

by Emanuel Jarogene

I am in the Clinton Program. It is a special and new program. We pick our own courses and every afternoon we go out. One afternoon course I have is a film workshop. We learn about video cameras. First they taught us how to use these cameras and then we started making our own shows and films. I've had the course for a half a year now and I enjoy it a lot. I will keep taking this course as long as they have it. It's just like a taperecorder. You tape it; then look at it. I have this course every week on Tuesdays. I've learned a lot in these six months and I hope to learn more. Later on in life it might help me to get a good job or make up shows or even good movies

that'll be on television. I can say I'm learning a lot from this course cause I am. I even get a lot of fun out of this. So far the film workshop class has made a lot of shows and films and interviews with people outside. We have a lot of fun in this course. After we make our movies or shows we get to look at them on television (closed-circuit).



Clinton Project : Kids and Video



"If there's not enough equipment to go around, especially portables, it's hard to keep interest high. You can usually send out a crew of three per Porta-Pak (cameraman, sound man, and someone to hold the record deck) and give each one someone something to do. By that we mean that there has to be some piece of equipment for each one to hold so they feel part of something.

Inside, the group usually breaks down into kids who want to work the equipment, those who want to perform, and hangers on. Some kids are timid about being taped and you shouldn't force them on camera. We found that even the kids who wanted to be taped most often became very reserved in watching themselves in playback.

"Don't build up a hardware mystique. The first day one kid ask us how much a Porta-Pak costs (\$1,495) and then wanted to know "why are you letting us kids use it" because he thought it was so expensive. In that situation, just plunk it into the kid's hands and let him start shooting. You've got to find a balance between having a kid respect equipment and not being awed by its cost.

Also try and minimize the difficulty of using the hardware, mainly because it's very easy to use. Instead of demand that kids circle around the equipment and get checked out on it as if it were an airplane or something, let them at it right away. They usually want to know how it works to solve a problem, not in anticipation of one. And that's a learning mode.

"Finally, don't lay a broadcast TV trip on them. Most of what you and they see on TV is behavior artificially conditioned by money and studio biases. While our kids often imitated TV (e.g. they did a news show) they quickly broke through its context with their own spontaneity.

Moreover, the Porta-Pak can go anywhere so copying studio behavior is superfluous. If you don't have portable equipment you can still work with kids, of course, but in that mode it becomes more of a control system for an adult authority figure. Everyone keeps telling us about video equipment locked in school closets because teachers are afraid to use it.

Especially avoid scripts. Scripts are writing. TV is a visual or oral medium. What's the point of forcing assumed behavior when kids can reinforce their own spontaneous modest? The only pre-written stuff we used was done by the kids themselves and they soon got out of that too.

INFORMATION OFFSPRING AND THE REGENERATIVE CYCLE: Video tape as a tool in restructuring the Public School System.

by Douglas White

An interesting experiment has just been completed in the Englewood, N.J., Public School System involving the collaboration of architects and videotapsters. The architects arranged for junior high students to construct an environment which involved many radical changes in the concept of public education. However, only two schools in Englewood were involved. The videotapsters were responsible for taping this event which has far reaching implications but involved very few people, and creating an impact on the culture at large.

The central issue was once you have created change on a small scale how do you escalate that change so that it effects the whole society? The answer lies in the fact that Amerika is an electronic culture. And so the experiment must be transferred into electronic information or in this case video tape. It is then subject to the principle of *Information Offspring and the Regenerative Cycle*. This means that once an event has produced electronic information it can then be broadly disseminated through our electronic networks. As a result of this the event is then capable of happening again and again all over the country.

The critical point is that the people who create the information offspring have a great deal of responsibility for they can manipulate the information so that it may not cause a regenerative cycle. The problem today is that control of the nature of information offspring and of the electronic networks through which it must travel is monopolized by a few powerful people. (To bring about change in Amerika we have to short circuit this existing network and create a free electronic cultural network.)

The following describes the Englewood experiment and the nature of information offspring that must be produced to create a regenerative cycle on a national level.

Not many people will argue with you these days when you say that children learn best by doing. For when children are totally involved in a process then learning becomes a natural result. Total involvement best describes the Englewood project. It was unique in that it involved both early and middle school students in the construction and use of an instant environment (or instant day care center) in the early school.

The environment was constructed by the middle school students. It was basically a large cardboard geometric indoor playground consisting of walk-in tetrahedrons, ziggurats, polypopagons and space coups. It had many nooks, cranies and different levels with places for children to slide, swing and hide.

The middle school students were divided into three groups: the Builders, the Placemakers and the Guides. The Builders went to the early school each day to fabricate and erect the environment which was held together by bolts, string, glue and tape. After the initial construction which took two days to complete, the Placemakers arrived to enrich the structure by adding color and texture.

The following day the early school children were introduced to their new environment by the third group, the Guides. They told the younger children stories, sang and played with them in their new surroundings.

There are several positive aspects that came out of this experience. First, the environment



served as a catalyst to create interaction between students, teachers and administrators where no interaction had existed before. Secondly, middle school students re-established contact with their early school and actually became involved in early school education. Many of the Guides taught the younger children through their stories and songs. Thirdly, the middle school children were totally involved in a new learning experience. The Builders found new meaning in math through the construction of geometric shapes while the Placemakers gained greater sensitivity to color, texture and form. They all experienced a great sense of achievement in viewing the younger children as they happily played in their new structure.

This project was initiated by Phil Winter and Sam Kornhauser of It Works, who were involved in negotiations with the Englewood school administrators and an interested teacher, Susan Segal. It took them eight months to work out the logistics. Once the arrangements were made they contracted Douglas White of Alternative Environmental Futures to produce a video tape documentary of the construction of the environment in Englewood.

The concept of *Information Offspring and the Regenerative Cycle* is largely responsible for determining the nature and quantity of material produced. This is how it worked in Englewood. The event happened and produced information offspring.

1 It produced a second generation of itself which was a three hour documentary taped during the five day period of the experiment. This tape will be cut to thirty minutes and will be of immense value in introducing and orientating school administrators to the project. It can also be used to generate public interest in the project.

2 Supplementary Tapes: There are several areas where tapes are needed for instruction and orientation of the middle school children before they begin actual construction.

A) Tapes showing actual construction techniques and procedures.

B) Information dealing with the theoretical aspects of the structure so that the students will understand exactly what they are doing.

C) Tapes can also be produced dealing with peripheral subjects for use after the event has happened to initiate discussion about how a particular subject relates to the experiment.



All of this information is produced to create a regenerative cycle. The end result will be a total package consisting of the materials for the construction of the environment and the accompanying tapes (in cassette form) so that they can be distributed on a national level.

Once the experiment becomes widespread it will establish a basis for proceeding with more experiments based on these same principles. There can be a new level of interaction among individual schools, students and teachers. And there can be new opportunities for public education to become a more relevant experience.

Contact through Alternative Environmental Futures, 316 West 88th St., N.Y., N.Y. 10024.



Last fall we got a call from Phil Yenawine in the high school department of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. He was helping fund a filmmaking class and heard we were loaning out video equipment. (We were. But we aren't now because we kept getting ripped off). Could he use videotape to teach film?

Of course we said no, film and video are two different things, why didn't he just underwrite a tape course? Which he very graciously did. So for the past five months about a dozen junior high school kids have been coming to our loft one afternoon a week to learn and play with video. The piece here by Emanuel Jarogene tells what went on after we asked him to write it).

We talk a lot about how unique video is and here one of our best students keeps calling it



film. While the kids really loved doing video, it's obvious we weren't as effective as we'd hoped. So all we can do is lay out what went right and wrong and pass it on. There's just not too much information around about kids and video.

There were usually four of us to help the kids. Two teachers and two of us from Raindance. Except for yelling at them not to step on the equipment now and then, and telling them how to work it, we let them do what they wanted.

The first few weeks the kids went out on the streets and shot interviews. Then when the weather turned cold they stayed inside and acted out scripts that were written or sketched out, using props they'd bought. All of that was on their own initiative. Some of the resulting tape is very strong in its way. (We will exchange a one-hour edit for

some of your tape. See Distribution section).

A few of the kids, like Emanuel, really got into making demands on the equipment's capabilities. They even asked to come on the weekends, when school was out, to keep trying out ideas. (We were only able to let them do that once).

While they also learned editing, our major failure was that none of them wanted to, or did, put together a finished piece at the end of the course. Of course, that may be our bias. Just as our being disappointed by our inability to get the kids to feedback verbally on their experience is probably more a reflection on our way of doing video instead of theirs.

What we can pass on from our experience is this:

If our plans go according to schedule, we shall have in hand twenty-five Sony Porta-pak units to lend to community organizations and individuals before the summer.

The slums of major cities resemble the ghettos of Europe in that they entrap people behind invisible walls. But the resemblance stops here. The older ghettos held a community of people with common religious and cultural heritages closely tied by an intricate communications system. Communications networks, run for and by slum residents in the U.S., are non-existent—excepting the "grapevine." Frantz Fanon suggests that a community will evolve only when a people control their own communications. If any sense of community exists in the black and Chicano ghettos, it exists by virtue of the sisters and brothers whose anger brings to the neighborhoods a common sense of revolution and/or apocalyptic despair.

A growing demand by Los Angeles blacks for programming relevancy and models of community owned and operated origination centers which reflect the minority culture and don't strain it through a "white screen" led to the implementation of the Watts Communications Bureau. In March, Nineteen Seventy, the Mafundi Institute of Watts and Communications Associates (CommA) from Santa Barbara, California joined together to form the Watts/Comm Bureau with an enabling grant from the Irwin-Sweeney-Miller Foundation.

The studios and head-end equipment of the CATV system will serve 5,000 subscribers in the Urban Redevelopment Project area with a dual cable installation that provides thirty channels of commercial and local programming. Watts/Comm will be housed in the Neighborhood Center built for Mafundi Institute by HUD and the City of Los Angeles.

The television system planned for Watts/Comm is a new concept in "interaction television." It not only permits voice feedback to the originating sources of the television programs—i.e., the offices of elected officials, storefront performing arts centers, schools, CAP centers, et cetera—but allows the viewer at home or in the storefront, or wherever the television set is placed, to plug in an inexpensive TV camera to send out his own video message. The system provides the capability of distributing many programs simultaneously with different sub-groups of subscribers having the opportunity to talk with the program source and, through the source, to each other. Two-way audio and video communications can generate dialogue, and dialogue can lead to community involvement and change.

It is a project that combines the issues of communication, community, and culture by means of a community based, community owned CATV network that will serve all ages and economic backgrounds.

The Watts/Comm Bureau will operate in the new Watts Urban Redevelopment Project now in the early stages of construction on 103 Street in South Los Angeles. The Mafundi Institute, a non-profit, community-controlled arts and cultural agency, will manage the Bureau—developing the programming and maintaining the operation as a public utility for the com-

munity at large. The purchase and installation of equipment, location of professional personnel, and the maintenance of ongoing program evaluation will be the responsibility of CommA. The Bureau will be equipped and operated in the following modes:

1. Experimental, two-way cable TV communications system giving subscribers access to locally originated programs, commercial stations, and special services. These services will include:

- (a) Daily consumer information.
- (b) Rumor control and a "switchboard" advisory service—answering questions on child care, welfare, transportation, jobs, legal services, et cetera.
- (c) Eye witness reports on community issues and events offering talk-back capabilities.
- (d) Broadcasts from local agencies and institutions.
- (e) Community relevant educational and cultural programming.
- (f) Stereo radio broadcasts amplifying the coverage of the radio broadcasting station.

2. Youth communications and training center for teaching film-making, TV news cameraman skills, and CATV operations, and offering paid positions in radio and television broadcasting to advanced trainees. This training operation will build initially on:

- (a) The experience of Mafundi Institute in beginning film instruction.
- (b) The West Coast operation of the training and placement program of the Community Film Workshop Council.
- (c) The elevation of the Watts Training Bureau, now operating at Mafundi, to a live operation.
- (d) The training and orientation of community persons in "interaction CATV" through the introduction of twenty-five Sony Portapak units into the community.

The Watts Communications Bureau has many objectives, but principally it will seek to breach the barriers to communication that exist in the black ghetto. The Bureau will start many dialogues—between youth and youth, between youth and adults, between various institutions, and between the people of Watts and the more affluent communities, who will discover from the Watts example that a community is not just a mailing address, but something to create, to make work, and a living environment which is inseparable from art and culture.

For more information on what they're doing, and for investigating possibilities of exchanging tapes, contact Don. D. Bushnell, CommA, 1540 Miramar Beach, Santa Barbara, Calif. 93103, or phone 805-969-1032.



Edurne Varney