

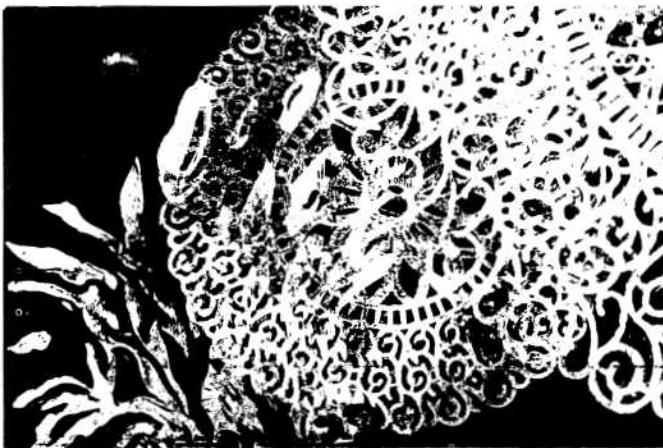
# What Can a Portapak Do?

ly and consciously regulate and arrange for our interpersonal relationships with others and our changing reactions to ourselves.

It is necessary to review and consider revision of theories of self which see man from a rigid viewpoint. Although there is continuity in the structural core of each person, self is not a concrete self. A maturing person is composed of many coexisting selves or self-aspects, changing and in flux from moment to moment yet always having a unifying matrix of physical body mass, name, gender, life history, incorporated cultural time-binding practices, language, values and emotional reaction patterns. Each person is unique in his process of creatively synthesizing these past and present introjected and identified-with images as they amalgamate into his own growing self.

This condensed manuscript was prepared for the presentation on Video as an Adjunct in the Growth of Self at the October 25, 1972 scientific meeting of the Association for the Advancement of Psychoanalysis, Carnegie International Center, New York City.

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We received a grant from NIMH to train employed mental health paraprofessionals in the use of videotape recording techniques. To do this, we used one portapak, some tape, and set up a once-a-week, five-hour class structure at a community mental health center. The class was open to Antioch students, interested paraprofessionals and therapists at the mental health center.

Our goals were to acquaint everyone with the hardware--to begin to understand it, demystify it; and develop a class process that would maximize the benefits we felt videotape could bring to a group. We knew that many community mental health centers had videotape equipment, but to our knowledge, it wasn't being used to the potential we felt video could have for bringing people together.

Another goal was to bring the community and the institution together. As Stelios is the director of a mental health center and has an interest in video, and as Alan is professor of communications at Antioch College and is interested in mental health, we felt that this project could work to bring students and the community together.

We realized that we couldn't develop our theories in the abstract, so our class became a human laboratory where we explored on ourselves the effects of videotape on a group. We were trying, week-by-week, to develop concrete uses of video that would facilitate therapy and/or group interaction.

During the class meetings, we found that the video process began to take on an identity of its own, and that that process shaped the character of what went on. No matter how clear our initial goals were, when the video equipment was on, the process became uncertain. We found ourselves unable to predict what would happen next.

One important thing that we learned was that one cannot maintain traditional roles while working with video. Video in playback doesn't show roles, it only shows people. The reality of this fact precipitated a crisis in our group when the students, tapists, teachers, paraprofessionals and therapists all had to begin reassessing and redefining their roles. We found that video had forced us to face

our structure--and as the roles broke down, we had no structure--and a new one had to be found.

What this meant to us as a group of people who came together to learn about ourselves through the hardware is that we all had to begin to relate to each other more as human beings, rather than as specific roles. At first, this caused a great deal of anxiety in class participants, but, through feedback, people began to reaffirm their identity as people. Video had democratized the group, and we became much more free to get to know each other as people.

During the class period, we formalized several techniques. We then tried to reproduce these techniques in other settings, with other groups.

Stelios took the equipment to a training seminar for alcoholism counselors to see if he could facilitate group interaction in a classroom situation. On his first visit, he tried showing, on a t.v. set, a tape of an interview with a barmaid, who was also a mental health worker, giving her views on alcoholism at the bar. He felt this tape would be of interest to the group. But, he found that no one got excited: they sat there, took notes, got bored, etc.

So when he went back another week, he used video as a process (rather than playback) tool, taping class members giving a short description of themselves and why they were in the class. During this process, the class became very excited; began interacting, person-to-person, for the first time in nine weeks.

We've done this in many other settings and have come to feel that video, when used properly, can break the ice in a group and quickly create an atmosphere in which interaction is much more meaningful. This doesn't necessarily have to be in a mental health environment, but can be applied to any situation.

THE INTERACTION BETWEEN HUMAN BEINGS AND THE MACHINE CAN BRIDGE THE GAP OF ALIENATION BETWEEN HUMAN BEINGS. At the present time, we feel that a change in behavior is possible based on a breakdown of internalized role definitions and idealized self-

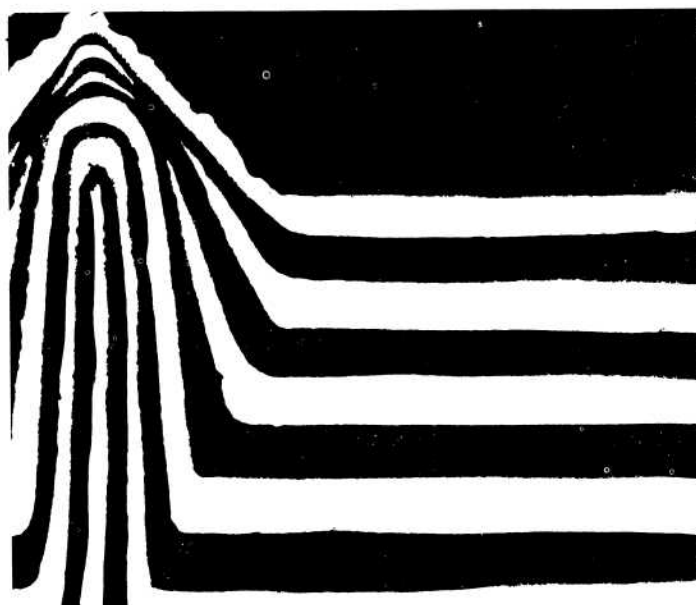
concepts. This is an area we intend to pursue further in our seminar throughout the year.

We would like to document here some of the exercises we used with the group to facilitate interaction. All the exercises were designed to feed information back to the individual and aid the group process by giving each other new material about ourselves:

1. SELF AS IS DESCRIPTION -- Individuals describe themselves physically as they think they look while the camera tapes long shots and close-ups from all angles (front, back, side). This tape is then played back to see the similarities and discrepancies between verbalized description and visual image. A very productive exercise to decrease the distance between the individual's internalized self-image and his actual one. Another variation is having people describe how they think they are coming across to other people.

2. IDEAL SELF -- Individual describes his ideal self while being taped with the monitor off. Then, with the monitor on (RF), he confronts his image and describes what he would like to change. A very good exercise for making people feel good. Most people block all their idealized selves out in the confrontation and decide that they are really o.k.

3. CAMERA-TAPE RECORDER-MONITOR -- Two people interact in one spot for about three minutes.



Another person sits behind the camera with his ears plugged and the lens on wide angle so he can see all of both the interacting bodies, but hear nothing. The fourth person, (the tape recorder), closes his eyes and just listens, or he can wear earphones (this requires a good mike placement). The fifth person, (the monitor) watches and listens. Then, at the end of three minutes, the monitor reports exactly what was said, mimicing the tone and inflection of what he heard, and mimicing the non-verbal body position of each interactor. Then the tape recorder reports out just the voices. The camera, just the non-verbals. Neither the tape recorder, camera or monitor is to use any objectives or make any judgments. They are only to report exactly what they saw and heard. Then the tape is played back.

This exercise is very good for: (1) separating the audio from the visual information; (2) heightening that non-verbals add a lot more meaning to the information (especially the non-verbal); (3) showing that non-verbals add a lot more meaning to the interpersonal dynamic of what is being said; and (4) showing that the sense of sight and sound are overloaded and that we remember only a small part of the reality of any given situation and that if we cut out either sense, we can usually remember much more information. (The monitor usually reports the least information of the three.)

4. INTERACTION-PROCESS — Two people interact in any way they want for a short period of time, (three minutes is usually long enough). The interaction is taped. Then, one of the two interactors goes out of the room, and the remaining individual gives his perceptions of what took place to the camera. Then, these two people trade places and the individual who was out of the room repeats the process. Finally, they both come back and watch the entire tape.

This is a very good exercise for: (1) showing that video used properly can facilitate (mediate) communication between two people. Many times it is easier to say things to a camera than face to face; (2) showing that used improperly, media can block communication, (if this happens, explore the reasons why); (3) a critique on how to shoot a two person conversation. Did the camera

technique match the content of the interaction? What was the verbal and nonverbal dynamic? What was going on? Did the camera person follow what was most important in the inter-personal dynamic or did he get lost in his own perceptions?

5. IT IS OBVIOUS (I SEE) - I IMAGINE (ZOOM) - I FEEL -- Begin taping the group interaction. R.F. the deck out to the monitor and put the camera lens on wide angle. Equate these visual statements to the verbal statement, "I see". Then, when the tapist sees a non-verbal gesture that interests him, he zooms in on that gesture. Then stop recording. Play back the tape and have the tapist freeze the most significant frame. This visual statement is equated to the verbal statement "I imagine". The tapist should then relate his thoughts about why he picked that particular moment as important; e.g., "I imagined Jerry's crossed legs meant that he was feeling uptight and defensive". Then, the should explain how he feels about Jerry; e.g., "I was feeling very uptight myself and I identified with you".

This is a very good exercise for: (1) separating the senses of sight, fantasy and feeling; (2) making the camera person aware of why he is focusing on a particular piece of the entire environment. Thus, making the tapist more able to verbalize his thoughts and feelings in the playback; (3) realizing the tremendous projections that happen during the taping process. In the majority of cases, the tapist will have chosen the individual frame to zoom in on because of his own empathy with the situation.

6. "WHAT DO YOU SEE IN ME THAT YOU DON'T LIKE IN YOURSELF?" -- One person stands up in the center of the group and anyone who wants to, joins him. (If no one joins him, he should choose someone.) The first person thinks of the above statement and tells the other person what it is in him that he doesn't like in himself. Then the process is reversed. Throughout, the group is encouraged to either affirm or deny or add to the statements made. Tape the whole interaction and playback appropriate sections. Or, for a variation, change the statement to the positive - "What do you see in me that you like in yourself?"

alan kaplan and stelios spiliadis