

## **An Analysis of the Annual Meetings of the American Society of Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama, 1969–1983**

**Thomas W. Treadwell  
Philip Lambert  
V. Krishna Kumar**

---

---

**With the major focus on psychodrama in the eight annual meetings selected for analysis, a wide variety of kindred modalities also served to enhance the program offerings. More training was offered in the fundamentals of psychodrama than in sociometry or in specific skills and their applications. The authors present several recommendations for making the annual meetings more valuable to members.**

---

---

In 1942, J. L. Moreno founded "An American Society for Psychodrama and Group Therapy," later incorporated as a membership society in the state of New York under the name "The American Society of Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama." The objectives drawn up were as follows: "(a) to further the study of subjects pertaining to the nature and treatment of emotional disorders by Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama; (b) to further the interest and advance the standards for all hospitals, clinics and other agencies utilizing these methods; (c) to further education and research and principles of Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama in medicine," (Constitution, 1952, pp. 331–332).

As one means of furthering these objectives the Society held its first annual meeting in 1943 and by 1983 a total of 41 meetings had been held.

The question of interest to the present study was: What has been the nature of programming offered by the ASGPP over the last decade or so? It was hoped that an analysis of the program entries could help in locating trends in programming and thereby aid in the planning of future meetings. The present study was stimulated by the work of Lee, Trimble, Cvetkovich, and Lonner (1981) who reviewed the annual meeting programs of the American Psychological Association (APA) for the years 1960, 1970, and 1980 for their ethnic minority and cultural content; they examined the progress that APA had made in covering minority issues in their annual meetings. A similar analysis was undertaken by Kumar and Goh (1981) for the annual meetings of the American Educational Research Association (AERA).

### Method

For the purposes of the study, it was decided to include for analysis the annual meeting programs from every other year beginning in 1969, and continuing through 1983.

The first step was to study the programs for these years to determine possible areas for analysis. The initial review suggested six such areas:

1. the location, duration and themes of the annual meetings;
2. the types of session formats;
3. the types of therapeutic modalities;
4. the various applications of psychodrama;
5. the types of psychodramatic techniques; and
6. the types of training.

In the second step, categories were identified within each area and their frequencies were tabulated.

### Observations and Comments

*Location, Duration, and Themes.* It was noted that all the eight annual meetings over the last 14 years were held in New York City. Earlier ASGPP meetings were held in cities other than New York (1953: Los Angeles; 1954: St. Louis; and 1956: Chicago.) Major professional organizations such as the APA and the AERA hold their meetings in several major locations in the country. Locating the annual gathering in the same city year after year is likely to limit the scope not only of the meetings but also of the society in two main ways:

- the midwestern and western members must incur considerably more travel expense than do the eastern members; and
- the meetings may not be attracting potential presenters and new members from other parts of the country.

Given the wide range of programs offered, the four-day schedule appears to be optimal for the meetings. Another consideration in deciding on the length of the meetings may be the location. With ASGPP headquartered in New York City, a four-day schedule may be easily manageable. In other cities, a three-day schedule might keep costs down while still achieving the desired objectives.

Explicit themes were stated for three meetings:

- 1969: Revolution in Group Psychotherapy  
What's New in Group Therapy and Psychodrama?
- 1973: The Group as an Agent of Change
- 1983: Psychodrama and Action Methods of the 1980s

While themes are probably useful in attracting potential participants to the meetings, in the programs analyzed subjects tended to be similar from year to year and announced themes did not seem to correlate with program content.

*Session Formats.* While popular appeal of most formats waxed and waned, in all years the modal session format was the workshop. However, the heavy emphasis on workshop sessions may limit the educational value of the conventions considered as a whole. Without papers and research symposia, there is little opportunity to learn from scholars engaged in research, who, in turn, benefit by discussing their work with others.

*Therapeutic Modalities.* Program entries were classified in nine broad categories of therapeutic modalities. Those in a tenth group—uncategorized—were unclear as to modality orientation. Clearly, psychodrama and its varied forms (special dramas, combinations with other modalities) form the major focus of the ASGPP annual meetings, a legacy from J. L. Moreno. In a departure from the objectives of the Society, there appears to be a decline in the frequency of group experiential approaches in the 1981 and 1983 programs compared with those for the 1973 to 1979 meetings.

Further, there has been relatively less interest shown in sociodrama, sociometry, family therapy, creative arts, and gestalt therapy. The lack of emphasis on sociometry in the annual meetings strengthens the findings of Treadwell and Kumar (1982) that various training curricula in the country show little interest in sociometry compared with psychodrama.

It is impressive that psychodrama has been used so flexibly with other modalities (e.g., gestalt, psychoanalysis). This trend recalls J. L. Moreno's editorial remarks (1948) about the directions of development in psychodrama:

Table 1—Analysis of Session Formats

| Session Format               | Annual Meeting |                |                |                 |                |      |                 | Total          |      |
|------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|------|-----------------|----------------|------|
|                              | 1969           | 1971           | 1973           | 1975            | 1976           | 1979 | 1981            |                | 1983 |
| Demonstration                | 28*            | 6              | 11             | 40              | 24             | 6    | 0               | 1              | 116  |
| Workshop                     | —              | 28             | 51             | 96              | 151            | 95   | 94              | 102            | 617  |
| Paper                        | 11             | 0              | 2              | 9               | 8              | 2    | 0               | 0              | 32   |
| Panel                        | 6              | 2              | 6              | 12              | 15             | 1    | 1               | 1              | 44   |
| Video/Film/Slide             | 2              | 0              | 9              | 12              | 8              | 2    | 2               | 1              | 36   |
| Research Symposium           | 0              | 0              | 1              | 1               | 1              | 1    | 0               | 0              | 4    |
| Conversation Hour            | 0              | 0              | 0              | 0               | 0              | 0    | 14              | 8              | 22   |
| Permanent Theatre of P-drama | 0              | 2              | 2              | 2               | 2              | 4    | 3               | 3              | 18   |
| Training Institutes          | 8              | 4              | 7              | 14              | 21             | 43   | 26              | 17             | 140  |
| Training Modules**           | —              | —              | —              | —               | —              | —    | —               | 3              | 3    |
| Invited Address              | 1              | 1              | 1              | 1               | 1              | —    | 1               | 1              | 7    |
|                              | (Eric Bentley) | (Z. T. Moreno) | (James Enneis) | (Hannah Weiner) | (Gretel Leutz) |      | (Robert Lifton) | (Louis Ormont) |      |
| Total                        | 56             | 43             | 90             | 187             | 231            | 154  | 141             | 137            | 1039 |

\* In 1969, the distinction between workshops and demonstration was not made clear; hence the category demonstrations includes workshops.

\*\* The module was not introduced until 1982.

Table 2—Analysis of Program Entries by Modalities

| Modality   | Program Year |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |  |  | Total |
|--|--------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|--|--|-------|
|  | '69          | '71 | '73 | '75 | '76 | '79 | '81 | '83 |  |  |       |
| 1. Psychodrama   | 20           | 11  | 22  | 60  | 65  | 44  | 48  | 52  |  |  | 322   |
| 2. Psychodrama combined with:<br>Bioenergetics, traditional literature, assertiveness training,<br>video tape, meditation, Jung, neural linguistic programming,<br>healing arts, psychoanalysis, yoga, sociometry, creative<br>arts, egopsychology, Adlerian, family therapy, primal<br>therapy, sensitivity training, gestalt, psycho-opera | 3            | 3   | 9   | 12  | 18  | 7   | 9   | 11  |  |  | 72    |
| 3. Sociodrama  | 0            | 0   | 4   | 4   | 4   | 2   | 3   | 5   |  |  | 22    |
| 4. Sociometry  | 2            | 3   | 2   | 4   | 6   | 2   | 2   | 5   |  |  | 26    |
| 5. Special dramas: Felden Kreis, ethnodrama, bibliodrama,<br>religiodrama, hypnodrama, philodrama, technodrama, logo-<br>drama, Playback Theatre, problem-solving theater, im-<br>provisational theater  | 2            | 2   | 1   | 6   | 6   | 1   | 5   | 6   |  |  | 29    |
| 6. Group experiential approaches: transactional analysis,<br>humanistic encounter, multimodal, biofeedback,<br>horticultural, pets, active therapy, Jungian,<br>juggling, reality, healing video therapy,<br>bioenergetics, eclectic existential, Sensitivity Training   | 14           | 10  | 26  | 40  | 71  | 24  | 9   | 8   |  |  | 202   |
| 7. Family therapy  | 1            | 0   | 1   | 4   | 2   | 3   | 4   | 5   |  |  | 20    |
| 8. Creative arts: music, poetry,<br>movement, dance, art   | 1            | 3   | 6   | 11  | 11  | 11  | 6   | 6   |  |  | 55    |
| 9. Gestalt therapy   | 0            | 0   | 1   | 10  | 11  | 9   | 6   | 3   |  |  | 40    |
| 10. Uncategorized  | 4            | 6   | 9   | 21  | 15  | 8   | 8   | 7   |  |  | 78    |

It was behaviorism, then psychoanalysis, later gestaltism, and now it is what I have called *actism* or *actionism* (action methods, action techniques, action tests and action research), with psycho- and sociodrama as its most significant exponents. But every step is pretty much contained in the alter step; behaviorism, psychoanalysis and gestaltism are enveloped and progressed in actionism; it is a synthesis, not a departure; the dog of Pawlow's [sic] experiment (in behaviorism) and the patient on the couch (in psychoanalysis) reappear in the moving and gesticulating actor-creator of psychodrama; they are still there, not yet separated from the primordial act. But something new is added, the experimental dog and the patient on the couch have become the *actor in situ*. (Editorial page)

Prior to 1976 the program brochures announced only the title of the sessions. Beginning in 1976 the brochures included with the session titles a brief description of what to expect from the sessions. However, these descriptions, more often than not, did not clearly specify the types of modality that were to be employed by the presenters.

*Applications of Psychodrama.* The variety of populations to which psychodrama has been applied is striking. While relatively few of these can be addressed at any one conference, the breadth of this span is consonant with the vision of J. L. Moreno, who "saw the goal of psychodrama as the treatment of all people" (Rudestam, 1982, p. 131).

*Psychodramatic Techniques.* Claims about the number of existing psychodramatic techniques vary between 200 and 300 (Haskell, 1975; Z. T. Moreno, 1975). To the authors' knowledge there is no single catalogue that lists all the possible techniques. Further, there are no data as to which techniques are most widely used.

Considering the results in Tables 2 and 4 together, it appears that the presentations have tended to be on psychodrama as a whole rather than on applications of individual techniques. Perhaps there was much spontaneity (as there should be) in the use of various techniques during the course of an ongoing psychodrama.

*Training.* All the annual meetings offered training sessions in psychodrama and related group therapies with a clear emphasis on the former. The training institutes in psychodrama tended to be at the fundamental level or were not clearly described in terms of their content or the level of prior training needed for enrollment. However, modules, when introduced in 1982 and offered as half-day training sessions for three consecutive days, were specific in terms of the number of hours of



**Table 4—Psychodramatic Techniques Mentioned in Program Entries**

| Techniques  | Frequency<br>(Total over eight years) |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| Auxiliary ego   | 5                                     |
| Crib scene  | 1                                     |
| Cultural atom   | 2                                     |
| Double: (For empathy, directors double,<br>director as double, individual<br>as double, groups as double)                             | 8                                     |
| Directing techniques: (role, style, attitude,<br>co-directing)  | 10                                    |
| Empty chair (multiple)  | 2                                     |
| Use of fairy tales  | 1                                     |
| Future projection   | 2                                     |
| Multiple protagonists   | 1                                     |
| Mirroring   | 2                                     |
| Movement technique  | 1                                     |
| Psychodramatette  | 1                                     |
| Role reversal   | 1                                     |
| Role training   | 1                                     |
| Role testing  | 1                                     |
| Shut up/letter technique  | 1                                     |
| Sociometry (action sociogram, social atom)  | 8                                     |
| Spontaneity testing   | 4                                     |
| Surplus reality   | 2                                     |
| Traditional literature  | 1                                     |
| Tele training   | 1                                     |
| Warm-up techniques: (central concern, circle,<br>fantasies and games, chil-<br>dren's for adults, psycho-<br>opera, Adlerian general) | 21                                    |
| Dream production  | 2                                     |
| Yoga  | 1                                     |



prior training needed for registration in the module. Training in sociometry, individual psychodramatic techniques, and their application to varied populations has been weak.

### Recommendations

The authors offer the following recommendations, based on their analysis of selected annual meetings:

- That consideration be given to holding annual meetings in locations other than New York City;
- That more detailed data regarding attendance be gathered to determine the optimal length of meetings;
- That overall themes be employed, worded carefully, and reflective of program content;
- That paper sessions and research symposia sessions be reinstated and invited addresses be continued, to help promote needed research in psychodrama and sociometry;
- That the various types of session formats be defined in both the Call for Papers and in the program brochure;
- That the various modalities be included in the Call for Papers, to encourage potential participants from allied fields to propose workshops and papers, and to enable those attending to select their sessions more intelligently;
- That the progress made in combining psychodrama with a variety of modalities be presented in papers on theory and research;
- That the Society continue to promote the applications of psychodrama to diversified populations and problems;
- That more presentors be encouraged to devote whole sessions to demonstration of individual psychodramatic techniques;
- That the descriptions of the training institutes be more specific with regard to content, level addressed, and hours of prior training as prerequisites;
- That training institutes be extended to include research symposia, invited addresses, paper sessions, and conversation hours with invited experts;
- That guidelines be offered to the program committee encouraging them to apportion greater program space to modalities other than psychodrama, thus creating a more balanced program.

It is the hope of the authors that these observations regarding past annual meetings will stimulate among the members many expressions of their preferences—both from those who frequently attend and from

those who find nothing sufficiently compelling in the programs to persuade them to attend.

#### REFERENCES

- Constitution and By-Laws of the American Society of Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama: As amended at the 10th Annual Meeting, 1952. (1952) *Group Psychotherapy*, 4(4), pp. 331-334.
- Haskell, M. R. (1975). *Socioanalysis: Self-direction via sociometry and psychodrama*. Long Beach, California: Role Training Associates of California.
- Kumar, V. K., & Goh, D. S. (1981). Ethnic minority content in the American Educational Research Association annual meeting programs of 1975, 1978 and 1981. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Los Angeles, 1981.
- Lee, J. D., Trimble, J., Cvetkovich, G., & Lonner, W. (1981). Exploring ethnic/cultural content of APA convention. *APA Monitor*, February, pp. 3, 16.
- Moreno, J. L. (1948). Editorial. *Sociatry*, 2(1,2).
- Moreno, Z. T. (1975). A survey of psychodramatic techniques. *Psychodrama and Group Psychotherapy Monographs* (No. 44). Beacon, New York: Beacon House.
- Rudestam, K. E. (1982). *Experiential groups*. Monterey, California: Brooks/Cole.
- Treadwell, T. W., & Kumar, V. K. (1982). Psychodrama and sociometry training: A survey of curriculums. *Journal of Group Psychotherapy, Psychodrama and Sociometry*, 35, 31-38.

---



---

Thomas W. Treadwell is an associate professor of psychology at West Chester University. Philip Lambert is a Bassett Research Professor of educational psychology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. V. Krishna Kumar is assistant chairman and associate professor of psychology at West Chester University.

---



---

Date of acceptance: May 4, 1984

Addresses:

Thomas W. Treadwell  
V. Krishna Kumar  
Department of Psychology  
West Chester University  
West Chester, PA 19383

Philip Lambert  
Department of Educational Psychology  
University of Wisconsin-Madison  
1025 West Johnson Street  
Madison, WI 53706