

SPEAKING OUT

USE OF EXPLICIT VISUAL MATERIALS IN PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

The impact and validity of audio-visual materials for the learning experience have usually been over or under estimated. Regardless of the subject area or technological excellence of the films, this range of evaluation indicates that it is the process of which the materials are a part which most influences their effectiveness. Specifically, the use of sexually explicit materials in professional education about sexuality requires careful attention to the nature and significance of the framework in which they are used.

Recently, members of the SIECUS Board of Directors participated in the University of Minnesota program (described in this Report by Dr. Chilgren). Board members, unidentified as such, were part of the regular large and small discussion groups composed of medical, nursing, ministerial, education and other students. It is one example of a number of excellent programs to be found in medical schools, and the Board members were impressed by its positive effects on their own better communication and relationships as a group.

Professional concern and skills regarding sexual problems are not achieved without exquisite sensitivity to the process of learning how to deal with them. *First*, there must be thorough commitment by the faculty to be involved and by the administration, to the importance of helping the learners to develop sexual self-insight—a prerequisite for individuals whose work with others is in a preventive, therapeutic or educational milieu. *Second*, there must be an understanding that the use of film segments is but one, though an integral, part of a design deliberately constituted as a continuum. This continuum may include orientation relating the social, cultural and ethical elements of sexuality to the development of personal attitudes; exposure to discussion of a variety of readings, beliefs, myths and realities about sexual behavior; and exposure to a series of life impressions by means of professionally produced, sexually explicit films shown in an open, though professionally protected, environment. By all these means the learner is immersed in profound reactions which are at once private and shared with a peer group. While vitally personal, the experience is neither alienated nor lonely, for each participant is aware that there will be opportunity for interaction about the films that is removed from their intensity. Anticipation of this periodic small group process permits the individual to focus on his immediate surface feelings as well as on those of a deeper level. Recognizing, sorting out, or expressing new personal insights does not need to occur all at once. Even though "all at once" has been the immediate key element providing high impact value of the audio-visual techniques, further integration of the experience will have to occur in the follow-through by

staff, with the goal being to capitalize on the time that was emotionally and intellectually invested.

As with any innovative approach in this field there will be those who are quick to adopt a program in order to be "on the bandwagon." But students of any discipline will quickly discover when an audio-visual program is being used to "con" them into a concept without adequate prior preparation and professional follow-through. They early recognize when an approach has become an educational end in itself instead of a continuing educational process. They are keenly aware of a faculty that is unprepared to recognize and meet the need for a continuing commitment to education about sexuality.

The models for such educational programs which ultimately prevail will undoubtedly be those which most help in the growth of the individual and which are undergirded by professional integrity, thoughtful planning, continuity and humane consideration of learning as a process.

Evalyn S. Gendel, M.D.

SIECUS REPORT

Volume I, Number 5

May, 1973

The *SIECUS Report* is published bi-monthly with volumes beginning in September.

Single copies of this issue are \$1.50.
Bulk rates are available on request.

Editor—Mary S. Calderone, M.D.
Managing Editor—Frederick E. Bidgood, M.A.

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The Sex Information and Education Council
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1855 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10023

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