

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 128 702

CG 010 808

AUTHOR Stanton, Timothy; Sheiner, Michael
 TITLE A Family Drama Workshop: Communications Seminar for High School Students.
 SPONS AGENCY Marin Charitable Foundation, Ross, Calif.
 PUB DATE [75]
 NOTE 45p.

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.83 HC-\$2.06 Plus Postage.
 DESCRIPTORS *Communication Skills; Curriculum Guides; Empathy; *Family Relationship; High School Students; *Interpersonal Competence; Listening Skills; *parent Child Relationship; Secondary Education; *Social Development; *Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

This paper was written for high school teachers and other youth workers, who are looking for effective ways to support and assist adolescents as they deal with their complex, and often painful, changing family relationships. It describes A Family Drama Workshop, a series of seminars on families and communication, which was developed and presented to high school students in 1975. The seminar used the structure of the classroom and the experience of art and literature to help students: (1) become more aware of how people influence each other in family or other group situations; (2) enhance their ability to listen to and empathize with other people; (3) use this new awareness and enhancement to improve their own emotional expressiveness. It was anticipated that by practicing these skills and exploring emotionally-charged feelings and attitudes toward families these students would feel more confident and flexible in their interactions, act more constructively, and thereby have a less troublesome time as adolescent family members. By becoming more able to make choices in their family interaction they would find family relationships less imprisoning. While all expectations were not met, this writeup should be of help to others who wish to design similar programs. (Author)

 * Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
 * materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
 * to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
 * reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
 * of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
 * via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
 * responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
 * supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *

A FAMILY DRAMA WORKSHOP

ED128702



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRO-
DUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM
THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGI-
NATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS
STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Communications Seminar for
High School Students

Designed by:

Timothy Stanton, instructor
Michaele Sheiner, LCSW, MFCC

Under the auspices of a grant from
The Marin Charitable Foundation

05 010 808

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
I. Introduction	1
II. Where We're Coming From	3
III. Our Method	6
IV. The Setting	8
V. Our Specific Objectives	9
Class #1	10
Class #2	13
Class #3	16
Class #4	19
Class #5	21
Class #6	23
VI. Project Evaluation	25
VII. Conclusion	30
Appendix	31

I. Introduction:

We are writing this paper for high school teachers and other youth workers, who are looking for effective ways to support and assist adolescents as they deal with their complex, and often painful, changing family relationships. It describes A Family Drama Workshop, a series of seminars on families and communication, which we developed and presented to high school students in 1975.

Using the structure of the classroom and the experience of art and literature we designed the seminar to help our student participants:

- become more aware of how people influence each other in family or other group situations;
- enhance their ability to listen to and empathize with other people;
- use this new awareness and enhancement to improve their own emotional expressiveness.

We hoped that by practicing these skills and exploring emotionally-charged feelings and attitudes toward families these students would feel more confident and flexible in their interactions, act more constructively, and thereby have a less troublesome time as adolescent family members. By becoming more able to make choices in their family interaction they would find family relationships less imprisoning.

These were high expectations and we did not entirely succeed. However, we feel our experience and ideas will be of interest and assistance to teachers and others, who work with adolescents and their peculiar relationship problems.

This is not a "how-to-do-it" recipe, but rather a "how-we-did-it" account. By sharing our experience and our reflections upon it, we hope to spark your interest and imagination toward designing your own program. Use what works for you, discard the rest, and let us know how you make out.

II. Where We're Coming From

Our experience as counselors of adolescents and families led to a concern that people have to come to a crisis before they can consider the effect on them of the rapidly changing social and emotional values of the 60's and 70's, and the effect of these changes on family life.

In our county, as elsewhere, the idea of family is under attack. Divorce rates are 50% and many people, finding the myth of the "happy family" discredited and its economic usefulness minimal, opt for "new" and more transient lifestyles. Moving from affair to affair, group to group and therapy to therapy, they seem to change, but continue to have the same (sometimes frustrating) relationship with different people. They do not get what they want.

In addition, in all this activity there is little mention of the security and self-confidence that can only come out of involvement in a continuing relationship. Perhaps the myth of family life becomes imprisoning and requires change, and the relationships themselves have some validity.

We do not subscribe to never leaving a relationship and we value the flexibility that cultural change has brought into our lives and the lives of those around us. However, if people have more confidence in their ability to improve a relationship gone sour, they might have more of a sense of choice about going or staying. We believe there are skills which can enhance this sense of choice.

Therapy and family therapy help people solve problems and attain new self-confidence as parents, family members, and individuals. Yet, these learning experiences are usually sought by people already in crisis. In that state, though well motivated, they often feel "failed" and inadequate.

How can people be better prepared to deal with the inevitable problems of change in family life before they reach this point? Can one be "educated" to have more satisfying relationships?

"Parent Effectiveness Training" (PET) and "Sensitive Hearing and Relationship Enhancement" (SHARE) are experiments, which offer preventative, educational experiences to family members. They are proving to be both popular and effective. Yet, involvement in these courses tends to be initiated by or limited to parents.

Can similar preventative experiences be designed for adolescents where they initiate participation and their peer group becomes the support system? Can schools undertake some aspects of this process and still avoid the controversial ethical and social issues involved?

The Family Drama Workshop, is the first phase in the design of such a school curriculum. Combining the values, tools, and issues of therapy with the relationship experiences found in art and literature, it offers students the opportunity to consider their attitudes about families in a supportive, objective atmosphere, which encourages the examination of emotionally charged beliefs, increases personal awareness, and encourages effective communication. Its aim is to provide students with the tools and self-confidence to enhance their enjoyment of continuing relationships. (As no small consolation, it seems to increase participants' appreciation of and interest in the arts as well!)

We designed, implemented, evaluated, and wrote up the workshop with the generous assistance of the Marin Charitable Foundation, to whom we are very grateful.

III. Our Method

Adolescents often feel overwhelmed by the emotional drama of family relationships. They appear to assume the self-righteous, yet impotent role of "judge-victim" and to be closed to the possibility of improvement and change.

Communication is enhanced when people are able to become more aware of the differing modes and levels of communication (verbal and non-verbal) and the differences between these processes and the content of the communication. As they come to understand the ways in which they experience their own feelings and react to the feelings of others, their communication becomes more effective.

The examination and self-examination required to explore these attitudes and improve these skills can only take place in an atmosphere of acceptance and trust.

To create such an atmosphere with high school students, we devised a seminar structure, which would value, respect, and involve each person. Everyone would contribute material and consider the material of others. Our role would be one of leader/participants.

Our goal was to teach specific communicative skills and to avoid the tendency of totally unstructured groups to become gripe or instant therapy sessions. Each session had a structure with several carefully designed exercises or planned activities, which met the following criteria:

- 1) they involved the use of guided imagery, play reading, photographs, pantomime, role playing or real life scenes, etc.;
- 2) everyone could participate as actor or active member of an audience whose response was important;
- 3) they could be discussed on two levels:
 - a) What was happening, emotionally between the people in the exercise;
 - b) How we felt about their interaction;
- 4) they would be fun and involving.

We used material from the creative arts, because of our philosophical belief that art, photography, and literature are relevant and connected to real life experience, and because they offer examples of human interaction not as immediate as the participants' personal anecdotes, and therefore not as threatening. We hoped that if the students could get excited about and learn from other peoples' relationship dynamics, they then could more easily explore their own relationships with curiosity and openness.

IV. The Setting:

The setting for The Family Drama Workshop was a classroom at School-Within-A-School, an alternative program at Sir Francis Drake High School in San Anselmo, California. The ten students involved were all white, middle-class, suburban teen-agers with a varied ability to discuss both academic and personal ideas and issues. Their family situations, which we were not aware of at the start, ranged from ones that were open and comfortable to those that were stressful or nearly non-existent. One student was an unwed mother. They voluntarily enrolled in the class for English credit on the basis of a flyer on The Family Drama Workshop, which we prepared (see appendix).

V. Our Specific Objectives

Objective 1:

To introduce high school students to the complexity and variety of family relationships.

Objective 2:

To answer the following questions for ourselves:

- a) What are differences between teaching about relationships and counseling about relationships.
- b) Can concepts of non-verbal communication and interactional behavior be taught experientially in a classroom setting?
- c) Can material from literature and art be used as a learning device to explore and teach about complex and emotionally-laden family relationships?
- d) Does experiential learning enhance cognitive understanding of human interaction?
- e) Will an understanding of the above lead to a broadened perspective for the students and move them out of the confining role of "rebel" or "victim" in their families?

Objective 3:

To teach the skills of empathy and sensitivity, to verbal and non-verbal communication, and use these skills to diminish adolescents tendency TO BLAME parents, siblings, etc. for their own unhappiness.

CLASS #1 (1½ hours)

Objectives:

1. To introduce ourselves and our approach demonstrating our interest in the students' opinions and reactions.
2. To begin developing a relaxed atmosphere in which students could act out and consider family scenes and feelings.
3. To test our material to see how students would respond.
4. To make a preliminary evaluation of the students' ability to comprehend, articulate, and gain perspective on their feelings about interactions between people.
5. Briefly describe the final project; a collage of family interaction: A non-verbal expression of each students' personal feelings, values or attitudes about their own family's or families in general.

Materials:

Tape recorder, taped reading of a portion of Scene I, Act I, from the play "Ceremonies in Dark Old Men", by Lonne Elder III, questionnaire, paper (see appendix) and pencils.

Procedure:

1. After we each spoke briefly about ourselves and our reasons for teaching the course, and described the course and the final project we played a previously prepared tape of a family scene from Ceremonies in Dark Old Men, saying "See what you think is happening to the members of the Parker family in this scene and how you feel about it."

Procedure: - continued

2. Forced Writing: we gave the students a "forced writing" exercise asking them to write for 3 minutes without stopping describing the scene as best they could.
3. Questionnaire: we asked them to fill out the questionnaire with specific questions about the scene (see appendix).
4. Open discussion on the scene asking such questions as:
 - "What is going on here?"
 - "How does each character feel?"

Assignment:

Begin reading play

Evaluation/Reflection:

1. We found the students eager to express opinions and reactions about relationships.
2. The pre-recorded scene sparked students interest in the play. They were curious about the Parker family and interested to know what happens to them.
3. In the discussion the students showed ability to: identify with characters and be objective about characters. For example, they noticed the expression of multiple emotions in individual characters: feeling resentful and foolish, feeling righteous and lonely, feeling loving and angry.
4. The "forced writing" (see appendix) and the questionnaire (see appendix) demonstrated students' ability to comprehend, articulate, and empathize with characters in the play. This was important information for us, since the level at which the course continued would depend upon these abilities.

Evaluation/Reflection: - continued

5. These two exercises and the discussion provided immediate involvement with the material and stimulated interest in the play and the course as a whole.
6. We were interested to find many students somewhat judgmental about the play's characters: i.e., mad at Mr. Parker, because he was lazy, etc. We hoped by the end of the workshop they might be able to go beyond these superficial characterizations.

CLASS #2 (1½ hours)

Objectives:

1. To encourage students to role play and examine family or group interaction.
2. To illustrate how emotions (especially ambivalent ones) are perceived and experienced.
3. To introduce experientially:
 - a) the concept of non-verbal behavior and its effects
 - b) the concept that communication means each person's behavior influences another person's behavior (R.D. Laing)

Materials:

Five copies of the scene from the play introduced in Class #1 (see appendix).

Procedure:

1. Dramatization: We asked several pairs of students to play out the scene.
2. Discussion. We discussed the scene using questions such as:
 - "What's happening here?"
 - "How does Theo feel?"
 - "How does Adele feel?"
 - "What is your reaction to it all?"
3. Sculpting exercise: (see appendix)
4. Discussion. This time we focused on the non-verbal interaction; how the characters looked (facial expressions, body posture, physical distance, etc.) and were affected by such behavior.

Procedure: - continued

Example: We asked one student "molded" as the character Adele,

"How do you feel?"

Student (Adele): "Nervous."

Us: "Can you say more about your nervousness?"

Student: "Theo is too close to me, I feel scared, weak."

Us: "How come you don't move away?"

Student: "His eyes make me feel like I should stay still ... I want to hit him, but he's too big ... remember, I'm about to slam the door and go upstairs."

Us (to student molded as Theo): "How do you feel?"

Student (Theo): "Angry and frustrated."

Us: "Why?"

Student: "Because I've been out all day lookin' for a job and now I have to listen to this!"

Us: "Do you feel big and strong, the way Adele sees you?"

Student: "No, just mad. She won't even look at me. And, I'm scared of her too."

Us: "So you're mad and you're scared. Anything else?"

Student: "No, I don't think so, but it's weird, because she's my sister!"

Us: "You mean you like her, want to feel close, but are angry at her and scared of her threats."

Student: "Yeah, just like with my sister at home. too ..."

In this way we led them to see the vast complexity of emotions in intimate communication and their non-verbal expression.

Assignment:

Our discussion that day ended up with the concept of manipulation; how one person can make another feel important, guilty, loved, not good enough. We decided to ask them to recall a moment when they manipulated or were manipulated by another person or group and come to the next class able to describe what happened and how they were affected by it.

Evaluation/Reflection:

1. At first the students were embarrassed about being asked to be actors, but they enjoyed and were competent at empathizing with the play's characters and acting out a scene. It is important to encourage them to volunteer to act.

Evaluation/Reflection: - continued

2. The role-playing and sculpting exercises enabled the students to "get into" the scene and its characters and get a look at the multi-layered complexity of their interaction. Most students were interested in and seemed to achieve at least an elementary grasp of the concept of non-verbal communication.

CLASS #3 (1½ hours)

Objectives:

1. To explore in-depth one student's example of manipulation; for its verbal, non-verbal, individual and group/peer pressures, etc.
2. To develop the students' ability to see and hear more of what goes on in interaction, so they can create more complex, and more life-like scenes.

Materials:

Tape and tape recorder -- optional. (In this class the students asked not to be recorded. In another workshop the students enjoyed hearing themselves and seemed to benefit from it.)

Procedure:

1. We asked for students to volunteer their scenes and together quickly decided on one to play out.
2. A scene was chosen. It involved a student drinking beer and playing cards with friends. Then a boy entered who was thought of as being "stingy" and a "moucher". The moucher nags for beer and eventually gets it from the student, who then becomes withdrawn and "moody".
3. The students quickly got into playing out the scene. We encouraged their tendency to exaggerate.
4. Discussion. We asked the group questions like:
 - "How did you feel about this?"
 - "What touched you about it?"
 - "What would you have done?"
 - "How do you think the different people felt?"
 - "Does this remind you of anything that has happened to you and in your family?"

Procedure: - continued

Throughout we encouraged the students to look beyond the surface and ascertain what each character was feeling and thinking by mentally putting themselves in the character's "shoes": i.e., "What did it feel like to you to be the "moucher?" "What did you feel like watching the student deal with the "moucher?" Near the end we directed the discussion toward similar situations in families.

Assignment:

We asked each student to come to the next class meeting with a written paragraph describing an incident of interaction between two members of their own family.

Evaluation/Reflection:

Playing out one of the students' scenes was particularly involving and successful in terms of our objectives. The students were both eager and adept at picking up the details of the interaction, when encouraged to do so!

For example: We asked the student, who played himself, and the student who played the "moucher",:

Us: "What did it feel like?:
Bill: "I was really angry at that guy, and at myself too, for being such a sucker."
Moucher: "Yeah, I knew you were angry, but you didn't say anything, just stared at the floor, and ignored me, so I just kept pushing for the beer. You wouldn't stop me."
Bill: "How did you know that? I felt like killing you."
Moucher: "You never looked at me. Just kept playing cards and looking away."
Bill: "Yeah, I guess I was scared of you too. I felt helpless. You just kept asking for the beer and calling me names. The more I got mad at you, the less I could say. I couldn't even look at you."
Moucher: "Yeah, well, it was funny, but I wanted someone to stop me."

Evaluation/Reflection: - continued

Us: "How did that feel?"
Moucher: "Scarey, I was really pushing Bill and felt like I couldn't stop or backdown."
Bill: "Yeah, me too. I knew you were going to get the beer from me, no matter what."
Us to others: "What was it like for you?"
Another student: "Wierd, like I wanted them to stop, but I was too scared to do anything about it."
Bill: "Yeah, but you didn't say anything or look like it. I thought you were on his side."

It took almost an hour to get to this point of "seeing" that aggressive people could be scared, but we felt pleased with the level of awareness and sophistication they achieved.

CLASS #4 (1½ hours)

Objectives:

1. To return seminar focus to family interaction.
2. To utilize one of their family scenes in further exploring the complexity of interaction.
3. To reintroduce and review the concept that a relationship is interaction between people.
4. To suggest that everyone is responsible and involved in communication, whether it fails or succeeds.
5. To suggest that in difficult family situations people's assumptions about each other may be inaccurate.

Materials:

Student and leader written family scenes (see samples in Appendix).

Procedure:

1. We asked students to volunteer their scenes for dramatization.
2. We played and discussed several scenes.
3. We utilized sculpting technique to explore one scene in depth.
4. Open discussion. Our questions included:
 - "What touched you?"
 - "Who in this scene is like you, why?"
 - "What did you feel as this character or while watching?"
 - "What would you have done?:"
 - "How do you know what you do about each character?"
 - "In particular, how do your eyes help you to know this?"
 - "How do your ears help you?"

Procedure: - continued

Note: We found as we went along that the progress of the seminar was helped by our sharing our feelings and reactions to the scenes along with the students. We were constantly asking and answering questions from our points of view. Our opening ourselves seemed to give the students permission and motivation to do the same. One should be careful, however, to avoid lecturing and moralizing on this sensitive and personal subject matter, or you will lose the trust and openness that is necessary for the seminar to function at all.

Assignment:

We asked the students to watch (and possibly photograph) family interaction to focus on what it looks like. Those who could not photograph were asked to look at magazines and newspapers to find photographs that seemed to tell family stories.

Evaluation/Reflection:

The seminar easily returned to a family focus. Everyone brought in a written scene, which they were eager to act out and explore. As the scenes were picked apart many students were able to see that their assumptions about parent, sister, or brother were often mistaken; that they, like the students, could also feel stuck, frustrated, and uncomfortable. In spite of their propensity to blame and label family members, many students did begin to take note of the complexity of the interaction, of the variety of emotions involved, and ways they were transmitted.

CLASS #5 (1½ hours)

Objectives:

1. To further explore non-verbal communication by looking at photographs and the stories and feelings they inspire, and to prepare the students to work on their projects (collage).

Materials:

Magazines and pictures. We used photograph books such as "Family of Man", "American Heritage", "Family", "Suburbia", etc., and picture magazines such as "Sunset", "Family Living", "McCall's", etc. Your local public library will have a variety of such resources. Personal family photo albums will work as well.

Procedure:

1. Break up into pairs to look at pictures.
2. We asked each pair to pick a picture that meant something to them.
3. Then we asked them to share these pictures with the rest of us, asking the following question:
 - "What story does it tell you?"
 - "Why?"
 - "How?"
 - "How do the people in the picture feel?"
 - "How do you know?"
 - "Does anything trouble you about it?"
 - "Why?"
 - "Are you in the picture?"
 - "What are you saying?"

Procedure - continued

4. Discussion: We asked questions here to elucidate the different stories various students would draw out of the same pictures, and then tried to group and catalogue them. We concluded this portion of the class with open-ended talk about the collages they would make for their projects. Suggested topics were:

- How my family is.
- How I would like it to be.
- A specific moment or interaction, real or imaginary.

Assignment:

Complete projects.

Evaluation/Reflection:

We feel the time spent looking at and discussing the photographs was very valuable. The students enjoyed creating sophisticated and intricate stories from the non-verbal information in each picture and gained practice in sharpening their perceptions of non-verbal behavior; identifying with others and drawing on their own emotions, using their own responses as a foundation for empathy.

We also have reason to believe that the "practice" session added to the high quality of the collages turned in at the next meeting.

CLASS #6 (1½ hours)

Objectives:

1. Re-introduce play, Ceremonies in Dark Old Men, to further explore stressful family interaction, assumptions we make about each other, roles we play, and to see if the students would be less judgemental about the characters.
2. Share projects and reactions to them.
3. Evaluate workshop.

Materials:

1. 10 copies of excerpted scene form play (Act II, Scene I)
2. Students' prepared projects (see samples in Appendix)

Procedures:

1. We read the scene together and discussed the interaction in the same manner as in Class 1.
2. We asked each student to present his/her family collage and then asked for feedback and questions from the group. Questions we asked included:
 - "What do you think the collage is saying?" "Showing?"
 - "How do you know this?"
 - "What does it make you feel?"
 - "What does it remind you of?"
3. We then initiated a discussion of the workshop series asking the students to describe what they liked and disliked in terms of the content and the process. We invited their recommendations and criticisms.
4. We concluded by sharing with them our thoughts and feelings about leading the workshop and working with them.

Evaluation/Reflection:

1. Many, but not all, of the students had finished reading the play. By reading aloud through the excerpted segment we were able to bring the others quickly up to date in order to discuss the play and particularly the Parker family as a whole. The students liked the play and were moved by the characters in it. Their discussion in this meeting showed a measurable improvement over the one at the first meeting in terms of understanding of the intricacies of relationship interaction, the "roles" different family members play, and the rules by which they play them (with everyone else's help). For example, one student was able to note how Adele (the daughter) had become a mother to her father and her brothers, and liked that role even though she blamed it on them all the time. We were also pleased to find the students more able to go beyond judgmental terms such as "lazy" or "awful" in their descriptions of the characters.
2. The student family collages were for the most part creative and original, and reflected much thought and care in preparation. They enjoyed doing them and sharing them with us and their classmates. This non-verbal personal statement from each student on families seemed to be a fitting conclusion to the seminar series.
3. The general concensus in the evaluation discussion was that the students enjoyed the workshop and would be interested in going further with the subject matter. Their comments and criticism are reflected in our conclusion.

VI. Project Evaluation

Our subjective evaluation of the seminar is that questions were raised, minds were opened, and skills were enhanced for many students. We feel all of our specific objectives, described earlier, were met to some degree. We realized that six sessions is insufficient time to develop the necessary trust to explore all issues in depth.

Objective 1:

To introduce these high school students to the complexity and variety of family relationships.

From the questions students raised and their attention and involvement, it was obvious that the students were interested in the subject matter and willing to openly explore their own attitudes and experiences. Many began to acknowledge that interactions, which they previously had taken for granted and perceived as simple and one-sided, were actually complex and open to several interpretations. This took place in our examination of incidents we drew from the play or photographs, as well as from their own personal anecdotes.

Objective 2:

We found answers to our own questions.

- a) What are the differences between teaching about relationships and counseling about relationships.

As counselors, we have a priority to let the client define his/her need and pace. This priority led us to mold our material to fit student needs and interests (for example, see "Assignment" made in Class II), an important approach in this type of Class.

However, being counselors coming into the school to become teachers, we experienced some role confusion with the students. Several meetings into the course we realized that the laissez-faire attitude which each of us uses in our offices (where people come to us looking for help) only brings confusion to a classroom. We needed to be firmer about our requirements.

Therefore, we would recommend that sufficient time be given to openly examining these role issues early in future workshops, particularly those lead by people from outside the school community. More experienced teachers and teachers from within the school may not have the same problem.

b) Can concepts of non-verbal communication and interactional behavior be taught experientially in a classroom setting?

The experiential processes we used and described earlier were fruitful in examining non-verbal communication, a concept difficult to grasp intellectually. We suggest future seminar teachers experiment by introducing photographs and discussing their "stories" earlier than we did. The pictures encourage students to deal only with non-verbal communication, and serve as an excellent introduction.

c) Can material from literature and art be used as a learning device to explore and teach about complex and emotionally-laden family relationships?

Art and literature are useful tools for exploring family relationships, because they offer incidents for examination, which are not so personal, and, therefore, potentially threatening, as the participants' own stories.

Because the artist or writer cannot and often does not fill in the whole story him (or her) self, there is room for the observer/reader to fill in what is left out from their own experience. Therefore, the use of art and literature serves as an opening wedge into areas people may be reluctant to enter on their own.

In addition, we found that by introducing art and literature in this fashion, many students could see it as more relevant to their own lives and were, therefore, more eager to explore it. One caution: workshop leaders should carefully choose their examples according to the interest and ability levels of the workshop participants. In our experience we found a tremendous range in students' abilities to read, comprehend, and abstract from their reading, and had some difficulty finding appropriate literature. A mistake here could become a roadblock.

d) Does experiential learning enhance cognitive understanding of human interaction?

Without the involving, experiential exercises, we are certain the seminar would have failed. Family interaction is too complex a subject matter to be understood by adolescents only through verbal analysis. Because it is drama, it can be taught as drama. In our experience the extent of attention and comprehension was often parallel to the level of involvement.

e) Will an understanding of the above lead to a broadened perspective for the students and move them out of the confining role of "rebel" or "victim" in their families?

This is a complicated objective to evaluate. Students seemed to appreciate a place to "spill out" and receive uninvolved adult and peer support for conflictual situations. Others benefited by looking more closely at an incident they once felt to be overwhelming.

For example: one student, after "sculpting" and discussing an incident where her mother had expressed great rage and anger, began to see "the other side"; she could imagine that her mother might be as scared and threatened as she was, and that maybe, because they had that in common, they might be able to communicate.

By listening to tapes of the first and final seminars we also noticed a measureable decrease in the students' use of judgmental terms to describe individuals involved in interactions (see Appendix). Their significantly lessened use of terms such as "bad", "lazy", "that bastard", etc., indicates a growing ability to gain perspective on such incidents and see the underlying complexities.

Objective 3:

Using the skills of empathy and sensitivity to verbal and non-verbal behavior to diminish adolescent's tendency to blame their families for their unhappiness.

Each seminar required the students to explore and practice their abilities to empathize, be sensitive and express what they felt to others. In particular the role playing in class II, III, & IV provided fruitful experiences in understanding and empathizing instead of blaming. Most students made observable improvement in this area.

A content analysis of the taped recording of the first and last sessions, in which the play and students' own families were discussed, indicated that students were better able to identify with people other than themselves and felt more compassionate and less judgmental towards the characters in the play and their own family members. (see Appendix)

VII. Conclusion

The authors have presented a descriptive and evaluative report on a pilot project designed to test whether high school students will relate to and develop from exploration of family relationship issues and communication skills. The vehicle for examining these issues was photography and literature and the method stressed experiential exercises and discussion.

The students enrolled in each workshop participated actively and demonstrated considerable changes in their attitudes to interactions amongst family members - both fictional and real. They valued having a safe and supportive place in which they could explore and practice personal interaction.

The subjective experience of the workshop leaders suggests that high school students in other areas will be similarly interested in and helped by participation in such seminars. We have presented here what we did and how we feel about it rather than what we think you should do. We urge those who work with adolescents and who are interested in families, to take off from where we have started and let us know about the results.

APPENDIX

1. Flyer
2. Summary of play
3. Sample questionnaire for "forced writing" exercise
4. Explanation of "Sculpting" exercise
5. Sample assignments from Class IV
6. Content analysis of questionnaire
7. Bibliography
8. Collage

OUR FAMILIES, OUR SELVES

A Family Drama Workshop

The object of this course is to involve students in thinking about and experimenting with family and group "systems" in order to improve the communication of their "real" or finest selves in group situations.

HOW CAN YOU LEARN TO BE YOUR "REAL" SELF IN GROUP SITUATIONS?

What is a family "system"?

What pre-conceptions interfere with our communication of our real selves?

- We will look at what is real or phony that the culture (news media, tv, literature, plays, movies) tell us about family life.

How do our emotions increase or decrease our ability to communicate?

- We will use communication exercises to examine and improve our communication.

How can we learn to describe what we experience to others so that they "get" our points of view?

- We will create visual and dramatic presentations, photographs, group paintings, dramatic scenes, audio tapes and collage of our developing perceptions.

This will be a twelve session course taught by Tim Stanton, teacher and photographer and Michael Sheiner, marriage counselor.

SUMMARY OF "CEREMONIES IN DARK OLD MEN" BY LONNE ELDER III

"Ceremonies in Dark Old Men" is a play about family relationships and about racism in America. The plot involves a time of change and crisis in the Parker family. The family consists of Russell Parker, the father, unemployed since the early years of his marriage; Adele Parker, the daughter who supports the family; Theo and Bobby Parker, grown sons, who have unrealistic dreams of success and spend their time guiltily hanging around the apartment. These four adults live together in a slum apartment in Harlem in the present time. At the play's opening, Adele, who dropped out of college several years ago to support the family when Mrs. Parker died, announces that she is giving up her job.

In an effort to make money and to live out their dreams for wealth and power in a white world, Theo, Bobby and Russell become involved with Blue Haven. Blue is a gangster who runs an organization called the Harlem de-Colonization Association which exists to rid Harlem of white influence. The organization is supported by Blue's involvement with number running and illegal whiskey. Theo, Bobby, and Russell manufacture the corn whiskey and money begins to come into the Parker family.

The lives of the family members change and their relationships with each other change. Adele and Russell become involved with tawdry love affairs. Under Blue's influence and encouragement Bobby begins dangerous stealing adventures. Theo becomes the busiest and most responsible member of the family. Adele and Theo fight and judge each other; old resentments come out into the open and a new closeness begins to develop. Theo becomes increasingly concerned about his brother's activities and feels lonely and unsupported in his concern. As Theo

and Adele face their own self delusions they begin to speak openly to Mr. Parker about his unrealistic and parasitic attitude toward life.

A confrontation between Theo and Adele leads Theo to decide to give up his involvement with Blue Haven despite the financial rewards.

At this point they learn that Bobby has been killed by a nightwatchmen while on a robbery. Russell Parker returns home, having been rejected by his girl friend and tries to face his own mistakes. He speaks of his guilt about his wife's death and his dependency on her. He tries to explain his need for fantasy in a racist world. The play ends before he is told of Bobby's death.

1. In the next three minutes describe below what you think is happening in this scene. Try to keep writing for the full three minutes. If you run out of things to say, write "I don't know what to say." Write anything to keep your pencil moving!

2. Which of the three characters is most like you? How is she/he like you?
3. Pretend you are Mr. Parker; what would you do next?
4. Pretend you are Adele; what would you do next?
5. If you were in Mr. Parker's place, what would you do next?
6. If you were in Adele's place, what would you do next?
7. What needs to happen in order for the problems in this scene to be solved?
8. What feelings do you think each character has during this scene?
 - a) Can you make a list for Mr. Parker?
 - b) Adele?
 - c) Theo?

SCULPTING EXERCISE

This is an exercise, which is useful in delineating verbal and non-verbal interaction; that is, how people interact and express themselves by what they say and what they do (from the way they position themselves in a room to their facial expression). It helps participants become more alert to these non-verbal cues and practice the skill of empathizing with or "getting into the shoes of" people with whom they are interacting.

Procedure:

1. Choose one participant to present a scene in which he/she was a participant.
2. Have that person become the sculptor who "molds" the other participants, as if they were modeling clay, into each character involved, in the scene or incident. The sculptor should mold them completely; how they look -- posture, expression, etc., how they are positioned -- in relation to others, in relation to physical structures, if any, etc. He should also explain to each character what it is he is doing and/or saying at the specific moment.

The sculptor should end up with a "stop action" re-creation of a specific incident in the scene.

3. Hold the stop action, silently, for at least 30 seconds or one minute.
4. Discuss: What is happening here?
How did it feel to be each character?
What did one character feel about the others, etc.?
What does the positioning say?
What do the expressions say?

SCULPTING EXERCISE - continued

4. Discuss: What is the relationship between all this non-verbal information and the verbal messages in the scene?
5. Those leading the discussion should look for opportunities to point out the differences between verbal and non-verbal messages, and the differences between what the sculptor said a specific person was doing/feeling and how the person "molded" felt as that person. They are often different, and that difference is often very surprisingly eye-opening to the "sculptor" who presented the scene.

SAMPLES OF ASSIGNMENTS FOR CLASS IV

Each scene includes some interaction between a parent and child. The student who role-played the parent inevitably was surprised to find out how uncomfortable it felt to be a parent. The realization that adults feel unsure, worried, isolated or frustrated led to empathic discussions about family conflicts.

Sample 1

(Between three people)

Son: "Mom, why don't you spank Jeff for what he does, he gets away with everything. He calls you the "F" word and if I ever did that you'd kill me."
Mother: "Well, he's younger than you are."
Son: "So what!! That's all the more reason to spank him - look here he comes now."
Mother: "Oooh Jeff ..."
Son: (mocking manner) "Look, oooh here he comes. Little shit, you think you're hot shit."
2nd. Son: "Shut up asshole!"
Son: "No! (hits him) Look Mom, why don't you spank your little son??! Huh? Your precious little son?"
Mom: (No reply, just stands there, then just says) "Jeff, stop!"
Son: (Jeff goes in kitchen, Ed plays with his yo-yo. Jeff comes back in) "Hey!! Stop playing with my yo-yo."
2nd. Son: "No, I can play with it too."
(Jeff spits at him, he throws his yo-yo against the wall)
Son: "Fuck you , asshole- you almost broke it!" (He takes it and walks out saying) "Cha-cha-cha" (shuts door)
2nd. Son: "Why don't you spank him, when he grows up he's going to be really bad. Do you know that! Huh? Tell me."
Mom: "Well, we all just have to work together to help him."
Son: "Oooh, with me you were real strict but with him it's different, why? Oh yea, it was different then, your grandmother raised you. That's why she was strict, well then, why don't you be strict? Well??"
Mom: "I am." (she just walks out)

SAMPLES OF ASSIGNMENTS FOR CLASS IV - continued

Sample 2

"There's a conversation between mother, father and the two daughters going on at the dinner table. It always seems to happen at the dinner table. The youngest daughter has just gotten grounded for being home late and she's asking why. The older daughter, who is 18 didn't get grounded, she was just as late as the other one. The father says because she's 18, good reason, but the younger one thinks it's unfair, of course, very typical. Then they started talking about being 18 - make up what you please."

CONTENT ANALYSIS

	1st. Session	2nd. Session
A) Comments - Judgmental	15	5
B) Comments - Indicating they <u>could not</u> see similarities between themselves and others.	3	1
C) Comments - Indicating they could see similarities between themselves and others.	3	9
D) Comments - Indicating identification with feelings of others.	5	9

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bell, Norman & Vogels, Ezra, A Modern Introduction to the Family, New York, Collier-MacMillan 1968. Part IV.
- Laing, R.D., The Politics of the Family & Other Essays, New York, Pantheon Books, 1971
- Kohlberg, L. & Gilligan C. "The Adolescent as Philosopher: The Discovery of Self in a Postconventional World", Daedalus, Fall 1971
- Otto, Herbert, The Family in Search of a Future, Appleton Century Crafts, New York, 1970
- Rogers, C.R. & Dynard, R. (Ed.), Psychotherapy & Personality, Chicago Univ. Press, 1954. "In Defense of Values Clarification", Kirschenbaum, Harmin, et al.
- Skolvick, Arlene S. & Skolvick Jarome, Family in Transition: Rethinking Marriage, Sexuality, Child Rearing & Family Organization, Boston, Little, Brown & Co., 1971