

## COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION <sup>1</sup>

Although the community is often characterized as "uninvolved" in its own affairs, there are sufficient instances of broad participation to warrant further analysis and some qualification. In the first place, participation, that is, attending meetings, keeping abreast of events relevant to the community, seems to be determined by the issues. If, for example, an explicit or implicit threat to the Hawaiian Home Lands arises or is perceived, then both the number of participants and the intensity of concern are impressive. On a number of occasions over the last three years specific issues have temporarily welded the community together in a united stand, but the controversy and the resulting organization faded rapidly. Such a sequence is clearly not unique to Hawaiians nor to Nanakuli; nearly every community shows a similar phenomenon at one time or another. Thus, on this point at least, the community in Nanakuli is not unlike other areas: residents presented with a sensitive issue will form a coalition, often with a broad consensus. If the issue is raised by some agency or agent from outside the community toward which there is already suspicion or hostility present, the likelihood of consensus is improved.

In the past few years the development of a coalition in Nanakuli has depended largely on the introduction of such issues. However, the concept of coalition as a temporary alliance of groups or individuals seeking to secure some mutual goal rather than to ward off a threat, is notably absent. Perhaps it is on this point that the most meaningful distinction can be made between Nanakuli and other communities which are able to organize for effective political or social pressure. In Nanakuli issues are often not separated from personalities, and if two people place themselves on opposite sides of any issue, one of two things is apt to occur: one individual withdraws, taking with him those who support his position, or both skirt the issue and avoid further consideration of the problem. In either case, hammering out a position to which all can agree is blocked by considerations having to do with past battles.

If a group is to remain viable in Nanakuli, it has essentially two practical alternatives: to avoid discussing any issue that might be divisive, or to emphasize cooperative activities in which relationships are continually reaffirmed rather than threatened, e. g., by organizing a luau. Even groups which are organized primarily to deal with issues may spend an enormous amount of time avoiding them in order to maintain group solidarity. For example, a group may spend months concentrating on rules of order (as a means of avoiding confrontation) and thus

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<sup>1</sup> Contributed by Ronald Gallimore (University of Hawaii/Bernice P. Bishop Museum), and Alan Howard (Bernice P. Bishop Museum).

not discuss the real issues. One frequent road to consensus is reliance on a popular leader to whom all have a commitment. The leader can then authoritatively make a decision or attempt to ascertain prevailing opinion before arriving at a decision. He (or often she) can also mediate disputes within the group. However, the road to this position is difficult and successful leaders are under enormous strain--they are responsible for satisfying a group of highly sensitive people. Even with the presence of a strong leader, consensus on an important plan of action may be impossible because the leader will often work to avoid dealing with matters that might threaten group solidarity. Indeed, it appears that becoming a leader, in part, depends on one's ability to steer the group away from troubled waters.

There are undoubtedly many factors--historical, educational, economic--which underlie the pattern we have portrayed. Clearly the Hawaiian penchant for congenial, conflict-free relationships is also involved. There is little doubt that most people in Nanakuli take no great pleasure in groups which must deal with controversial matters, even those related to self-interest.

It is also plausible to suggest that in the past the potential benefits of coalition may have been simply so insignificant that the factors which forge other communities together were absent in Nanakuli. Indeed the past isolation, both physical and political, of the Leeward Coast makes indifference and apathy somewhat predictable. But with the economic development of the area as well as recently initiated public programs, the potential pay-offs which became available may serve as a catalyst for greater community organization and effectiveness.

Finally, it should be noted that an apparent increase in the number of effective organizational workers has occurred in recent months. In part, this is due to government-sponsored programs which have provided increased opportunities for individuals to work on matters of direct and basic importance to the community. Also, it appears that the younger generation, whose education may be the determining factor, have begun to get involved with community-wide concerns. Whether members of a community such as Nanakuli can be persuaded or trained to use the concept of coalition is problematical. Recent reports which have come to our attention from sources on the mainland suggest that coalitions, such as the Black Congress of Los Angeles, can be formed from diverse and ordinarily antagonistic elements in an ethnic community (Preacely, 1968). The Black Congress, for example, is reportedly composed of about 40 groups, ranging from very militant nationalistic organizations to what are called, depending on one's view, moderate or "Uncle Tom" groups. The central thread which binds this group, whose effectiveness has not been systematically assessed, is the concept of unifying around those positions on which they can agree without attempting to agree on everything--that is, forming a temporary alliance or a coalition. Our mainland informant suggested

patterns may interfere with certain key behavioral strategies on which the Hawaiian life style depends, such as the avoidance of confrontations. In effect, changes in the living arrangements may eliminate the use of particular avoidance tactics or conflict resolution tactics and in turn increase the amount of conflict and disharmony. For example, the elimination of yard space in which a man may work on a car or entertain his friends may remove an ingredient essential to the establishment and maintenance of family units. With no space which is clearly his own a man may be more likely to spend time away from home, generating, as a consequence, greater husband wife conflict.

Conditions which increase the likelihood of husband-wife confrontations are also likely to increase the probability of divorce (see "Family Development") Thus we cannot emphasize too strongly the importance of considering the social and psychological effects of radical changes in the ecology of family life. Indeed, it would be particularly instructive to examine the contrasts between Hawaiian families who live in apartments in Honolulu and those in our Nanakuli sample. It would be, in our view, very reasonable to hypothesize that both greater conflict and family dissolution occur among families living in apartments, and also that what we have described as the Hawaiian life style is significantly altered in such situations.

It is obvious that education is the most efficient and economical means of introducing positive changes into Nanakuli. We have already argued many times that the schools, in order to be successful, must adapt their teaching strategies to the community. Recent efforts in this direction have already begun, but ample measures of patience and support from the larger community will be necessary before any dramatic results occur. The teachers and principals have been asked to solve an extremely difficult problem, one which will require experimentation, innovation, and perhaps radical change. They must be allowed to risk mistakes as well as enjoy success, if they are to have some chance to eventually provide quality education for the children of Nanakuli.

There is another issue, as yet not clearly resolved, which centers on the question of whether or not the schools' function includes changing the social and cultural identity of the students. To put the question more bluntly--is the goal of education in Nanakuli to make that community indistinguishable from any middle-income area in Honolulu? We do not believe it is part of our function in this report to address such questions, but we do urge that the issue be given considerable attention and review. And we do suggest that biculturalism is not an impossible goal. It is entirely possible for the people of Nanakuli to make some changes in their lives in the future without destroying the many good things of the present.