudes and feelings in

far greater incidence and duration than would have been produced in more positive functioning micro settings.

As Bronfenbrenner claims:

At some point in the process of growing up, many of us have probably felt cut off from one another of these worlds, but usually not for long and not from more than one world at a time. If things weren't going well in school, we usually still had family, friends, or some activity to turn to. But if, over an extended period, a young person feels unwanted or insecure in several of these worlds simultaneously or if the worlds are at war with one another, trouble may lie ahead.

For a growing number of young Americans, difficulty in more than one micro setting is the everyday reality pattern they face day in and day out. This is especially true of the children living in poverty. The problems and hardships that poverty backgrounds produce in youngsters are powerfully stated by Kozol:

The children of poverty--especially, in our cities, minority children--remain prisoners of a long and brutalizing legacy of racism and economic exile. Repeating generations of unemployment, welfare, dead-end futility, have worked to shatter the family structure, leaving many youngsters without the role focus of fathers, and with mothers so overwhelmed by pressures, they are unable to provide discipline and order in their children's lives. Those families, largely but not all minority, have been trapped in America's urban ghettos and pockets of rural poverty so long, that they have lost real connection to the work ethic, lost most sense of structure, lost faith in schools as a means out of the ghetto and up the economic ladder, lost any hope or vision that they might have transferred to their children to help them escape through schooling. Caught in this social undertow, the learning difficulties such children bring to school are desperate. From homes usually barren of books, of any vocabulary of ideas, they enter school already lagging behind and, year after year, fall yet further behind. Large numbers of them from the very start of their school career, face an overwhelmingly uphill struggle--a struggle which a few will win, many

will lose, and others will simply give up on. And as more disadvantaged children come into the school system over the next decade, the problem will be overwhelming.¹²⁰

In today's America, children are the country's poorest citizens; 13 million live in homes whose annual income falls below the poverty level. These households are beset with multiple problems that impact profoundly on the youngsters growing up in these very high-risk micro family systems. The young people living in these very high-risk families tend to be the most at-risk when they enter school. They may be the most at-risk of the student population, but they are not alone. As Pamela Robbins states:

Just who are these children at risk? They are our children. Yours, mine, our neighbors'. Their parents are white collar, blue collar, and professionals. They live in cities, suburbia, towns, and yes, even on the farms. All youth today are at risk.¹²¹

Although all youth are potentially at risk, a large pool of the youth of the nation have fairly solid microsystem support foundations. If there is a troubling circumstance taking place in one microsystem, strong support from the other significant microsystems tend to offset the situational difficulties experienced in the more unsettled microsystem. Success often breeds success; doing well in one of the major microsystems can yield the positive self esteem and self concept needed to prosper in other microsystems.

Young people entering school from stable, loving, supportive family microsystems usually begin their formal educational careers with the solid psychological and economic foundation needed to thrive in the learning milieus they attend.

Family microsystems that are tightly knit, financially sound and psychologically enhancing promote the creation of synergistic ecologies. These synergistic ecologies stimulate and support the actualization of the potentials of all of the family members. Family members learn from each other, teach each other and encourage each other to become all they are capable of becoming. The enhancement of the well being of all family members is the cornerstone of this micro family foundation.

An important aspect of positive life-enhancing microsystems is the quality of its social density. As Garbarino notes in ecological terminology:

We can consider the existence of relationships that go beyond simple dyads (two people). Where the individual can observe and learn from being exposed to other dyads (such as mother and father), development is enhanced. This is also true where the person can observe differences in his own dyadic experience because a third party is present. As long as increased numbers in a microsystem mean more enduring reciprocal relationships, larger and more complex microsystems, as a function of age, mean enhanced development. Social riches are measured by enduring, reciprocal, multifaceted relationships that emphasize playing, working, and loving.¹²²

Even familial microsystems characterized by social riches have their everyday stresses, strains and

disappointments. Life is like that. These families, though, are able to weather the everyday presses that emanate from modern day meso, exo and macro realms. They may not be rock solid, but they are sufficiently anchored psychologically and economically to hang together when the driving winds of change sweep into the family unit. They are sound, resilient and teleologically oriented. A strong belief in the future for all members is a maxim that permeates the belief system inherent in the household.

In these microsystems, life-long learning is not just a cliché. Life-long learning is manifested and exemplified in the everyday actions of the family members. Positive modeling unfolds as a matter of course. Clear communication channels are maintained and cultivated. Sibling rivalry and parental disagreements tend to be softened and tempered by an underlying "caring connection" that bonds the members to one another.

As stated in Beyond Rhetoric: A New American Agenda for Children and Families:

America's future is forecast in the lives of its children and the ability of their families to raise them. Most American children are healthy, happy and secure. They belong to warm, loving families. For them, today is filled with the joys of childhood--growing, exploring, learning and dreaming--and tomorrow is full of hope and promise. These children will become the competent and caring parents, employees and community leaders upon whom America's future depends.¹²³

A significant and growing pool of the youth population though is not only potentially at risk, they are in the here and now living painful and often devastating at-risk lives. As the Final Report of the National Commission on Children (Beyond Rhetoric) so clearly points out too many youngsters live far from the "American Dream":

But at every age, among all races and income groups, and in communities nationwide, many children are in jeopardy. They grow up in families whose lives are in turmoil. Their parents are too stressed and too drained to provide the nurturing, structure and security that protect children and prepare them for adulthood. Some of these children are unloved and ill tended. Others are unsafe at home and in their neighborhoods. Many are poor, and some are homeless and hungry. Often, they lack the rudiments of basic health care and quality education. Almost always, they lack hope and dreams, a vision of what their lives can become, and the support and guidance to make it a reality. The harshness of these children's lives and their tenuous hold on tomorrow cannot be countenanced by a wealthy nation, a caring people, or a prudent society. America's future depends on these children too.

In discussing the process of the National Commission on Children's work, Dr. Berry Brazelton, a committee member, writes that:

We all felt we were seeing the imminent breakdown of a society which had been and could still be an example for the world. Our culture has not as yet supported stressed families and children adequately. We anticipate a frightening future for our society as children from both over stressed middle-class families and the desperate, hopeless, angry families of the poor face an uncertain future. We are in a national emergency and no one seems to be paying attention. We must allocate the considerable resources we will need to meet this crisis. We must salvage this next generation if the nation is to have any kind of decent future.

The growing number of poor and single parent households is symbolic of tremendous change that has taken place in the foremost institution of our society--the family. The family has been the most primary and most basic unit of the nation's social organization. The family as a major institution, a significant socialization blueprint of our macrosociety, has undergone profound transformations in the last twenty to thirty years.

Half of all first marriages now end in divorce. The majority of these marriages that end in divorce have children under 18 years old. Inevitably a large percentage of these youngsters will remain in a single parent household for a considerable period of time. If the single parent works or is on welfare, the family income will be much less than the earned income in a two-parent home. The slide into poverty, for at least a certain time period, is a reality for most single-parent families.

Generally speaking, growing up in single-parent households creates economic hardships and psychological troubles for both parents and children alike. There are single-parent households that do remarkable jobs regarding the creation of loving, stable and supportive familial ecologies. In general, though, single-parent households are troubled households. Consider:

Around 75% of single-parent children will sink into a spell of poverty before they reach 18, vs. 20% of kids from two-parent families. After divorce, a Census

Bureau study discovered, kids are twice as likely to be in poverty as before.

Growing up in a single-parent family puts its mark not just on a child's external economic circumstances but on his or her innermost psyche as well. A vast National Center for Health Statistics' study found that children from single-parent homes were 100% to 200% more likely than children from two-parent families to have emotional and behavioral problems and about 50% more likely to have learning disabilities. In the nation's hospitals, over 80% of adolescents admitted for psychiatric reasons come from single-parent families.¹²⁶

The breakdown of the family unit has been a devastating blow to many of the members going through the dissolution process. Nationally, from a macro perspective, a vital institution embedded in our basic societal matrix has undergone enormous change. Even two-parent family units have not been left untouched.

In discussing two teenagers and the pressure that their families feel today, Bronfenbrenner tells us that, "Both live in families that have been significantly affected by one of the most important developments in American family life in the post war years: the employment of both parents outside the home."¹²⁷

Bronfenbrenner goes on to mention:

Their mothers share this status with 65% of all married women in the U.S. who have school-age children. Fifty percent of mothers of preschool children and 46% of mothers with infants under the age of 3 work outside the home.¹²⁸

How a family copes with both adults working outside of the home depends on the ego integrity of the individuals involved, as well as on the communication patterns and

coordination of demands inherent in the new arrangement. Even in very stable family units, life can get hectic and pressurized. When two people work full time, taking care of the meal preparation, cleaning, shopping, taxiing of the children and the like can stress out even the healthiest and strongest of individuals.

Taking care of these household duties, along with the engagement of full time work arrangements, can reduce the time allotted for the all important human nurturing and child-rearing features of family life. There is only so much time and energy to expend each day; working long hours, fighting traffic, bringing work home from the job, etc., can be draining enough to leave little for the children waiting at home or at the day care center.

If the parents' work conditions and work responsibilities are unduly stressful, that stress can be displaced and projected on the other family members. The external work problems of the job or career become internalized within the adults. Eventually that stress can become internalized within the youngsters in the home.

Parents that feel harried and at wit's ends to make bill payments due to the high cost of living, thus the need for two wage earners, can impair their relationship with each other and with their offspring. If both parents have to work full time just to make ends meet, one of the parents

may have to work a second job just to create a nest egg for more trying times that may arise in the future.

In Hawaii it is not unusual to hear about one or both parents working one and a half or two jobs due to the astronomical cost of living in the state. With housing, rent, and food costs the highest in the nation, many wage earners are hard pressed to bring home enough income to cover the necessities of life.

Jerry Burris, The Honolulu Advertiser's City Editor, notes that, "Hawaii's voters feel victimized by an economy that, they say, is leaving them behind."¹²⁹ He goes on to state that, "Over and over, the reporters heard tales of families doubling up; of relatives who had moved to the mainland where costs are lower; of parents sacrificing to put their kids in private schools."¹³⁰

Comments of some of the people interviewed in the Advertiser/Channel 2 News Hawaii Poll of July 23-30, 1992, help us gain insight into the problems and anxiety people feel regarding this issue:

- My kids can't afford to live outside.
- The cost of living is so terrible, you can't save.
- The price structure here is high, but the wage structure is low. It's discouraging for people who come here. The wages don't keep up with the cost of living.

- My husband and I make good money and can't afford to buy a house. I'm terrified of being 65 years old and being a renter.
- I know my kids after college aren't going to be able to live here because of the cost of housing, the cost of living.
- I can't afford a home... It's sad that people have to move to Nevada just to own a home.
- The economy has just devastated us.
- I'm a professional, my wife's got a good job and we still can't buy a house.
- We'd love to buy, but won't be able to do it. We feel for our children.¹³¹

On August 6, 1992, the Governor's Office of Children and Youth sponsored a forum at August Ahrens Elementary School in Waipahu. The purpose of the forum was to hear from the community regarding the status of families, as well as to gain input regarding ways to improve services in areas impacting on children and families, such as education, health and general support services.

When the audience was asked to make an assessment on how families were doing in general, residents mentioned that they had to choose between economics and families. Due to the very high cost of living in Hawaii, parents must choose between "feeding their children and being with their children."

In an article in the Leeward Current, Errol J.

Christian puts it this way:

Residents said that both parents had to work to make ends meet, leaving their children with sitters or day-care centers. In some cases the children lacked supervision, guidance and direction. The breakdown of the family structure resulted in children being confused about rules of ethical behavior and lacking role models. Residents also said that the increase in the number of single parent households is a sign that families were not doing well.¹³²

As Burriss comments, "The message is a powerful one for office seekers: 1992 is a 'pocketbook' year. If you can convince voters you can help resolve their economic terrors, you will get their vote."¹³³

The downturn in the economy has impacted on the tourist industry. Visitors from the mainland have not been coming to Hawaii at the rate they usually have. Layoffs and reduced hours of work have been the effect for numbers of hotel workers. In addition, the sugar industry, a main staple of Hawaii's local economy, has fallen on hard times. Sugar mills are closing and workers are losing their livelihoods. These developments in the macro and exo levels can have and will have great impact on the micro family systems affected by these powerful social and economic developments.

Change in the work microsystems can impact greatly on the family microsystem. Loss of a job, reduction in hours, working two jobs, both parents working, each in its own

fashion can add stress and tension to the family unit. As Bronfenbrenner states:

Recent studies indicate that conditions at work constitute one of the major sources of stress for American families. Stress at work carries over to the home, where it affects first the relationship of parents to each other. Marital conflict then disturbs the parent/child relationship. Indeed, as long as tensions at work do not impair the relationship between the parents, the children are not likely to be affected. In other words, the influence of parental employment on children is indirectly operating through its effect on the parents. ¹³⁴

From the child's standpoint, the influence of the parents' work world is an exo-level undertaking. Here is a prime example of the power of an exo-level development to greatly impact on the lives of children far removed in proximity from the child's micro-level. The exo-level is in turn influenced by macro-social and economic forces that shape the exo-level worlds.

As in the other systems, the macrosystem can offer a foundation for opportunity and growth or it can set the stage and the agenda for risks to develop in the other systems. As Garbarino claims:

In general, macrosystem risk is any social pattern or social event that diminishes the ability and willingness of people to act cooperatively and supportively in social networks. Macrosystem risk is a social event or a pattern that disrupts and impedes the caring community. ¹³⁵

With the growth of single parenthood, families and children in poverty, job layoffs, plant/mill closings, teenage parenthood, families doubling up, two wage earner families, general economic pressure, and the like, patterns

of risk have increased considerably throughout the nation, including the Aloha State.

In addition to the problems and changes discussed earlier regarding the family, Bronfenbrenner believes there are other macro social changes that require accommodation through public policy and practice in order to reduce the risks of alienation. As he states:

Other social changes include lengthy trips to and from work; the loss of the extended family, the close neighborhood, and other support systems previously available to families; and the omnipresent threat of television and other media to the family's traditional role as the primary transmitter of culture and values.¹³⁶

In the context of a discussion and analysis of two two-parent middle class families, Bronfenbrenner tells us that, "Along with most families today, the families of Charles and Philip are experiencing the unraveling and disintegration of social institutions that in the past were central to the health and well being of children and their parents."¹³⁷

In Hawaii, state economist Gregory Pai believes that there has been an erosion in the residents' overall quality of life due to the fact that the cost of living has grown six times faster than did household income in the 1980s. In 10 years, through 1989, median income, adjusted for inflation, increased 13 percent to \$38,829. In that same time frame, the consumer price index rose 73 percent.

Pai also noted that, "U.S. Census data for Hawaii reveals 'a disturbing trend' of the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer.¹³⁸ This "disturbing trend" along with the erosion in the residents' quality of life translates into macro-level engendered risk for families and children. As financial pressure mounts for families to keep up with the increase in prices in Hawaii, psychological pressures and disturbances within these affected households are more than likely to increase in frequency and duration in the coming years.

Naturally, the increase in the number of "poor families getting poorer" does not augur well for these families, the schools these children will attend and the state as a whole. This gap pattern between the poor and the not poor is a nationwide macrosystem trend. Again Bronfenbrenner provides insightful commentary:

In this nation, single parenthood is almost synonymous with poverty. And the growing gap between poor families and the rest of us is today the most powerful and destructive force producing alienation in the lives of millions of young people in America. In recent years, we have witnessed what the U.S. Census Bureau calls "the largest decline in family income in the post-World War II period." According to the latest Census, 25% of all children under 6 now live in families whose incomes place them below the poverty line.¹³⁹

The alienation that Bronfenbrenner discusses can be exacerbated at the school level. As Bronfenbrenner points out:

My reference to the world of school is not accidental, for it is in that world that the next step toward alienation is likely to be taken. Children who feel

rootless or caught in conflict at home find it difficult to pay attention in school. Once they begin to miss out on learning, they feel lost in the classroom, and they begin to seek acceptance elsewhere. They often find acceptance in a group of peers with similar histories who, having no welcoming place to go and nothing challenging to do, look for excitement on the streets.¹⁴⁰

Macrosystem trends and patterns have seemingly increased the "at-risk factors" surrounding and operating in families. More children are entering schools from "at-risk" backgrounds. This scenario is a distressing and anxiety promoting one to say the least. These nationwide macrosystem trends and patterns have not gone unnoticed by Hawaii's educators.

As stated in The Hawaii Project on Children and Youth

At-Risk:

Educators in Hawaii, as elsewhere, are looking seriously at children and youth of school age who are not in school, who are doing poorly in their schoolwork, or who show evidence of developing personal difficulties that will interfere with their educational progress. The growing numbers of at-risk children and youth constitutes one of the most critical problems facing the schools today.

A dominant theme emerging from the literature on the at-risk is that higher priority and greater resources must be given by schools, corporations, universities, and federal and state governments to provide effective education for America's children and youth. National and community self-interest demands such action; the country's ability to survive as a competitive nation depends on it for those who doubt the need, Professor Henry M. Levin of Stanford University makes the case with compelling demographic numbers. For example, the educationally disadvantaged alone are about to become a majority in our public schools and a growing but unprepared portion of the work force.

Until we devise better ways to design and deliver educational systems and services to students at risk,

our society can hardly hope to preserve a system of public education committed to excellence for all.¹⁴¹

The writing is and has been on "the educational wall" for some time now. Macrosystem trends and patterns have contributed to the growing population of alienated and troubled youth. To better meet the needs of these students, schools have to change. If schools stay the same these students will continue to underachieve, fail, and drop out.

If more and more young people are entering schools from "at-risk" alienating backgrounds, schools must attempt to balance the human ledger by willfully creating "alienation prevention" learning milieus. With respect to the family as an "alienation prevention" system Bronfenbrenner notes:

Parents don't usually think in those terms. They're just being good parents. They spend time with their children and take an active interest in what their children are thinking, doing and learning. They control their television set instead of letting it control them. They've found support systems to back them up when they're not available.¹⁴²

These families combine maximum support with maximum challenge. These families are not run in an authoritarian fashion, nor are they laissez-faire in how they operate. Parents strive to hear what their children are saying to them. They take the time to really listen to what their children are conveying to them. These parents open doors for their children and as they do so, they encourage them to move through them and grow into the competent citizens they can become.

This combination of support and challenge is essential whether it be in the home or in the school. When young people come into the school system from homes that do not adequately provide the essential support and challenge needed for children to thrive and actualize potentials, it behooves the school system to conscientiously and diligently design educational ecologies that emphasize support and challenge, as the main warp and woof of the overall learning fabric.

The support and challenge component processes must permeate the system if the growing population of alienated youth are to have a chance of shaping decent futures for themselves, not to mention the profound importance of creating positive existences in the "here and now" for themselves.

Castle High School's "small school-core program" was designed to emphasize the power and importance of creating a learning milieu based on strong, caring support and positive, sensitive challenge for all students taking part in the ecological experiment. The educators involved in the restructuring undertaking knew full well that schools were not educating all of the students attending those institutions. The National Network for School Renewal, of which the University of Hawaii is affiliated, called for viable partnerships to be created involving universities and schools.

These partnerships were to work together to reshape the schools to better educate all of the students attending those institutions. For too long the schools operated in their own particular worlds and the universities did likewise in their particular environments.

The National Network for School Renewal became a new macrosystem blueprint of educational change. Network implies connections, linkages, communication sharing, structured webs of information and policy exchange, etc. As Bronfenbrenner states:

The more we learn about alienation and its effects in contemporary post industrial societies, the stronger are the imperatives to counteract it. If the essence of alienation is disconnectedness, then the best way to counteract alienation is through the creation of connections or links.¹⁴³

Without the formation of The National Network for School Renewal and the University of Hawaii's membership in that organization, the core program would most probably never have come to fruition. The explicit connection of the University of Hawaii with the National Network for School Renewal led to the fostering of explicit links between the University of Hawaii and Castle High School. Thus macro-level links led to exo-level links which, in turn, facilitated meso and microsystem links.

Bronfenbrenner firmly believes that the forces that produce youthful alienation are growing in strength and scope. He mentions that:

Families, schools and other institutions that play important roles in human development are rapidly being eroded, mainly through benign neglect. Unlike the citizens of other modern nations, we Americans have simply not been willing to make the necessary effort to forestall the alienation of our young people.¹⁴⁴

The blossoming connection between the University of Hawaii and Castle High School is one necessary effort to forestall the alienation of young people and adults attending these institutions. As stated in The High School House Plan Proposal leaflet:

The size of many high schools has concerned educators for the last decade. Often bigger is better was the theme and efficiency experts applauded this notion. Recently, studies have shown, and common sense dictates, that increased size means de-personalization, alienation, and the perceived loss of power to control one's environment and one's life. For the teacher, big schools reduce their commitment and sense of responsibility for the school and its goals. For the student, big schools reduce the sense of belonging, and being known and consequently, their self-esteem.¹⁴⁵

By reducing the bigness factor in general, the core plan reduced the chances of students feeling themselves to be faceless numbers in a rigid school bureaucracy. By emphasizing the advisorship approach to creating more sensitive and caring networks linking students, teachers and parents together, "breaking forces" have been cultivated regarding upsurges in alienation.

By underscoring the importance of the teaming approach to educational delivery systems, distance between teachers has been reduced. By meeting, working and engaging in group

discussions on a daily basis, one's sense of professional support and collegiality has been enhanced considerably.*

A long as students feel alienated and isolated from the schooling process, quality learning and personal development will not be forthcoming. For students to grow educationally, they need to invest themselves in the learning process; if they are too passive or absent physically and/or mentally, potentialities that they have will not be actualized in the schools they are enrolled in.

Regarding macro-level reports and alienation in the school, Bronfenbrenner conveys the following message:

For the recent reports bemoaning the state of American education, a recurring theme has been the anomie and chaos that pervade many U.S. schools, to the detriment of effective teaching and learning. Clearly, we are in danger of allowing our schools to become academies of alienation.¹⁴⁶

The core plan created an educational ecology characterized by compassion, support and challenge for involved students and teachers alike. By doing so, alienation became a less pronounced and less powerful a force in their lives.

The core plan helped create an ecological niche designed to personalize the educational experience of students and teachers alike. In this fashion, it helped reverse the trend of large, impersonal schools becoming "academies of alienation."

*See student and teacher comments p. 162-167.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

James Garbarino points out that, "The ecological perspective posits social habitability as its ethical prime directive."¹⁴⁷ By habitability Garbarino, an ecological theorist who has worked with Bronfenbrenner, means essentially the quality of the social environment. Habitability involves looking at how supportive and inviting an environment is.

A main contention of this dissertation is that the smaller "school within a school" core program establishes a more habitable ecological environment for students, teachers and counselors alike. Good quality social environments facilitate the psychological bonding between the significant individuals involved in the educational process.

In today's future shock world where changes occur at great speeds, alienation is a psychological fact of life for many people. As Garbarino states:

Students bring to school with them the alienation which afflicts the rest of society in ever more serious proportions. The ties that bind the society together--family, community, political organizations, etc.--have been weakened during recent decades. The students reflect this growing dissociation and estrangement.¹⁴⁸

The "ties that bind" in an educational institution are the heart to heart human, caring connections between student and student, teacher and student, and teacher and teacher. To more fully appreciate the "ties that bind" from an ecological perspective, one needs to look into the context

of those very ties. We need to look at the structural foundations of an institution that either promote and facilitate positive ties, or, on the other hand, contribute to the dissipation of those integral "ties that bind."

As one progresses through the hierarchy of schooling, from elementary through high school, the impersonality of the schooling process increases. Elementary schools are usually smaller with a stronger maternal caring component infusing the system. Elementary students are certainly still children needing large doses of tender love and care as part of the unstated curriculum content/process.

Elementary school tends to be more child centered and less subject oriented. For the most part, one teacher spends a great amount of time with her charges. The children may be pulled out for certain subjects such as physical education, art or music, but for the most part one teacher works with and is in charge of 25-35 children for that particular school year.

The elementary teacher often acts as the surrogate parent for the children in her class. She needs to be there for them not only in an academic sense, but also from an emotional feeling sense. The educational context of the arrangement calls for a caring supportive and challenging nexus between student and teacher. Some teachers seem to exude that naturally caring component, but most all of the

elementary teachers know of its paramount importance in the lives of young children.

As the children progress through the schooling process, more demands are placed on them. In junior high school they have more than one teacher to work with. They go from class to class and are responsible to adapt and accommodate themselves to five or six different teaching styles and methodologies. In junior high school the subject matter discipline appears to take precedent over the student-centered approach of the elementary school.

Maturationally speaking, they are now moving out of "pure childhood." They are entering the latency stage of pre-adolescence. They are growing and developing physically, mentally, psychologically and sexually. It is often a confusing time, that time after childhood's openness and innocence. They are trying to search out who they are and who they can possibly become.

The school they attend is bigger and more open than the elementary school they attended. For many, the "ties that bind" are not as apparent and supportive as they were in the elementary years. If the home life is troubled, if those "ties that bind" the family are torn and frayed, junior high school years can be quite stressful and pressuring.

By the time the children reach high school, they are no longer children but teenagers on the cusp of young adulthood. During these years the peer group becomes a very

powerful influence; for some an influence more potent than the family group. This is especially true if the family is weak, dysfunctional, fragmented or negatively impacted by economic, health, or personal problems and transitions.

In high school the educational pendulum has swung to the subject centered end of the spectrum. Many high school teachers pride themselves on how tough and demanding they can be, "For how else can these soon to be young adults make it in the real world after school?" "If they are not babies any more then they shouldn't be babied" is the mind set that often permeates the system.

The school is larger and often more spread out and diffuse than the junior high school. There are more security guards and more vice principals. There are more students, more teachers, more classrooms, more buildings, more demands, more expectations, more pressure and more questions. For some it can be too big, too cold, too rule-centered and too estranging.

The results of a massive federal survey conducted by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago sheds light on the transition difficulties experienced by many students entering high school. The data was a follow-up to the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988. As Robert Rothman states:

Nearly three-fourths of the 25,000 tenth graders surveyed said that courses are harder in high school than they were the year before, and more than half said that teachers and rules are more strict. Despite their

higher levels of achievement in tenth grade compared with eighth grade, many students may be academically ill-prepared for the transition to high school.¹⁴⁹

The change from the smaller family type elementary school to the large, impersonal factory type high school has been a long and winding road for our young people. Some have stayed on course, but others have fallen or are falling by the wayside due to psychological road blocks, structural potholes and natural accidents of chance and fate.

Garbarino states that an essential feature of a quality social environment, one with strong "ties that bind," is the "perceived enduring interests of others, particularly non-familial adults."¹⁵⁰ Too often the very context and structure of the large high school precludes the cultivation of this paramount psychological supportive element.

As Garbarino comments:

Success in the secondary school is affected by the social forces in the school that attract the adolescent to the school and to the process of schooling. The issue here lies in the social structure of the school. Does it draw the student into its activities and programs?¹⁵¹

With respect to large high schools, Garbarino goes on to state:

The school's impersonal social climate results in inadequate observation and monitoring of student behavior. The key is the lack of personal feedback, with out which the schools cannot function as support systems for prosocial behavior.¹⁵²

This social reality is especially troublesome for students lacking personal feedback in the home. If the macrosystem of the home is without positive feedback loops

and connections, a quality microsystem world of the classroom and enriched mesosystem of the larger school is essential for balance.

The core program provides for closer and more consistent monitoring of the students than does the "at-large" traditional arrangement. By providing an advisor for each of the 120 students involved in the coring process, closer communication linkages between educator and pupil is an essential built in feature of the overall operational process.

At the heart of the coring process is a concerted attempt to decrease the size of the schooling process. By creating a smaller, more cohesive core program, a tighter social support system context has been established for the students and teachers involved in the process.

The coring arrangement permits a more particularistic micro-meso setting than does the more massive "at-large" procedure. The "at-large" schooling process contributes to an impersonal universalistic type school setting. When comparing families and schools, we know that families are more personal and particularistic than are schools. Large schools are excessively universalistic whereas smaller schools or "schools within schools" provide learning milieus that are more personal and particularistic than are their larger counterparts.

With respect to supportive social contexts and alienation, Bronfenbrenner tells us that:

As the academic marginality of students increases, optimum school size decreases. As youthful alienation increases because of historical trends toward age segregation, stressful family relations, and disrupted socialization, the need for smaller schools increases.¹⁵³

Research on the social and psychological factors that contribute to optimum environments for prosocial growth and development contain the following aspects:

A combination of warm and supportive relationships, an emphasis on specific directions of personal growth, and a reasonably clear, orderly, and well-structured milieu. These environments have a high expectation and demand for performance.¹⁵⁴

In good, educational support contexts, there are high expectations, challenging tasks and demands, and solid, consistent support and concern. In large schools too many students, especially marginal students, have to go it alone. They feel they are not listened to and not understood.

In far too many cases, they feel that they have no one to turn to when a problem arises or when the educational demands feel excessive. Many times the more marginal students have no one to go to at home for help and clarification with particular assignments given at school. Often the parents cannot help their youngsters because they themselves do not have the background needed to comprehend and analyze the assignments.

Some students cannot attend the tutorial periods after school because of familial demands, such as having to take care of a younger sibling. Other students work right after school because money is needed by the family to help pay for monthly bills. Here is a prime example of the micro world of the family impacting negatively on the student micro world.

Still other students work for the money it puts in their pockets. The money they earn helps them purchase the latest fashion styles, recent music releases, popular movie tickets, concert performance tickets, and the like. Some work many hours a week and that presents a problem with school. As Bronfenbrenner states:

According to the most recent figures available, 50% of all high school students now work part-time--sometimes as much as 40 to 50 hours per week. This fact poses a major problem for schools. Under such circumstances, how can teachers assign homework with any expectation that it will be completed?¹⁵⁵

If students are working too many hours per week at the local fast food outlets, keeping up with the demands of the high school curriculum will be difficult for them. Too many student-workers get home too late from their jobs. They get to bed late and are late to school. They are often tired and are hard pressed to find the time to adequately prepare for exams.

As the demands and stressors build up at home and in the classroom, students begin to fall behind in their ability to keep up with the assigned tasks. Their sense of

frustration and alienation contributes to a dissipation of their motivation to continue on in their educational pathway. For too many, the educational challenges metamorphosize into overwhelming burdens that, from their perceptions, apparently cannot be met.

As Garbarino puts it:

A personalized social climate can significantly affect the attitudinal response of students to staff demands by offering the "compensation" of individuation and flexibility. Demands that may be acceptable in a small context because of its intimacy may be viewed as oppressive and authoritarian in the depersonalized large setting.¹⁵⁶

In the core program, the advisor is expected to convey a caring and an invitational outlook towards his or her advisees. A "teacher as counselor" mode of perspective and orientation is a fundamental aspect of that role obligation.

Naturally, this type of outlook may come easier to some teachers than to others. This is to be expected. Although some teachers may be able to exude the caring, unconditional, invitational, positive regard type connection to his/her students, all teachers in the core program are expected to emphasize, as best they can, this important mindset.

With the advisor-advisee nexus in place, students know they can go to their advisor when things are beginning to "pile up." They can go to their designated advisor when problems and changes in the micro world of the family have begun to impact negatively on their chances of maintaining

their motivation to keep meeting the demands that emanate from the micro world of the classroom.

In large, impersonal schools, too many students feel that there is no one to go to for the support and unconditional positive affirmation they need to help them get through the hard times. In large schools, the personal linkage is not operational. The sensitive, supportive school safety net so crucial for so many troubled students is not in place, is not built into the psychological infrastructure of the schooling process.

In the "at-large" traditional mode of operation, students are not assigned to one particular teacher-advisor. They are aware of the fact that they have a grade level counselor who they could go to for help. They also are keenly aware of the fact that 400 plus students are assigned to that one grade level counselor. The personalized and individualized attention and support that they need may not come from the counselor due to absurd counselor-student ratios.

The teachers in the "at-large" program have one prep period that they usually utilize for classroom-lesson plan related tasks. Even if a student approaches a teacher in the "at-large" program for more personalized help and assistance, it may not be forthcoming due to the impersonal type context that they both operate in. Both student and teacher are operating in a large, impersonal mesosystem that

contributes to psychological distances, personal barriers and communication gaps.

From an ecological perspective, the "at-large" schooling process operates more like a disparate series of loosely coupled and alienated micro subsystems. This type of an educational mesosystem is lacking in the cohesive communicational networks that are needed if students are to feel sufficiently and significantly supported in their quest to actualize potentials, feel positive about school, and, in general, prosper as they carry on throughout their school careers.

In the core program the advisor can sensitively represent his or her advisee's concerns, worries, stressors and the like at the core meetings. If a student's micro family world is in upheaval, all core teachers can now be made aware of the changing vicissitudes of that particular student's home situation. By being apprised of the micro events occurring in the home, micro adjustments can be made in the classroom. In this manner the care and sensitivity on the part of the core teachers becomes apparent and real to the student experiencing the difficulties at home.

In the core approach to educational reform the student and teachers become part of an educational community responsive to concerns of both students and teachers alike. By consistently communicating student concerns, the core is better able to make timely and flexible adjustments for each

unique case by case scenario. The personalized attention that every parent truly wants for his/her youngster has a much greater chance to come to fruition in the core approach than it does in the "at-large" traditional approach.

In the core mode the students are immersed in a supportive, tightly linked mesosystem. In the core plan the students are monitored closely and consistently by all of the teachers, but especially by their advisors. The sense of alienation, of not connecting meaningfully with the system, is not as prevalent in the smaller, more personal and supportive core plan. Connections and linkages are essential aspects of the core process.

The core program can be looked at as a buffering system. A buffering system views and responds to individuals in a special and sensitive manner described by Caplan:

In such relationships the person is dealt with as a unique individual. The other people are interested in him in a personalized way. They speak his language. . . . Above all, they are sensitive to his personal needs, which they deem worthy of respect and satisfaction.¹⁵⁷

The core program promotes an ethic of personal caring that is characterized by a more inclusive, holistic concern for each and every student involved in the program. The core program personnel attended workshops that emphasized the teacher as counselor commitment to student support and caring. What Smey-Richman states about the holistic concern

for the well-being of all students, the core program strives to implement and work to improve upon:

Personal caring means the individual, low-achieving student is not anonymous; each student's personal characteristics, idiosyncrasies, and problems are acknowledged and respected by others in the community. Personal caring also means school personnel help low-achieving students cope with problems by being readily available for consultation to offer guidance and advice, and to encourage low-achieving students to stay in school.

When that caring connection is perceived by students to be real and potent, a sense of personal commitment to the learning process becomes more purposeful and deterministic. By being respected as a unique individual with special qualities, potentials, and struggles, the chance for a positive school-student bonding linkage is enhanced and galvanized.

With respect to the psychological bonding between the student and the schooling process, achieving school membership is a prerequisite for low-achieving students' growth in academic learning and for the manifestation of other desirable outcomes. If students do not feel a growing attachment to the schooling process, their motivation to pursue their progression through the subject areas and the grade levels, will be tenuous at best.

An important way for students to feel connected to the schooling process is for students to be able to take part in extra curricular activities. Being a part of an athletic team, the band, or a student organization gives the students

an avenue of pursuit to follow based on self interests, talent, and promise.

From an ecological perspective, when a student is eligible and able to be part of another microsystem of the school, such as an athletic team, the student's meso domain is enhanced and made more multi-dimensional. By being part of an athletic microsystem, the student has a chance to demonstrate and exhibit his or her talents and skills in a highly respected and valued arena.

The recognition that comes from peers and adults when a student "makes the team" increases the "ties that bind" a student to the schooling process. By virtue of wearing the school's colors in athletic contests with other schools, the student accepts the school's norms. By being on the team, in the band, or in a student government organization, the student manifests behavior that is supportive of the school norming structure and process.

In Hawaii a student must maintain at least a 2.0 grade point average to be eligible to participate in extra curricular endeavors. When comparing data regarding students with grade point average above 2.0 in the "at-large" group, the core percentage of students having a chance to engage and invest themselves in extra curricular activities is greater than the non core population.

The core group allows a greater percentage of students to follow through on extra curricular options if they so

desire. Without the 2.0 students do not have the option of extra curricular activities open to them. Without the opportunity to "be on stage," so to speak, and display their athletic, creative and leadership potentialities, and to represent their school, pathways to increased self recognition and self esteem are closed off. Once closed they may never open.

For some talented athletically inclined students, their sport's microsystem is the key to keeping them on track regarding positive school and community related involvements. Many, in truth, define themselves as athletes; their whole self concept definition tends to revolve around their talents and future possibilities regarding their athleticism.

If they are not eligible to participate in the one major microsystem of their lives, psychological frustration, depression, and anger often follow. On the other side of the coin, if they are eligible to play in the micro world of their love, interest and talent, positive feelings about themselves and the school they represent more easily germinate and surface in their day to day existences.

Smey-Richman puts it well when she states:

An important element of school membership or a sense of community is student participation in institutional activities. In order to feel a sense of belonging or ownership in a school, low-achieving students must be given meaningful opportunities to take part in the life of that school.

The high risk youngster who is struggling in the classroom and possibly experiencing distress at home needs to be involved in microsystems at the school level that provide respect, encouragement and connection.

Youngsters who do not feel at "home" in the above mentioned microsystems are ripe candidates for the gang microsystem so prevalent here and on the mainland.

How do we increase the percentage of students eligible to participate in extra curriculum activities? As this study shows, we strive to create smaller, more caring, supportive and holistically structured learning milieus such as the core concept of Castle High School.

Big institutions appear to breed bureaucracy and alienation. All students need to know that they are cared for as unique individuals with unlimited possibilities and potentials. They need to know that if they are having difficulty making the transition from a smaller junior high school to a larger, more demanding and impersonal high school, they will receive support, assistance, backing, extra help, modifications, and deeply felt encouragement by the educators of the school. The core concept and program represents the educational paradigm that builds in these crucial psychological elements as "givens" in the overall schooling process.

By being eligible to take part in extra curricular activities, whether it be athletics, student government,

drama, the band, a student's mesosystem is enhanced and enriched. By establishing more diverse linkages between microsystems, the student's mesosystem becomes pregnant with positive engagements of self commitment.

By not being eligible to take part in the aforementioned activities, a student's mesosystem will be ill defined, weak and unstructured. As Egan and Cowan state, "Building linkages between personal systems is one way of assuring that we are living our lives in a community of systems rather than in a series of disparate subsystems."¹⁶⁰

The core plan provides educators and students with the smaller, more personalized structure needed to bring to fruition the community of systems mentioned above. Due to the rapid changes and increased pressure rippling throughout today's macrosystem world, schools need to restructure themselves into smaller, more habitable and supportive learning milieus. As Boyer states:

The shift in family life has caused schools to take on burdens and responsibilities of the home. For many teenagers, the high school may be the only place to get support and ease the pain of personal trauma and deep hurt. It frequently becomes a crisis center helping a pregnant girl, supporting a young student who has had a fight at home, or helping a teenager through the trauma of parental separation or divorce. High school is home for many students.¹⁶¹

In discussing the quality of a school, its social habitability, the morale of the students and educators attending and working at the school is of utmost importance.

Students and teachers manifesting strong, solid and high morale tend to feel a sense of psychological positivity and emotional well being with respect to what takes place at school.

Students with low morale profiles tend to view their connection to school in negative outlooks. School life appears to be meaningless. They often have a weak sense of purpose and lack confidence in themselves and in the schooling process.

It is a contention of this dissertation that the core plan structured an educational environment that was more conducive to the facilitation of higher senses of morale for a higher percentage of students involved in the core plan than was the case in the "at-large" group.

The perception of a stronger sense of morale on the part of the students in the core plan was reflected in some of their comments made with respect to their feelings about the core plan. An important facet of the Ecological Theory of Human Development revolves around the phenomenological world of the individuals involved in the ecological experiment. As stated by Bronfenbrenner in definition form: "Ecological validity refers to the extent to which the environment experienced by the subjects in a scientific investigation has the properties it is supposed or assumed to have by the investigator."¹⁶²

Expanding on this definition, Bronfenbrenner comments:

Again, the use of the term "experienced" in the definition highlights the importance of the phenomenological field in ecological research. The ecological validity of any scientific effort is called into question whenever there is a discrepancy between the subject's perception of the research situation and the environmental conditions intended or assumed by the investigator. This means that it becomes not only desirable but essential to take into account in every scientific inquiry about human behavior and development how the research situation was perceived and interpreted by the subjects of the study.¹⁶³

In Castle High School's ecological experiment, the students were the primary subjects of the core plan. The core plan centered on the reconstruction of part of the large school. A primary concern was to create an educational ecology that was more personable, more caring, more supportive, more challenging, and more inviting. A major thread weaving through the fabric of the core plan was the "thread of connection." Creating a small, humane learning community that emphasized closeness and connections between students and educators was of paramount priority for the project team.

Big schools tend to beget alienation and anonymity; small schools or schools within schools, tend to promote involvement and attachment to the overall educational process. Without an evolving sense of attachment and connection to the learning process, academic gains will be that much more difficult to come by, especially for high risk youngsters. The core plan attempted to structure an

educational environment that would elicit improved student morale, involvement, and investment of self.

To obtain a feel for how the students interpreted the core process, how they experienced it from their phenomenological fields of perception, the following comments are included:

- I liked the core program because it helped me. My teacher called every week and gave a report to my parents. I liked A-period because it gives me time to get my homework done and do make-up work.
- I think if we are in cores people copy other people's work more often, since we all have the same assignment. But the good thing is we don't all have tests on the same day!
- The core is good because I don't have that many people to mingle with, so that's less peer pressure.
- I liked the core because it was easy for me to make friends because I came from another school.
- The teachers are very close, and that is great because it helps them keep a close eye on us.
- The teachers really pushed us to get ahead. If it wasn't for them, more people than usual would be flunking.
- I made honor roll this quarter. I've never done that before in my whole life!
- The core has made me strive to get more A's than settling for C's and D's. It has done that by giving test and practice quizzes every week. It has also helped by giving homework on set days. Then we can easily study without worrying about too much homework to do.
- In the core we all have the same teachers in English, science, math and social studies. This way the teachers get to know the students better. A lot of people make new friends because they have those people in the four classes.

- The core has really helped me to get off to a good start at Castle High School because you know everyone and everyone's your friend. The core helps me to help myself instead of depending on someone else.

- Last year I had a C average, but this year I have gone up to a B average. Because in the core good grades are important. I am trying harder.

- Starting high school as an incoming freshman, I didn't know what to expect, and I was scared. But being a part of the Gold Core gave me the opportunity to adjust to Castle which is so big and has many older students. The program gave me a feeling of belonging and an opportunity to know my teachers well because of the individualized attention that I have received. I feel that I can go to them if I need help with school work or with other problems. I feel the Gold Core has helped me make the transition to high school a lot smoother.

- I met and became closer to students I wouldn't really get to know before.

- The teachers were real helpful. They were there for you if things were not going too well in certain classes. They were there to help you out.

- I never got a call from a teacher before, asking how I was doing, how I felt and giving me the homework over the phone.

- The core teachers really encouraged us to do our best. They really backed us up.

- Some of my friends not in the core have many tests on the same day. In the core we are not loaded with tests on the same day.

- We worked in groups more than we did in 8th grade-- that was cool.

- I liked the field trips that we went on. They helped break up the year in a good way.

- They kept a close watch on you but I guess that was OK because I didn't get into that much trouble in the core. I did better than last year.

- The Gold Core program to me is a privilege to be in. Even though I was picked by random I consider myself lucky. The Gold Core really made my life easier. It

really did help the transition of converting from Intermediate to High School. When I was in Intermediate school, the thought of being in classes without people I knew and with other people of different classes was just plain scary. When I got the paper saying that I was one of the chosen few to enter in this experimental program my first reaction was confusion. What is this paper? With all the registration forms and papers to be filled and signed, it seemed like too much. However, I must say that it was all worth it.

- The Gold Core is a well organized program dedicated to students. The teachers schedule homework assignments so that it doesn't pile up. Tests are scheduled so that you don't have to cram facts into your head for two classes in one night. Compared to my other friends who aren't in this program, they're the ones who are truly suffering. The teachers really care and they listen to what you have to say. They make the atmosphere so that you want to learn. And when it comes down to it, learning is what it's all about.

- The most important thing to me about the core is groups of teams. Teams to me are important because you learn to work with other people that you've never worked with before and you also learn to work as a team or as whole. Teams also help and encourage others like a family. Because of the encouragement and the individual team members you do better in school. For example my grades are better. Before my grades used to be D's and F's, but now I am getting C's. Whenever my grades are down the teachers call my parents. If that happens, I get an earful from my parents, but my grades have been improved. In conclusion, the "Gold Core" is a good program that should be continued and spread out to all public schools.

- This program really helped to better my grades this year. If I wasn't picked for this program I think my grades would've gone down, so I think I have gained from being in the Gold Core.

- In the Gold Core program we are assigned to teams of four students. Being in teams really helps you learn faster and better.

-Core program is FUN! I really think it helps me because we have homework for each class on certain days. We also have tests for each class on certain days. My grades from last year have improved and the teachers are really good. I enjoy going to all of my

classes and learning. At the end of each quarter we go to excursions and have a great time.

- I like the Gold Core because it helps me have self-confidence in myself to help me get to the top and be a part of the Gold Core. They have a lot of caring teachers, and that's the best part of it. I love this program and it really helps me a lot.

- We learn in groups which makes learning easier and fun. We work in teams of four so if one doesn't understand we have three others to help us. Sometimes we do our work with partners. All this benefits us so that later when we get a job we can cooperate with our co-workers. Although we work in teams we also take tests individually so we have to learn the material.

- Last year in the 8th grade my grades weren't that great and my mom wasn't that happy. But this year my grades have improved. The Gold Core has been a great experience for me and I would like other Castle students to experience it too. That's why I think you should provide the funds so our teachers could continue to improve and develop the program.

- In the Gold Core we all have the same teachers in English, Science, Math, and Social Studies. This way the teachers get to know the students better. A lot of people make new friends because they have those people in the four classes.

- The Core has made me strive to get more A's than settling for C's and D's. It has done that by giving test and practice quizzes every week. It has also helped by giving Homework on set days. Then we can easily study without worrying about too much Homework to do.

- Being in the Gold Core from the beginning of my freshman year made it really easy to adjust to high school life and I felt really comfortable because I knew most everyone. By the time a few weeks had passed there was a sense of unity among all the students and teachers. Since all the teachers work together they know everyone's weak and strong points so they try to encourage everyone's strong points and help your weak points.

- I think the Gold Core is a really good program. being in it has helped me a lot. Compared to a regular class the Gold Core classes are much better. In class everyone works together to achieve better grades. A really good quality in the Gold Core is that the teachers give you a chance to improve your grades because they know that there is always room for improvement which gives me a lot of confidence. Another good quality is that the teachers go out of their way so everyone can do his best. For example, tests are scheduled so everyone will be prepared for them and we won't have more than one test in a day. The teachers try their best to make every person pitch in so everyone has a good learning environment.

- We work in groups so everyone has an easier time in class. Changing groups every quarter helps because you get to know everyone in the class. Also the teachers try to encourage us to participate in school and class activities and to boost our spirit in our school.

- I think the Castle High School Gold Core deserves to go on. Everyone has tried his best to make it work out and I think we've succeeded!

Many parents were also favorably impressed by the core program. Testimony of one parent regarding Senate Bill 2501 "Relating to Education Innovation" stated:

Since my daughter has been in this program she has shown improvement in her grades and attitudes, and it has also improved her appearance. The teachers are always in touch with us if anything happens, especially when she has done something good. This is very different, because the only time the other parents get a call is when the student has done something wrong.

As a parent I am really proud that my daughter is in this program. Her attitude has improved, she is doing well, and she is looking ahead to her future. I recommend that this program be continued and expanded to include all the ninth graders in our school.¹⁰⁴

The teachers who volunteered to be involved with the coring process also had positive comments concerning the program. Mark Kane, the social studies teacher, stated,

"Compared to the regular school, we're way ahead in terms of understanding what the expectations are."¹⁶⁵ Kate O'Malley, the science teacher, commented enthusiastically that, "I'm totally into ninth grade spirit. Always before I had mixed classes. Now I've found my niche."¹⁶⁶

Miriam Fujimoto also viewed the coring process positively. As Carol Chang points out in an article entitled "Freshman Ease into High School":

Fujimoto is also grateful for the extra prep time. A former speech squad advisor with a full class schedule, she didn't mind working all of last year and through the summer to prepare for the transition team, because now she has extra time to prepare for only four classes.¹⁶⁷

Elaine Matsuzaki, the math teacher, especially liked the close monitoring of students that takes place in the core process. In a recent interview Matsuzaki pointed out:

Working on a team of four teachers is the biggest plus--we meet every day--we identify concerns right away. We can be more consistent as a team when we work on students' needs. In addition the work is divided up evenly. We each take one-quarter of the core students and these students become our advisees. If I have to get in touch with parents, I have only a pool of thirty to be concerned about. Before I had up to 168 students to worry about. Now I know we each have thirty students to really follow up on. The support is better and more manageable.¹⁶⁸

Matsuzaki goes on to comment:

The core allows for integrated curriculum planning. An environmental studies project was undertaken by all four teachers. Each conducted part of the overall project. Teachers are empowered in the core to be more creative and expansive. Also things are coordinated more consistently in the core. Students are not overloaded with tests or homework. There is more balance and more unity.¹⁶⁹

Teachers in the core process support each other's contribution to the team effort. No longer are they isolated and only concerned with individual classroom matters. As Matsuzaki comments, "For me, it's really great. Before I only knew what was happening in my own class. What I like is the good control. We can check with each other."¹⁷⁰

By allotting time for the core teachers to meet everyday a supportive, more congruent micro-mesosystem is established for students and teachers alike. As Chang writes:

While the students may feel they have nowhere to hide, the teachers are pleased with the extra time they have to counsel students and meet with each other to discuss progress or problems among their common pupils. Coasting along as an anonymous number in the back of a large class is ¹⁷¹out of the question for this group of ninth graders.

One can argue that the improvement in academics, attendance and behavior is an overall outcome of "The Hawthorne Effect." "The Hawthorne Effect" refers to the effect of a variety of working conditions on the productivity of the workers at the Hawthorne Plant of the Western Electric Company. The investigators tried a number of different modifications in working conditions for the selected experimental group of workers. No matter what they tried, productivity improved.

The investigators tried dimmer lights, brighter lights, unchanged lights, various organization line modifications and the like. Gains in productivity increased for all of the interventions. It was not so much what specific modifications were implemented at the plant that produced the improvement, it was rather the felt specialness of the workers who were the center of attention that motivated the productivity gains.

In other words, the workers felt positive about their being singled out for participation in the experiment. They felt good about being the centers of attraction and attention. Their "internal lights" were made to feel brighter by all the attention and support they were getting from the investigators.

The core students, and teachers for that matter, were centers of attention. They received the backing of the high school administration, the consultation of the University of Hawaii personnel, and the green light from the Windward District Office. Newspaper articles appeared regarding the core plan. Mention of the core plan was even made during the half-time of televised OIA football games involving Castle High School.

If "The Hawthorne Effect" was operating in the core plan of educational reform, so be it. If conditions for learning can be improved by making the students and teachers the center of attention, we need to expand on this insight.

For too long too many students have perceived schools as non caring, pressure driven, competitive bureaucratic institutions. Many, especially high risk students, felt and feel alienated from the school process.

The core plan establishes an educational ecology based upon a solid, caring social support system for students and teachers alike. In the "at-large" perspective, there is no true tight knit support system. It is too large, too loosely coupled and too impersonal. The core plan promotes more and better quality feedback loops between students and teachers.

The change process of the core plan involved the four systems of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory of Human Development: micro, meso, exo, and macro.

Linkages between the boundaries of systems were established. National reports from the macrosystem called for drastic changes in the nation's schools. Shared assumptions of the majority of the populace called for change in the schools. The schools were, generally speaking, not doing the job. Mediocrity would be tolerated no longer.

The rallying cry was amplified by the nation's governors. Governors were to encourage reform in their states. Universities were encouraged to form partnerships with local schools. The private sector was also strongly

invited to become actively involved in efforts to strengthen the schools.

Locally, the University of Hawaii's College of Education became more actively involved in partnerships of various kinds with local schools. One of those partnerships involved Castle High School. The Windward District and the legislature supported efforts for change in the schools. Monies were allocated to lend support to the core plan.

Thus consensus of validation for change filtered into the mesosystem of the school and into the microsystem of the classroom. Plans were drawn up, meetings arranged, system linkages were set in place.

An "invitation to change," by the Hawaii School-University Partnership was extended to the faculty of Castle High School. A number of teachers were receptive to the idea of working with the Hawaii School-University Partnership. Additional meetings were held, teachers were selected to participate in the core plan, and workshops were arranged.

The more personalized and supportive "small school" movement was launched at Castle High School during school year 1989-90. Change at the local school came about because of change in other systems. As essential elements of the change process, connections, and reconnections between systems, recently more isolated from each other, were firmly grounded in a more explicit foundational matrix.

To help students, especially high risk, alienated students learn more and "be" more, the very condition of their "at-riskness" has to be a major cornerstone of any potential project needs analysis.

If, indeed, too many students were found to be nonconnected to the schooling organization and process, that "fact of student disengagement" needed to be central to any projected change intervention. We could no longer only look inside the personal psyche of the students as the prime cause of their alienation. Nor could we only place primary causal emphasis on the family or neighborhood.

Looking for the primary causes of student failure and disengagement can lead to finger pointing, finger pointing that emanates from one's particular personal perspective. When communication is felt to be superficial or lacking on the part of teachers and parents, teachers and students, teachers and university professors, etc., defensive positioning and maneuvering can result in dissonant finger pointing.

A substantive sense of partnership between significant role groups is one antidote to the projection of blame syndrome still prevalent in many communities locally and nationally. Locally some Leeward residents still feel that projection of blame syndrome to be evident in their school and communities. As Christian writes regarding comments

shared at a recent community policy forum held by the Governor's Office on Children and Youth:

In the area of education, residents said that unlike past generations, parents and teachers do not form a partnership. The residents said that instead of working together parents and teachers are blaming one another for the poor state of children's education in Hawaii.¹⁷²

How wide spread this sentiment is locally, and nationally for that matter, would be important to know. The fact that a percentage of residents on the Leeward side of the island of Oahu feel that way is an indication that a problematic situation exists, at least for the participants who verbalized these concerns.

The core plan emphasized strategies to create a more personalized supportive learning milieu, as well as strategies to enhance the academic side of the ledger. In addition, strategies to improve school and family relations and connections were strongly emphasized. Student progress was closely monitored and there was a built in and concerted effort made to establish open, two way communication linkages with the parents and/or guardians of the students involved with the core process.

This communication exchange started even before school began. Letters explaining the core approach were sent to the families of every core student. Advisors called students and parents inviting them to ask questions or seek clarification concerning the new program. A general meeting

with the core team group and the parents of the students in the core plan was also held.

Just as the exosystem reached out into the mesosystem of the school, in the form of the Hawaii School-University Partnership, the school, in the form of the core meso/microsystem, reached into the microsystem of the home. Pro-active invitational messages were conveyed to the microsystem homes before and during the school year.

The "reaching out and connect with someone process" was, of course, strongly emphasized in the microsystem of the classroom. The advisor-advisee role relationship set the stage for a more personalized linkage between the adult-advisor and the student-advisee.

The core teachers were sensitized to the importance, not only of establishing a sense of ohana or community with the core students, but also to the need for appreciating the students as whole people, not just as subject centered grade earners. As Gary Wexler states, "Pay attention to the kids as whole people. We need to take account of the needs of children as people, and their needs as members of society, as well as looking at them as thinking machines."¹⁷³

Attention to the teachers as whole people is also essential if we are to have long lasting, meaningful, and effective change in our schools.

Regarding teachers and reform, Ernest Boyer states:

Teachers are the lowest on the totem pole of education, yet they are expected to perform miracles everyday.

Today, legislatures all across the nation are introducing new reforms. National commissions are giving their opinions. State commissioners present their leadership ideas; most of the proposals are timely and overdue. But I worry that our focus on school reform will be one of regulation rather than renewal of those who meet with children every day.¹⁷⁴

The core plan's teaming of teachers set the stage for increased teacher empowerment. The core teachers were given more time to meet with each other to go over, on a daily basis, student concerns, integrated curriculum endeavors, and general core planning needs. They were encouraged to become pro-active and involved in the decision making of the core process. No longer were they isolated, individual, disengaged teachers on their own in a nebulous weakly linked mesosystem.

Ashton and Webb state the following regarding the context of the teaching profession:

Our study of teachers' sense of efficacy leads us to conclude that the central social-psychological problem facing teachers today is how they can maintain a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment in a profession that offers so few supports for, and myriad threats to, their sense of professional self-respect.¹⁷⁵

The core plan structures into its ecological context solid support systems for students and teachers alike. Embedded in the change process is an emphasis upon cooperative team work. By working on a team, individual teachers can have input in decision making processes that impact on activities that permeate the overall curriculum pathway encountered by core students.

By brainstorming and engaging in substantive dialogue regarding student needs and uncertainties, relevant information, promising ideas and tentative action plans are exchanged. Evolved commonalities and shared assumptions are more prevalent in the core process than in the more independent and fragmented "at-large" approach to structuring the schooling process.

Sharing responsibilities, tasks, and plans regarding a group or core of students creates a growing, enriching and supporting sense of unity for the teachers taking part in the reform implementation. By working collaboratively with members of the core team, teachers are able to enlarge their knowledge base regarding the individual students they are working with.

As Ashton and Webb phrase it in their study of teachers' sense of efficacy and student achievement:

Teachers claimed that the three elements of the teaching role (helping students, enhancing teacher-student relationships, and team membership) are complementary, and all are part of a conception of teaching and learning that is socially rather than individually based. The intellectual and social development of children is important, but it is to be achieved through a team effort¹⁷⁶ in an environment of trust, caring, and hard work.

The teaming approach of the middle school teachers that Ashton and Webb relate above, is differentiated from orientations to teaching and learning as represented by junior high school teachers:

Teachers at the junior high had autonomous responsibility for their classes. Formal membership in

a subject-area department was the primary unit of collegial association. However, the department structure at the junior high school was not designed to promote daily, task-related interactions or shared decision-making. Decision making at the junior high occurred at the administrative level of the school and was in harmony with the schools' predominantly individualistic orientation. Little effort was made to arrive at a group consensus through open discussion at department or faculty meetings.

These descriptions by Ashton and Webb are analogous to the core program and the "at-large" approach to schooling existing at Castle High School. The traditional "at-large" mode of structuring school emphasizes a more individualistic orientation on the part of the teachers. The "at-large" program does not deliberately structure or specifically design in organizational features that would promote shared decision-making and daily task related interactions amongst the schools' faculty.

If the school structure promotes an emphasis upon individualism and isolation, the support system needed to enhance teachers' sense of professionalism and respect will be superficial and short circuited. By operating from their personal individualistic perspectives, a sense of isolation and alienation can easily prevail.

Regarding the importance of collegial relations Ashton and Webb point out:

Teachers in traditionally organized schools often feel isolated from their colleagues. Teachers tend to have strong social needs and their isolation in individual classrooms may contribute to many teachers' dissatisfaction with their profession.

In the core program the teachers meet daily to discuss core related concerns and issues. The decision-making regarding core problems, activities, and future endeavors emanate from discussion contexts that are held daily. If there is no set time allotted and made available to discuss pressing student concerns or larger educational issues, they will not be addressed in the manner appropriate to their importance. Top down decision making will be the modus operandi of schooling structures and processes that do not specifically establish collegiality, teamwork and shared decision making as essential elements and aspects of the overall program.

If these new design features are not explicitly built into the organizational structure, as givens, the old traditional way of structuring and operating a school will continue to perpetuate the authoritarian top down mode of administrative procedural functioning.

School structures, like the core program, can enhance teachers' opportunities for collegial interaction, dialogue, planning and action. The core program elicits involvement on the part of the educators participating in the implementation reform. Involvement, supportive cohesion, shared decision making, decentralization, teamwork, consensus agreements, enhanced communication networks and the like, are of paramount importance in the core program.

If the school remains large and impersonal, top down management style will continue to predominate. If the schools remain overly large and impersonal, the enlargement and modification of teacher roles to include concern with the overall educational ecology of the institution itself will continue to be beyond the teachers' realm of possibility. Teachers will zero in on their classroom worlds and hope for the best.

By creating a "smaller school system," such as the core program, expectations of teacher involvement in the "small school system" decision making process are embedded in the reform philosophy. When teachers are expected to meet daily and interact with each other, their input and collegial commitment to the shared decision making process will come to fruition more frequently and more substantively. Without a structurally carved out channel for their ideas to flow, few ideas will be consistently forthcoming.

When teachers feel important and when their ideas and commitment are called for because the school is structured (restructured) to elicit their active participation in decision-making processes, their sense of efficacy regarding their impact on their students' learning potentialities tends to be enhanced and amplified.

As Ashton and Webb point out:

School structures that enhance teachers' opportunities for collegial interaction have a positive effect on teacher attitudes and student performance. For

example, in a comparison of four relatively successful schools with two that were relatively unsuccessful, Little (1982) found that norms of collegiality prevailed in the successful schools. Strong collegial support may bolster and sustain teachers' sense of efficacy, enabling teachers to be more effective with their students.¹⁷⁹

Obversely, school structures that do not enhance teachers' opportunities for collegial interactions can tend to have a negative impact on teacher attitudes and student performance. If teachers feel too isolated, on their own, and without an adequate social support system to contribute to and lean on when times become trying, teacher morale, energy, sense of efficacy, and general optimism will tend to diffuse, unfocus and dissipate.

A major premise of this study asserts that a person/ecological system perspective is of utmost importance in our attempt to make sense of human behavior and educational reform. We must recognize that a uni-dimensional perspective of people or ecological systems is too narrow, superficial, and limited. A dynamic multi-dimensional viewpoint must include people, organizational systems, the interaction between the people and the systems and the interaction and energy exchange between the systems themselves. As Chris Argyris noted in the early 1960s:

Organizations and personalities are discrete units with their own laws, which make them amenable to study as separate units. However, we also believe that important parts of each unit's existence depend on their connectedness with the other. We hypothesize that one cannot fully understand the individual without understanding the organization in which he is embedded

and vice versa. We are not negating the value of studying individuals or organizations. Our primary interest is at the boundaries of both--at the points where they overlap and are interrelated.¹⁸⁰

At Castle High School, the "at-large" traditional program presents a school structure that is too large, impersonal, diffused and for too many students, too uninviting. Big schools, and Castle High School is no different in this respect, tend to promote alienation, anonymity, non participation and disengagement, especially for marginal, at-risk youngsters. Regarding school size, Garbarino points out:

Research on school size suggests that large schools (enrollments greater than 600 in grades 9-12) tend to become psychologically unsustainable. Large schools discourage participation, create elitism, encourage staff inflexibility, and most insidiously, alienate those students who are already academically marginal. By 1970, most youth in the United States were enrolled in big schools. Historical data on school size chronicle the decline of quality of life for children in this, their primary institutional setting. In this area perhaps more than any other, we have seen an unthinking policy of growth undermine and destroy socially desirable settings (small schools) in deference to goals of quantitative progress. The assumption that big schools mean power and opportunity directly parallels the notion that an unlimited policy of economic growth means progress. However, depersonalization and a reduction of social pluralism in the child's experience are alarming consequences of large schools. Bigger means, paradoxically, less social diversity for the individual student. Although school size nearly tripled from 1950 to 1970, the data suggest that a reverse of this trend is possible. Just as escalating energy costs have given pragmatic impetus to "walking neighborhoods," these same forces demonstrate the cost effectiveness of small schools. Such schools can now be technology intensive to permit a resource-laden environment: both academically rich and character building. Even where physically separate, small schools are not feasible, several small, complete schools can share the same facility.¹⁸¹

The core program of Castle High School is one beginning attempt to design an enhanced educational ecological milieu for students and teachers. The structure is smaller, more personable, psychologically enhancing, inviting, and supportive. The results of the 1989-1990 school year showed that the core program set the educational stage for increased student performance. In general, student attendance, academic performance, and behavior/character manifestations improved. The statistics clearly point out improvement in these three significant areas.

The core program reconstruction effort involved the input of individuals from various fields and systems. All systems of the overriding ecological landscape were integral to the start, growth, development and expansion of the ecological transforming experiment undertaken at Castle High School in the year 1989-90. As Ashton and Webb comment:

An ecological approach to school change suggests that although educational reform may start at the level of the microsystem (teachers and students working in the classroom), lasting changes must permeate throughout the meso, exo, and macro systems of the educational environment.¹⁸²

In diagrammatic form, extrapolating from Lewin's familiar equation $B=f(P \times E)$ (behavior is a function of the interaction between person and environment), an education-learning related equation based on ecological principles might look like this:

$$PLB=f[(P \leftrightarrow S_i) \times (S_i \leftrightarrow S_i) \times (S_{ni} \leftrightarrow S_{ni})]$$

Translated as follows: Pupil Learning/Behavior is a function of the quality of the interactions between the pupil and the human systems in which he is involved (S_i), the quality of the interactions of these systems (pupil involved systems) with one another, and of the quality of the interactions of systems, not directly involving the pupil (S_{ni}), with one another.

This equation symbolically underscores the power of the quality of the interactions of pupils and systems, as well as the dynamism of the interactions of systems with each other, both near and far.

In this regard, student interactions with his microsystems are included, as are the interactions of those microsystems with each other. The interaction of the microsystems comprise the mesosystem. Included in the equation are the systems that the student is not directly a part of: the exo and the macrosystems. In the ecological model, these system exchanges and transactions, no matter how far removed and abstracted from the individual students, are of profound influence on what goes on and takes place in the students' more immediate and proximate microsystems.

An ancillary equation based on ecological principles referring to teacher development and empowerment might look like the following:

$$TDE=f[(T\leftrightarrow S_i) \times (S_i \leftrightarrow S_i) \times (S_{ni} \leftrightarrow S_{ni})]$$

Translated as follows: Teacher development and empowerment is a function of the quality of the interactions of teacher and the human systems he or she takes part in, the quality of the interactions of those systems (teacher involved systems) with each other, and the quality of the interactions of systems that the teacher is not a part of (S_{ni}).

The quantitative results of the core program of the school year 1989-90 are impressive. With respect to important categories deemed significant for school success the core group did better than the control or "at-large" group. Data was kept on attendance, academic performance, and discipline referrals. The attendance results will be looked at first because it is almost axiomatic at the high school level that students who miss a lot of school stand a greater chance of doing poorly with respect to grades than students who attend on a regular and consistent basis.

Attendance

In regard to ten or more absences per quarter, the core team showed that seven percent of its students fell into that category. The control or "at-large" group showed that 23 percent of its students fell into that category. In the crucial fourth quarter of school year 1989-90, ten percent of the "at-large" or control group were absent ten or more

times, whereas the core group manifested only two percent of its student population as having ten or more absences.

Clearly, core group students, in general, attended more regularly than did the students randomly assigned to the "at-large" control group. Throughout the school year, and especially in the fourth quarter, students in the core group were attending classes more readily than students in the "at-large" control group.

Academics

The core group had 23 percent of its students earning a B grade or better during school year 1989-90. The "at-large" group had 18 percent of its students earning a 3.0 grade point average or better during school year 1989-90. With respect to students receiving less than a C average (2.0 g.p.a.), the core group had 34 percent of its students fall into that category, while the control group manifested 56 percent of its students falling below a 2.0 g.p.a.

The Hawaii State Test of Essential Competencies (HSTEC) was taken by the total ninth grade class in the spring semester of school year 1989-90. Fifty-one percent of the core students (excluding the gifted and talented component of the core group) passed the competency test, while 34 percent of the students in the "at-large" group passed it on their first attempt. Of the gifted and talented group, 96 percent passed the competency test.

Disciplinary Referrals

Data reflecting class C offenses by quarters:

1st quarter: Core - 2%; Control - 6%
2nd quarter: Core - 7%; Control - 11%
3rd quarter: Core - 2%; Control - 6%
4th quarter: Core - 0%; Control - 2%

Data reflecting the school year 1989-90 regarding attendance, academics and disciplinary referrals, as shown in the above listed percentages, indicate that the core program was an improvement over the "at-large," control group. In general, students were attending more, earning better grades, and adapting themselves positively to the core educational ecology.

It appears that the core program created an environment that was more supportive, more challenging and more inviting for the students entering the ninth grade of the school year 1989-90. We may shape our environments, but surely our environments shape us. The core environment was more conducive to the facilitation of viable, reciprocal, and mutually enhancing connections between individuals and systems surrounding and embedding students, teachers, counselors, administrators, parents and significant others.

By personalizing the educational ecology embedding the students and educators, the core process helped establish important "linkages of engagement" for students and educators alike. Large schools have not been the most ideal

educational environment for many students entering today's school system. This is especially true for "at-risk" students.

This case study described the change process at Castle High School through the cognitive lens of Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory of Human Development. The change process at Castle High School was a collaborative effort involving individuals and systems. Bronfenbrenner's theory presented us with a holistic and multi-dimensional framework.

When applied to the educational change process that took place at Castle High School in the school year 1989-90, the Bronfenbrenner theory, along with the insights of other ecological minded educators, provided a more inclusive and more precisely interconnected knowledge base regarding the change process.

This case study dissertation provided clarification and insight into the differences and distinctions permeating the two systems of schooling offered the ninth grade students entering Castle High School in the school year 1989-90.

The core program appears to provide a more supportive, inviting, enriching and psychologically enhancing educational ecology for students and teachers alike than is provided in the traditional "at-large" structure of schooling. When the micro- mesosystem learning ecology is supportive, personalized and explicitly linked with other

systems (exo and macro), student learning, in general, will improve as a result of the restructured ecological learning context.

This case study of high school reform endeavored to highlight the paramount importance of creating viable, supportive, and dynamic interactions and interconnections between students, educators, parents, significant others and the systems undergirding and encompassing those individuals.

Castle High School has expanded the coring program to include four ninth grade core teams and three tenth grade core teams. Future expansion of the core reform model will be facilitated if substantive funding and ongoing support is forthcoming from the legislature, the district, and the university.

During the years Castle High School has experimented with the coring process, other schools have visited the campus to observe the coring teams in action. Recently high schools have begun to design and implement their own unique variations of the "school within a school" paradigm.

As more schools begin to modify their microsystems and mesosystems, a fund of knowledge will be developed. A key feature sustaining student-teacher centered "school within a school" development will be the networking that ensues among the schools engaging in the change process. Clear communication and knowledge base sharing among the schools involved in ecological efforts at educational reform can

contribute to the quality enhancement of those change endeavors.

Continued support and follow up on the part of the Hawaii School-University Partnership is essential if changes are to be implemented, sustained and modified in the years to come.

From an ecological perspective, all systems of the overriding field need to be involved and interconnected. The ecological change nexus must develop stronger links of communication and support between the schools and the university. As more schools engage in the change process (recently Kalani High School and Farrington High School), additional change facilitators and linking agents may need to be employed to assure substantive support for the increase in the number of schools engaging in the ecological experimentation of education.

If support from the exosystem institutions is spread too thin, quality change that truly benefits students and teachers may not be forthcoming on a scale required to meet the diverse needs of the individuals attending and working at the large high schools investing in the change process.

Now that the coring change process has been expanded, not only at Castle High School, but also in other local high schools, it is imperative that timely and consistent training sessions and workshops be conducted throughout the school year.

These educational undertakings could be arranged for the core teams during their open group planning periods. Ongoing instruction regarding the core philosophy, cooperative learning processes, teacher as counselor perspective, and the overall personalization of education are examples of relevant topics to be covered.

In addition, total staff development workshops could be conducted during faculty meetings. Similar topics as those mentioned above could be covered at these full faculty meetings. By arranging and conducting these large group meetings, on an ongoing basis, bridges can hopefully be built between the core program group cohort and the non-core "at-large" teachers.

At these full faculty meetings new and veteran staff members can be made aware of the overriding rationale for change, as well as be given opportunities to engage in hands on activities and methods utilized in the coring process.

These meetings are needed to increase and enhance the communication flow between the core group teachers and the "at-large" teachers. From an ecological perspective, a change in one part of a system will inevitably have an impact on other parts of the system, even those not specifically designated to take part directly in the change process.

As the core program develops, there is a danger that faculty members not directly involved in the change process

may feel alienated and out on the margins of the changing school culture. Thus the need for meetings designed to encourage and elicit communication sharing and hands-on commonalities for all members of the faculty of the total high school.

At these meetings, long range plans and projections can be shared regarding the "school within a school" movement. The more new and veteran teachers know about and are familiar with the coring philosophy and process, chances are that a larger pool of potential core educators will develop as a result of the evolving linkages between core and non-core personnel.

The last thing a school would want, in the name of school reform, is a split faculty based on core versus non-core members. An overall school mesosystem that is based upon a growing sense of unity and purpose is a goal to strive for. Faculty meetings designed to evoke substantive communication patterns, open ended dialogue, and shared purposeful planning on the part of all of the school members is an avenue to pursue with zeal and commitment.

The involvement of the Hawaii School-University Partnership in the facilitation and mediation of these large group meetings would be a very important aspect of the overall staff development process. The Hawaii School-University Partnership has been integrally involved in the coring process; that involvement needs to continue to be as

viable, visible and supportive now and in the future as it was during the inception of the change process.

Presently the core program involves the ninth and tenth grades of Castle High School. Now that change has been incorporated into the first two years of the high school educational sequence, ideas regarding modification of the third and fourth phases of the educational process can be looked at with more intent, vigor and thoughtfulness.

If staff development meetings are arranged in the near future, ideas and tentative plans for, not only improving the present ninth and tenth grade core programs, but also for expansion into the junior and senior years, may very well emanate from within the faculty group. If given an opportunity to air concerns, uncertainties, ideas, tentative plans, and visions, new configurations and models may surface as a result of the open-ended give and take forum approach to future school renewal and change.

The Gold Core students from the 1989-90 ecological experiment are graduating in June 1993. Follow up evaluation regarding how the Gold Core students fared in their junior and senior non-core years is needed. Did their positive patterns continue throughout their junior and senior years? Did they continue to do better than the "at-large" group or was there a fall off in their scores and patterns?

After graduation follow up would also be beneficial regarding the overall impact of the core program. For example, it would be interesting to note if core students (not including the gifted and talented component of students) enter both two and four year colleges at a higher rate than do the "at-large" group. Do they plan to enter small colleges ("colleges within colleges") at a greater rate than the "at-large" group? These and related questions can guide future research endeavors, as well as help provide a more long range, holistic picture of the Gold Core "school within a school" model.

It is interesting to note that a recent request for math tutors for the present ninth and tenth grade core groups resulted in 18 volunteers from the original Gold Core group. Four volunteers from the original "at-large" group signed up.

One can speculate that the "ties that bind" students to the more supportive core program are still evident. A personal felt sense of obligation and responsibility towards the core program, the core coordinator and teachers, and the new students may be a dynamic at work here.

In discussing the volunteer effort, Marian Kitajima, core coordinator, believed that the volunteers just wanted to help out and give something back to the program they felt positive about. Educators have long been concerned about the importance of instilling a civic sense of responsibility

in our students. The core approach, with its emphasis on support, cooperation, and challenge, may be one viable avenue of pursuit with respect to the facilitation of this admirable objective.

School reform takes time, commitment, funds, communication and system connections. Schools cannot do it alone. Change that promotes substantive student-teacher centered improvement can more readily be actualized when the immediate and the more distant ecological domains are linked up with one another in a mutually enhancing, positive exchange matrix.

To continue the improvement process at Castle High School entails the committed involvement of the National Network For School Renewal, the Hawaii School-University Partnership, the legislature, the Department of Education, especially the Windward District, parents, students, and educators. All systems must be integrally engaged and invested in the change process.

If more than mere, superficial, cosmetic tinkering is to be accomplished, the macro, exo, meso, and microsystems have to all be manifestly engrossed in the reform endeavors. As Urie Bronfenbrenner states:

Finally, lying at the very core of an ecological orientation and distinguishing it most sharply from prevailing approaches to the study of human development is the concern with the progressive accommodation between a growing human organism and its immediate environment and the way in which this relation is mediated by forces emanating from more remote regions in the larger physical and social milieu.¹⁸⁵

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