

THEORETICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL PSYCHOLOGY

THE SOCIETY FOR THEORETICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL PSYCHOLOGY DIVISION 24 OF THE AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

Spring 2014 Presidential Newsletter



From Jeff Reber

June 2, 2014

Dear Society Members and Affiliates,

It has been an eventful six months since you received my fall presidential newsletter. It is my pleasure to now update you on several past and upcoming activities that are of import to the society. Specifically, I will:

1. Reflect on our annual midwinter conference that was held in Atlanta last March.
2. Highlight the upcoming APA convention and hospitality suite program.
3. Announce new executive committee officers and committee chairs.

2014 STPP Annual Midwinter Meeting

This year's annual midwinter meeting took place in Atlanta and was co-sponsored by the University of West Georgia psychology department. It was a wonderful event with a number of stimulating presentations and lively discussions. One of the highlights of the meeting for me was the inclusion of conversation hours, each of which focused on a key theme of importance to theoretical and philosophical psychologists. Each conversation hour was well-attended and many society members and affiliates participated in the discussion. I hope we will continue to

include these less formal opportunities for collegial exchange in our future midwinter meetings as well as in our annual convention programming (more to come on that later).

I was also pleased to witness and participate in a number of intergenerational discussions and meals that spontaneously emerged outside of the formal programming. By “intergenerational” I mean interactions that included seasoned members, early career members, scholarly and professional affiliates, and students, all talking together about the topics and themes that ignite their passions. These intergenerational exchanges enhanced the sense of community felt at the conference and I encourage all of you to continue to extend your circle of conversation to include society members and affiliates from all ages and backgrounds. We have a special social planned for the hospitality suite at the APA convention this August that is designed to facilitate this intergenerational dialog in a really interesting way (more to come on that later as well).

Finally, I wish to thank our on-site hosts, Karen Malone and Lisa Osbeck, our program co-chairs, Joe Ostenson and Josh Clegg, and our student workers for their outstanding efforts, planning, and running of the conference. It was a truly excellent conference!

2014 Annual APA Convention

APA’s Collaborative Program. This year’s convention, which will be in Washington, DC from August 7-10, will be the first in which collaborative programming takes center stage. There will be 78 collaborative presentations which are sponsored by at least two divisions and address topics of broad import to the discipline. Our society is a co-sponsor on three of these special presentations, two of which address the lifelong training and development of psychologists and one that examines the perspectives of ethnic minority groups on death and dying. I encourage all of you to attend these excellent symposia (a complete list of collaborative presentations is currently available at <http://apa.org/convention/programming/collaborative/index.aspx>).

Division-level Collaboration. We will also continue with our tradition of sharing sponsorship of collaborative presentations with other foundation divisions in our *Big Questions, Essential Conversations* symposia series. This year we will co-sponsor two symposia within this series, one of which addresses “psychology’s unresolved relationship with the good life” (co-sponsored by division 32), and another that addresses the topic of psychology and civil liberties (co-sponsored by division 39). I strongly encourage you to attend these two excellent symposia. In addition, we will sponsor a symposium on transcendence that is co-sponsored by division 36 and a symposium on the “missing bricks” in psychology’s foundation that includes presenters from several APA divisions. We are pleased to be working again this year so closely with colleagues from a diverse range of backgrounds and specialty areas.

Hospitality Suite Program. This year marks the first year in our history that our society will host its own hospitality suite. Given the sharp cut in division programming hours that was required to accommodate APA’s new collaborative program, it has become necessary for many divisions to include hospitality suite programming as a significant portion of the overall convention program. We see this as an exciting opportunity to move forward with some innovations in programming that we have already experimented with at previous conventions in which we have rented hospitality suite hours from other divisions. Just as importantly, it gives us

the opportunity to strengthen relationships within our society and between our society and other divisions and groups. A full convention program, which includes the hospitality suite program will be posted to our website, shared via our listserv, and posted by APA in the next week or so, but here are a few highlights to whet your appetite.

Conversation hours. As I mentioned before, our midwinter program was strongly improved by the inclusion of several conversation hours which addressed a number of key topics of importance to members of the society. We will be hosting half a dozen conversation hours in our hospitality suite on general topics emerging from specific presentations, which will include transcendence, the good life, pluralism, ethics, faith, and diversity. We look forward to your participation in these discussions!

Social Hours. I also mentioned previously the value of intergenerational exchanges that emerged at the midwinter conference and strengthened our sense of community. We have structured our hospitality suite program to allow for a number of these exchanges to take place at the convention. For example, we have three social hours planned this year: 1) a general social hour for all members, affiliates, and guests, 2) a mentoring social hour for students and early career psychologists, and 3) a “living legends” social that features former recipients of the Gittler and lifetime achievement awards.

Presidential Programming. There will be several presentations in the hospitality suite that I have selected for their fit with my presidential initiatives and the convention theme. I am particularly excited to announce two special nights of programming. First, the theme for Thursday night will be theoretical and philosophical psychology and the holocaust. Thanks to the generosity of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, we have the great fortune of hosting a talk by a research fellow from the museum as well as a talk by a holocaust survivor. We will also provide admission tickets for the museum’s main exhibit that evening for those of you who would like to visit the memorial museum during your stay in DC. To listen to the narrative of a survivor in his or her own words is a very special and increasingly rare opportunity, and I strongly encourage your attendance that evening.

A second night of special programming will focus on theoretical and philosophical psychology and the cinema and will feature a talk by an expert in the cinematic arts followed by the viewing of a film that illustrates several key topics discussed in the talk. All are welcome to attend, but we are especially eager to have student affiliates and ECPs join us for this exciting event.

Executive Committee Changes

The process for electing and appointing officers begins with a call for nominations, which I sent out a few months ago, followed by a meeting of the past-president, president, and president-elect, who add nominations and consult on new appointments. This year, we received one nomination for president and the presidents committee added three more nominees. Unfortunately, only one nominee accepted the invitation to run for election and ended up running unopposed. Luckily, our candidate is outstanding, has a great deal of experience in the society, and will do a great job.

The presidents committee also came up with three nominees for member-at-large, but only one nominee accepted the invitation to run for that office as well. Again, the candidate who did run is excellent and experienced and we are lucky to have her aboard. However, I think a society functions at its best and shows evidence of vitality and growth when its members are eager to serve and seek office. I share this information with you to alert you to a concern (this is not the first year of unopposed elections) and to encourage you to nominate yourselves and others for positions on the executive committee. If nominated I hope you will accept the invitation to run for office, if it is at all possible for you to serve.

With that said, here are the newly elected and appointed members of the executive committee:

President-Elect: Steve Harrist

Candidate Statement: I feel sincerely honored by the invitation to run for president of the Society for Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology. At the next annual meeting of STPP/APA Division 24, I am chairing a symposium that will introduce graduate students and interested psychologists to the field of theoretical and philosophical psychology. Along with colleagues from the Society, I am also proposing an edited book on the same topic—*Introduction to Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology*. The purpose of the symposium and the book are to familiarize those who are new to the field with the sort of background information that will allow them to enter into deeper, more reflective dialogue with senior members of the field. Our annual meeting and our mid-winter meetings offer opportunities for re-engaging with old friends and also encouraging new members and making new friends. But, the limited time we have together sometimes means that these activities compete for time and attention. If I am elected president of the Society, I will work to expand opportunities for old friends to work together to welcome new members into our community of scholars and show the relevance of our kind of work (e.g., critical inquiry into unexamined theoretical and philosophical assumptions) to the discipline of psychology. My education includes: Ph.D. – Clinical Psychology, University of Tennessee; Post-doctoral Fellow, Center for Psychotherapy Research, Vanderbilt University; M.A. – School Psychology, Trinity University; and B.A. – English, University of Texas. I serve as the Hyle Family Endowed Professor in K-20 Leadership at Oklahoma State University and as Interim Head of the School of Applied Health and Educational Psychology. My scholarly interests include philosophical hermeneutics and ethical theory and recent articles include: “Pathologizing the normal, filling up the empty self, and Virtue Ethics” (*Journal of Contemporary Psychotherapy*), “Levinas and hermeneutics on ethics and the other” (*Theory & Psychology*), and “Disguised ideologies in counseling and social justice work” (*Counseling and Values*). I now serve as secretary for the Society for Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology and in the past I have served as program chair and reviewer for the APA Division 24 meetings, reviewer for the *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology*, and have been active as a presenter at STPP meetings for a number of years.

Member-at-large: Sarah Hickinbottom-Brawn

Candidate Statement: Sarah Hickinbottom-Brawn is a faculty member in the Department of Educational Studies at Kwantlen Polytechnic University. Her scholarly interests include sociocultural and historical constituents of self, identity, and personhood; historical and cross-

cultural investigations of psychological concepts; and narrative approaches to research and therapy.

Early Career Psychology Representative and ECP Committee Chair: Brady Wiggins

Brady replaces David Goodman at this position, who has served the society very well in this role for the past several years. We thank David for his service.

Membership Committee Chair: Gregg Henriques

Gregg replaces Sarah Hickenbottom-Brawn at this position, who has helped advance a number of important membership initiatives during her tenure in this position. We appreciate Sarah's service.

Society Webmaster and Social Media Committee Chair: John Houser

John replaces Jon Carter at this position. We express our great appreciation to Jon for getting the new society website up and running and for putting in place the society logo. Jon has served in this position for many years and we thank him for his excellent service.

Terms of service for elected officials will begin at the conclusion of the convention this August. Those appointed to committee chair positions will begin service immediately. We appreciate the willingness of our new officers to serve and lead the society and we look forward to working with you.

Conclusion

As you can see, there are many interesting and exciting activities going on in the division. There are also a number of challenges and opportunities we face. I am so pleased to be working with such willing and capable executive committee officers and society members and affiliates on the initiatives and tasks that are important to us all. We have a wonderful society that is full of passion and vigor for ideas that matter not only to the discipline of psychology but to humanity as a whole. That is what strikes me most strongly about our group: We care. We care about the theoretical and philosophical assumptions that inform our theories, methods, and practices. We care about the trajectory of our discipline and the ontological, epistemological, and ethical implications that trajectory entails. We care about interdisciplinary, intersubdisciplinary, and intergenerational exchange and engagement. We care about our students and ECPs. We care about and for each other. It is my great pleasure to join with you in the project of caring for this society and helping it flourish in every regard.

I wish you all the best and look forward to meeting with those of you who can attend APA this August. Please feel free to contact me if there is anything I can do to better serve you.

