

Spring 2007

Special Conference Issue

# ISTP Newsletter

*The Newsletter of the International Society for Theoretical Psychology*

## **2007 ISTP Conference Highlights:**

- "Theoretical Psychology Beyond Borders"
- Keynote Addresses
- York University
- Exploring Toronto & the ISTP Excursion

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## **ISTP Biennial Conference**

### **"Theoretical Psychology Beyond Borders: Transdisciplinarity and Internationalization"**

**York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada**

**18-22 June 2007**

The upcoming ISTP biennial conference, hosted by York University's History & Theory of Psychology Program, continues ISTP's tradition of creating opportunities for collaboration beyond national and academic borders among scholars investigating emerging themes in theoretical psychology. It will be the largest ISTP conference thus far, with over 300 presentations and submissions from 35 countries.

The focus for this year's conference is the importance of international and transdiscipline approaches within psychology. The need to emphasize the international context of psychology is now a significant topic, as the limits of Western psychology become more apparent and other cultures increasingly contribute to the international understanding of psychological phenomena. The ISTP conference is an exceptional opportunity for moving beyond mere exporting of Western psychology to systematically including psychological conceptualizations and organizations that exist outside the Western context. Keynote addresses, symposia, and discussions during the conference will focus on the conceptual and practical possibilities and limitations of the internationalization of theoretical psychology.

Transdisciplinarity represents another important aspect of the current transformation of psychology. Ideally, transdisciplinary research overcomes any link to a particular discipline and instead draws upon several disciplines in order to address a specific issue or problem. Transdisciplinarity also extends beyond the academy and resonates with ISTP's commitment to bringing together alternative and sometimes opposing accounts of mental life such that indigenous knowledges are as impactful as academic ideas for understanding psychological phenomena. For academic reasons—including education, expertise, and institutional affiliation—transdisciplinarity is not easily accomplished. One of the goals of the conference is to address obstacles to transdisciplinarity from a meta-theoretical perspective.

The keynote addresses listed on the next page approach in varying ways the significance of transdisciplinarity and internationalization for theoretical psychology.

There is still time to register for the conference at the conference website (<http://www.yorku.ca/istp2007/>) where the conference program is also available.

## Keynote Addresses

**Rob Wilson**, Professor of Philosophy, University of Alberta

### ***The Extended Mind***

Philosophers of mind and cognitive scientists have recently entertained the extended mind hypothesis, the idea that the mind and cognition extend beyond the boundary of the body. This talk will provide an overview of this hypothesis and some of the considerations that have arisen in debating its truth with an emphasis on addressing the question of why this debate matters to psychologists and cognitive scientists themselves. The short answer to this question is that the debate both reflects deep-seated views of what cognition is and what constitutes an appropriate way to study it, and points the way to new opportunities for transdisciplinary work on the nature of cognition. **Monday, June 18, 10-10:55 am**

**Kurt Danziger**, Professor Emeritus, History and Theory of Psychology Program, York University

### ***The Holy Grail of Universality***

Although the sites of psychological research and practice have always been internationally diverse, the knowledge claims of the discipline have always been universalistic. In an earlier period this divergence was often rationalized in terms of differences among “schools” and more recently in terms of “indigenization”. In the long run, the imposition of methodological uniformity led to a questionable kind of universality. However, the global dissemination of psychological knowledge does affect the objects of that knowledge in certain uniform directions. **Tuesday, June 19, 10-10:55 am**

**Isaac Prilleltensky**, Dean of the School of Education, University of Miami

### ***Happy But Dead: Well-Being Beyond Borders—***

### ***Interdisciplinary and International Interrogations and Interventions***

This exploration of the concept of well-being starts in psychology, but makes its way through several disciplines and continents in an effort to achieve a comprehensive notion of personal, interpersonal, organizational, and community health and development. The presenter elaborates the risks and paradoxes involved in parochial and ultra psychological definitions of well-being, such as being happy but dead. Drawing from public health, economics, sociology, political science, community development and moral philosophy, the author strives to elaborate a non-individualistic conception of well-being. Gathering evidence from multiple countries and continents, the author offers an international view of what well-being means in different parts of the world. In addition to interdisciplinary and international interrogations, Prilleltensky also shares interventions that have proven efficacious in advancing the well-being of marginalized populations. **Thursday, June 21, 10-10:55 am**

**Jeanne Marecek**, Professor of Psychology, Swarthmore College

### ***Suicide in Paradise: A Trans-disciplinary and Transnational Account of Self-harm in Sri Lanka***

Each year, roughly one million people die by suicide, most of them in the developing world. In many aspects—who, how, why, where, by what means—, suicide in global context differs dramatically from the portrayal of suicide in our psychology and psychiatry textbooks. Ethnographic analyses of suicide challenge psychologists to look beyond universal claims about suicide, to reject the emphasis on psychopathology, and to theorize the porous borders between “first” and “third” worlds. This presentation takes Sri Lanka—an island nation off the southeast coast of India—as a case example. Beginning in the 1970s, Sri Lanka was gripped by a spiral of suicide and deliberate self-harm. By the mid-1990s, suicide deaths had increased by 700 percent; Sri Lanka recorded the highest suicide rate in the world. To understand this, I first examine first-person accounts of survivors and their families. I describe the dynamic interplay between local norms pertaining to family relations, gendered morality, responses to conflict, and display of emotions, and new possibilities arising from the global flows of workers, technology, and capital. In the latter part of the presentation, I shift the focus from rural ethnography to discourses about suicide that circulate among the urbanized elite and medical professionals. These discourses typically are steeped in “psy” talk borrowed from the West. They invoke imagined cognitive and emotional insufficiencies of suicidal individuals, reviving colonial discourses about backward and childish rural masses. Such accounts not only reaffirm the superiority of the speakers, they also deflect attention from the connection between self-harm and the explosive cultural politics arising from modernization and globalization. **Friday, June 22, 10-10:55 am**

## York University

York University is the perfect venue for this year's ISTP meeting, given the conference's focus on transdisciplinary research. Based on a foundation of interdisciplinary thinking, students and faculty at York are encouraged to bring together different fields to examine real-world issues. The result is a comprehensive learning and exploratory experience, enabling visionary research and teaching on issues of local, national, and international significance. Founded in 1959, York University is Canada's third largest university and is world-renowned for attracting students interested in interdisciplinary approaches to learning. York offers full and part-time graduate and undergraduate degree programs to nearly 50,000 students.

York University includes four campuses, although conference activities and housing are limited to Keele campus, the main university grounds. A comprehensive, printer-friendly map of Keele campus is available at <http://www.yorku.ca/yorkweb/maps/KeeleCampusMap2006.pdf>, while an interactive map can be found at <http://www.yorku.ca/web/futurestudents/map/webmap.html>.

A quick visit to the interactive map can orient you to the conference venues. Centrally located Pond Road Residence (#35), is one of the accommodation options offered to conference attendees, while Vanier Residence (#55), the other accommodation option, is in the northern part of campus near the Toronto Track and Field Center (#7). Accolade West (#93), where the conference activities will take place, opened in 2005/2006 and provides state-of-the-art teaching, exhibition, and performance facilities at the heart of the Keele campus. The building houses 'smart' classrooms featuring cutting-edge technology for your presentation needs. On-campus shopping is available at York Lanes Retail Centre (#24), located near both Accolade West and Vanier Residence.

If you are commuting to the conference from off-campus, visit the York University public transit website at <http://www.yorku.ca/trnsprt/publictransit.htm>.

It includes information about the complimentary shuttle (<http://www.yorku.ca/trnsprt/shuttle.htm>) provided between York University and the GO transit train service—the most direct way to reach central Toronto (besides driving a car).

If you need assistance while at York, important campus phone numbers are provided at <http://www.yorku.ca/security/impphonenum.htm>.

Our host for the ISTP 2007 conference organization at York University is the History & Theory of Psychology Program of the Department of Psychology. Many thanks to Thomas Teo, Laura Ball, Jason Goertzen, Kate Harper, and Alexandra Rutherford for planning this year's conference!



Accolade West



York Lanes Retail Centre

## Exploring Toronto

Welcome to Toronto, capital of Ontario and Canada's largest city, a multicultural mosaic bound together by English-Canadian mores. It is the ideal venue for our equally multicultural conference. Toronto is a bustling metropolis where you can tour Ontario's world-class Royal Museum (<http://www.rom.on.ca/>) and Art Gallery (<http://www.ago.net/>), explore aboriginal culture at the Native Canadian Centre (<http://www.ncct.on.ca/>) and the Dominion Gallery of Inuit Art, or grab a bite of global fare at the numerous Italian, Greek, Asian, and fusion restaurants. And, of course, the simple pleasure of walking around historic Distillery District (<http://www.thedistillerydistrict.com/>), modern Harbourfront Centre, or any ethnic neighborhood in the city is fascinating and always free. In addition to these classic experiences, Toronto is a site of innovation offering unique adventures for even the seasoned traveler:



*Explore music  
through nature at  
Toronto's Music  
Garden.*

- Ever imagined music in garden form? The Toronto Music Garden ([http://www.toronto.ca/parks/music\\_index.htm](http://www.toronto.ca/parks/music_index.htm)) designed in collaboration with cellist Yo-Yo Ma, expresses Bach's *Suite No 1 for Unaccompanied Cello* through conifers, wildflowers, and meadows. You can also attend a free concert at the grass amphitheatre.
- Want a trip back in time? At Toronto's First Post Office (<http://www.townofyork.com/index.html>) you can do so. After writing your letter with a quill pen, era-costumed staff will seal it with wax and even send it postmarked "York-Toronto 1833".
- Are shoes a museum item? Enter shoebox-shaped Bata Shoe Museum (<http://www.batashoemuseum.ca/>) by famed architect Raymond Moriyama and answer a definite "yes". The impressive 10,000-item collection covers every corner of the globe and 4 million years of history.
- Ever attended a lecture while watching a movie? At Cineforum (<http://thecineforum.tripod.com/index.htm>) idiosyncratic Reg Hartt showcases classic and avant-garde films in his Victorian house, sometimes while lecturing about them.

## Wine Country and Niagara Falls

Apart from exploring Toronto, you may take the lovely excursion prepared by our conference organizers. Leaving at 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday, June 20, from the conference venue, you will explore two highlights of Toronto's surroundings: the charming Niagara Wine Country and Falls. Cruise to the base of the Falls on the "Maid of the Mist" steamboat, then enjoy a scenic drive along the Niagara Parkway to the world-renowned Chateau des Charmes Winery for a tour and private wine tasting at this award-winning vineyard. From there, the tour continues to historic Queenston Heights, site of one of the battles of the War of 1812 between Canada and the United States. On the veranda of the Queenston Heights Restaurant, located at the Niagara Escarpment, a world biosphere reserve, feast on a truly Canadian bar-b-que while enjoying magnificent views of the Niagara River, the United States, and wine country far below.



*Book a trip to the  
Niagara wine country  
and Niagara Falls with  
your conference  
registration.*

To book the excursion, go to  
<https://obsidian.atkinson.yorku.ca/istpc/registrationform.aspx>.



## President's Letter: Rachel Joffe Falmagne

Dear Colleagues,

It is my great pleasure to inaugurate this first issue of the new ISTP Newsletter, and on behalf of all of us, express my gratitude to Laura Kerr (Editor) and Piotr Trzesniak and Ioannis Lambrou (Associate Editors), who have generously accepted to take on the important task of providing this concrete channel of communication across time and space for our ISTP scholarly community. We are fortunate to have a fine intercontinental editorial team (USA, Brazil, Greece) to lead us in this process.

As an international scholarly Society, we face practical challenges and enjoy tremendous intellectual opportunities. On a practical level, our membership is geographically dispersed. Continuity of communication takes some effort, and such continuity is vital for the cohesive functioning of the organization. This newsletter is, therefore, a crucial forum for ongoing exchanges of information, exchanges of views on matters of common concern, and scholarly dialogue. It will not only foster continuity of contact through the time intervals between our bi-annual conferences, but also, and perhaps even more importantly, secure a forum of communication with colleagues who may be unable to attend those conferences for economic or other reasons.

On an intellectual level, I see the international scope of our membership as an invaluable asset for supporting the development of new discursive configurations, new approaches to knowledge, new methodologies, and new research questions through the reciprocal engagement of diverse intellectual traditions. Knowledge production is a social process. Theories and scholarship produced in particular historical and social locations are grounded in the discourses of knowledge, the processes of social and cultural constitution, and the experiences that inform those locations, and they represent, as philosopher Sandra Harding has coined, 'local knowledge systems' (where "knowledge" can be understood either in post-positivist or in social constructionist terms). Of necessity, these 'local' understandings are partial and contingent. The productive and critical engagement between theoretical works across intellectual and cultural traditions offers rich resources for enhancing the development of theory beyond cultural and social boundaries and for leading the field in new directions. The vitality of ISTP bi-annual meetings and the quality of formal and informal exchanges they include is illustrative. Geographical and economic constraints, however, place limitations on the scope of those engagements because of the difficulty of ensuring as broadly global a representation among conference participants as is desired. Although nothing can fully replace face-to-face embodied interactions, it is my hope that this newsletter can help transcend those limitations and serve as a meeting ground unimpeded by spatial contingencies.

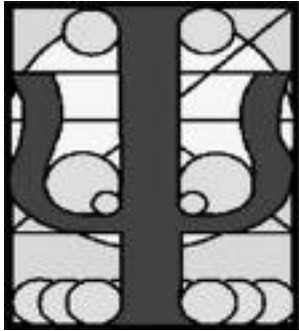
With best wishes,  
*Rachel Joffe Falmagne*

## *Theory & Psychology* Special Issue

The April 2007 Special Issue of *Theory & Psychology*, "Critical Engagement With Mainstream Psychology," is now available. In this issue, the editors—ISTP members Lisa Osbeck and Michael Tissaw—argue the relationship between theoretical psychology and the psychological community at large requires continual and regular reappraisal. The papers in this special issue amply demonstrate their point. Addressing mainstream psychology as well as taking critics to task, "Critical Engagement With Mainstream Psychology" expertly covers a number of important subdisciplines, including personality psychology, neuroscience, cognitive science, social psychology, and developmental psychology. Contributors include James Good, James Lamiell, Kareen Malone, and Dan Robinson.



## ***Theory & Psychology's New Web-Based Submission System***



On January 1, 2007, *Theory & Psychology* began a web-based manuscript submission system. Based on a platform produced by *ScholarOne*, the new system manages the entire manuscript process from submission to publication. It is now much easier for authors to submit articles and revisions while monitoring their manuscripts' status in the review process. The new system also facilitates reviewers' access to submitted articles and allows them to submit their comments electronically to the editors. We expect the new system will make the editorial process more transparent and the entire review process timelier.

All other aspects of the journal's production remain unchanged, including simultaneous papers and electronic publication. Book reviews are still managed via email by the Book Review Editors.

To submit a manuscript, visit <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/thpsyc>.

## **Editors' Notes**

Welcome to the latest generation of the ISTP Newsletter! We are still getting our bearings, and are likely to modify formats and layout as we develop as an editorial team. Our main goal is to serve the members of ISTP. While this issue of the newsletter is primarily devoted to our upcoming conference, future issues will address a variety of topics relating to ISTP and theoretical psychology, including news & trends in theoretical psychology, calls for papers, and conference announcements. The ISTP Newsletter will also serve as a forum for member discussions as well as the executive members of ISTP. Plan for this latest version of the newsletter to be produced in the fall and spring, when it will be sent electronically as well as posted on the ISTP website at <http://www.psych.ucalgary.ca/istp/>.

We would greatly appreciate feedback on what you would find most beneficial in a biannual newsletter from ISTP. Please email the editor at [laurakkerr@gmail.com](mailto:laurakkerr@gmail.com) with your suggestions about how to best serve the membership of ISTP.

*Laura Kerr*, Editor

*Ioannis Lambrou* and *Piotr Trzesniak*, Associate Editors

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*Suggestions for future newsletters?*

*Contact the editor at  
[laurakkerr@gmail.com](mailto:laurakkerr@gmail.com).*