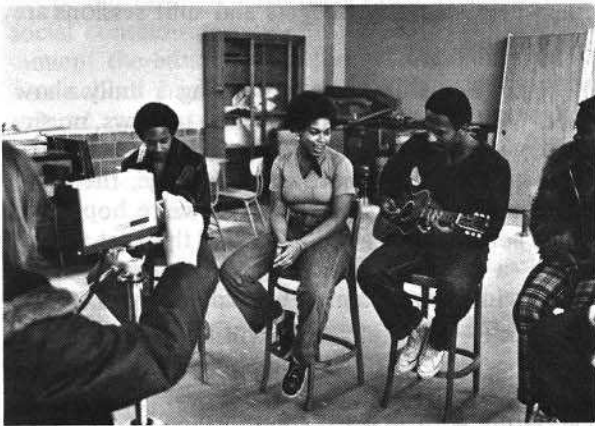


# Video in a Therapeutic Community

BRUCE COST

My student population is unique. The school in which I work is part of a residential treatment program for adolescent drug addicts. Over 80% of the boys and girls are from New York City, with the remainder coming from upstate New York communities. Prior to admittance most of the kids have attended school sporadically and have a history of hard drug use and involvement in crime. Most all are alumni of city youth houses and come to this campus via criminal or family court. There is one admission requirement: an indication on a kid's part that he wants to gain some control over his life and break loose from the circle of judges, courts, social workers and drugs that dominate his existence.

Holy Cross School in Rhinebeck, N.Y., can be viewed as a "therapeutic community," mixing 85 students with 80 staff members (including psychiatrist, psychologists, social workers, administrators, counselors and a school staff of 30.) The campus, 90 miles north of New York on the Hudson, is a 1000 acre facility owned by Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York. State child-care and education funding contribute to the maintenance of the institution.



Bruce Cost

The school was voted a state school district unto itself by the state legislature, and as a result is a self-supporting institution within an institution. The school atmosphere can best be described as innovative. Teachers receive full support for whatever they feel will turn a kid on educationally. The school's willingness to experiment has recently won it a large state grant to begin a pilot program in outdoor education. Classes have ten students, at most, and several courses have two instructors.

I work as a teacher and am responsible for the development of a media program for the school. This, includes videotape. However, the use of videotape is not limited to the classroom. And since I have been the most vociferous advocate of the use of videotape throughout the institution, I am involved in developing uses for it in all phases of the program. Three broad categories are necessary to describe our uses for videotape at Holy Cross: education; therapy; and staff training.

## Education

Typically, students here are not only turned off to schools and institutions, but in many cases have a hard time functioning in anything resembling a structured activity. Class periods in which the teacher lectures for 40 minutes are seldom successful and class discussions cannot be counted on to involve everyone. But these students consistently react positively to involvement with videotape. They like the equipment and its power to record them.

For example, I have found that kids who are unwilling to spend time discussing a topic in seminar fashion will thoroughly explore the same subject as "experts" on a TV panel show. Because, while they may not have heard many after-dinner discussions of ideas or events in their homes, they have seen this on TV. And they can readily identify with this format. Plus, the playback is reinforcing. They see themselves in brand new roles - positive ones which they can enjoy.

As with most videotape programs, we use this tool heavily for various dramatic activities. For these students, however, learning to explore emotions in a controlled situation is particularly important. Learning to exercise emotional control in a dramatic situation may help these kids exercise similar control in real-life situations. Tape is tangible evidence of accomplishment. Videotape drama gives them the rare chance to excel in a classroom.

Student camera crews of two and three have recorded various situations and events on campus in documentary fashion. For example, they have invaded classrooms to record the mood and important activities of the class session. On playback, the teacher watches himself conduct a class, the students view their classroom attitude and behavior, and the camera crew is forced to really observe and understand the classroom environment because of their responsibility to record it well.

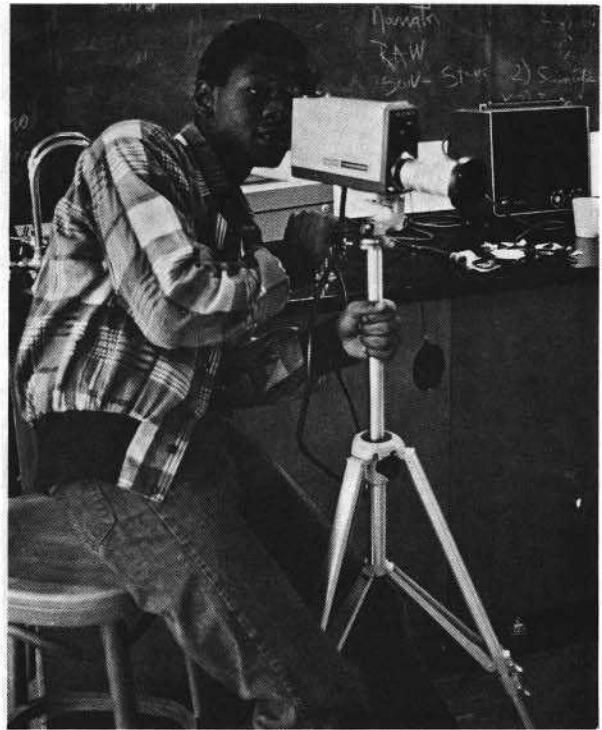
## Therapy

It is hard to distinguish between the educational and therapeutic value of videotape, particularly in a Holy Cross classroom. However, the value of videotape, in a strictly therapeutic sense is easy to see in both individual and group therapy sessions. The therapist or group leader can play back a recorded session and stop the action at important points for illustration or discussion.

This past summer I was involved in an experimental group designed to orient new kids to the program. The staff psychiatrist, the head of Social Services and I acted as group leaders and tried to get the kids to examine their own behavior and the circumstances which brought them to Holy Cross. The technique was videotape recording. They acted out situations they share in common - from encounters with the courts to family scenes. This "psychodrama" was then played back, frozen at various points and discussed, focusing on the relationship a particular role has had on the life of the participant. For example, if someone is to play a parole officer in a courtroom scene or a grandmother in a family scene, he must begin to understand the perspective of that person. When a kid begins to do this, he begins to examine his own role in the proper perspective. And it becomes easier for him to understand how his behavior resulted in his present placement.

## Staff Training

For any staff member who deals directly with kids, supervised role-play followed by group discussion is valuable training. A teachers' workshop can choose common problem situations to role-play and record. On playback the group can decide on the best technique for handling a classroom fight, for example. The role-playing participant will adapt these techniques to his own personality, thereby helping him be more effective in his job



Bruce Cost

and establishing a more consistent approach to dealing with the kids. Sessions such as these allow the staff participants to support each other as well as share experiences and ideas. And it is valuable to break roles and look at situations from a different vantage point.

Videotape is having an impact on the program at Holy Cross which I hope is indicated in this much abridged look at our use of this tool. It seems to be one of the few known quantities that positively affects the adolescent population we deal with, in both a behavioral and educational sense. Videotape seems to have been specifically designed for use in our environment.

# A New Approach in Higher Education

JANE GARMY and JEFF BUSH

The Thematic Studies Program (TSP) was started at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice (CUNY) in September 1972, with the help of a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The program is designed to make college learning a more personal, relevant and immediate experience for the student, who instead of taking a number of unrelated courses, concentrates on a specific theme and during the course of the school year discovers how a number of different disciplines contribute to an understanding of this theme. One of the program's assumptions is that learning goes on in many

ways both inside and outside the classroom, through large group meetings, small seminars, independent research, field trips and learning based in the community. Students are also given the opportunity to design and carry out individual projects which range tremendously in scope and design.

From the beginning, the use of video has been seen as an important part of TSP and we have struggled to come to grips with the problem of how to use it effectively and how to best integrate it into the