

To: Anne Leavitt, Dean of Social Science
CC: Graham Pike, Dean of International Education
Audrey Hansen, Study Abroad Manager
Sandra Galloway

Report on ISTP Conference in China 2009
And Funding Submission

I recently attended the conference of the International Society for Theoretical Psychology in Nanjing, China, May 15-19, 2009. This was a most rewarding and valuable experience.

In attendance were psychological scholars from all over the world and, particularly, from China. The issues addressed included phenomenology, philosophy and psychology, cross-cultural psychology, research into everyday life issues, history and theory in psychology, positive psychology, methods, social relations, theory across the world, religion, and many other topics. Of particular significance to me and to my work in psychology, particularly with my international students from China, was the effort being made by Chinese psychologists to establish a psychology that reflects the reality of being Chinese. After years of drawing upon Western psychology—its methods and theories, the Chinese are sensitive to the fact that the Western psyche is not the same as that of the Chinese.

It was most informative to listen to the Chinese psychologists and psychology students speak to their discontent with Western psychology and its lack of sensitivity to non-Western peoples. Even more so was the discussion of the struggles faced by the modern Chinese people with their transition from a more traditional social organization to that of a modern industrialized and capitalized society. This is an issue that I can easily bring into my teaching and which should, without doubt, prove of value to my students—both international and local.

I also benefitted from my discussions with the Chinese students. In fact, I have established an ongoing relation with a few of them and have offered my support in their ongoing efforts to become psychologists. That too has been most rewarding to me personally and as a psychologist.

Outside of the foregoing, I also benefitted from my conversations with other international scholars and from the sense of camaraderie and collegiality that I experienced. As a predominantly theoretical psychologist, among psychologists of a primarily experimental emphasis (which tends toward the a-theoretical), it is easy to feel isolated and misunderstood. So, to be with those who have an affinity towards theoretical issues, I have valued the opportunity to be among those who see the need for critically examining and refurbishing psychology.

As is apparent from the foregoing, this opportunity has been most valuable to me personally and, I believe, these benefits will carry over into my teaching and serve V.I.U. through the personal growth I have gained from this experience.

I wish to thank you for the opportunity that I was afforded by your financial assistance. It is most appreciated.

Sincerely,

Brad Piekkola