LETTERS OF APPRECIATION RECEIVED FROM RECIPIENTS OF SCHOLARSHIPS TO ATTEND THE 2014 ANNUAL MEETING OF THE AMERICAN GROUP PSYCHOTHERAPY ASSOCIATION

I am writing to express my appreciation for the scholarship that helped me to attend all six days of the Annual Meeting this year. From the Special Institute with Dr. Bessel van der Kolk, to the Two-Day Institute with the amazing Dr. Joel Frost, and throughout the three days of the Conference, I was consistently presented with opportunities to learn more about the group process. I got the gift of being able to learn a great deal more about myself as a group member and as a future group leader. I was encouraged to take the next step toward starting a group myself. I appreciate the chance to experience a variety of offerings throughout the six days, and I plan to give back in the future so that others may have the same opportunities that were afforded to me.

I received the Anne Alonso scholarship to attend the AGPA conference in March 2014. I have recently returned from the conference and have written the following paragraphs to reflect on my experiences.

The buzz of reunions filled the lobby. People recognizing faces and names: familiarity, closeness, and brief exchanges about the year past. Even with my "new member-first time" attendee pink and blue badge seemed to be a point of interest. "Well hello Melanie...Welcome. You are from...Hawaii. Wow, all the way from there. How neat. You will have great time. I have been coming for 15 years." Every place I turned was filled with warm smiles, embraces, interest, as if the very fact that we were there signified commonality in spite of different backgrounds: doctors, psychologists, MFTs, nurses, & social workers. Never have I found a professional space so welcoming and integrated with different ideas and disciplines.

I felt a sense of both ease and discomfort: nervousness, body heat, uncertainty about what was to happen next, and excitement about that very same possibility. I felt grateful for being there and at the same time, ready to swoon into the arms of comfort: defenses, pleasantries, my hotel room, and nights awake thinking. With the optimal amount of discomfort, growth is soon to follow, and I found comfort in this fact. Others normalized my experience of fatigue, uncertainty, and both the pleasure and challenges of the experience. Should I stay or should I go...emotionally that is, as presence of full attention takes intention.

I remembered back to why I had come to AGPA in the first place. My job consists of group work with active duty military in an experiential program. I often feel like I am sailing into the territory of the unknown both emotionally and in therapeutic technique. Do I know what I am doing? Am I facilitating a safe group process? Am I being too rigid and distant? Am I authentic or do I need to cut back on my humor? Are there techniques I could use to further the depth of our exploration?

I came with questions about my work but also myself. I have actively sought my own therapy and consultation since I have begun this profession but still revisit my neuroses with regularity like an unpleasant relative coming to visit. Are my blind spots still hurting others and myself? Am I cut out for this work? Can I sustain a
good balanced life with the challenges of this job? I had hoped to explore the cohabitation of my professional and personal selves and my perpetual age-old family trait of 'am I good enough?'

I was told to enter into the institutes fully and completely. "The more you put in, the more you get out," was the advice given and so I did so. This full frontal leap of faith was initially met with felt resistance and pressure from my group. I felt good, bad, embarrassed, and relieved at my authenticity, and what I learned will likely sink in over the coming weeks. I learned it was okay. I was okay and the process of others. I was humbled by feedback that came from both group members and that which I was able to give myself. As much as I wanted to run the other way, I learned the very thing I sought. Like I tell many of my patients who are seeking a magic pill or therapeutic fix for their hurtful PTSD and attachment issues, there is none. One must trust in themself, rely on people, and relinquish control of knowing. Only this enables openness to the process of self-healing, regulation, and connection.

As the week persisted, I learned group techniques, explored common questions, and met interesting and accomplished people. I learned of Anne Alonso for whom my scholarship is named and funded. AGPA members spoke with such fondness with a twinkle in their eye of her presence, knowledge, and deep passion for the field. "She was a very special lady," they remarked. I felt in those moments that I had found my way into something quite special, part of something much bigger, and honored to be able to attend due to the scholarship I received. Without it, I most definitely would not have been able to come

This field is so inextricably linked to both our intuitive strengths and shortcomings. It is a painful profession of both honor and growth. I walked away with a little more allowance for myself and others. While my brain is swimming with ideas, concepts, theories, and even games to play with my groups, the most valuable thing I learned is a deepened sense of knowing that what I do and how I do it is indeed good enough, and that others are right there with me seeking to help and make the world a little more connected. I thank everyone for this opportunity and to the AGPA staff who worked so hard to make this event such a success.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and for providing me with this scholarship and opportunity. I hope to connect with you in the future.

I would like to thank you for awarding me the international scholarship to attend the AGPA annual conference 2014 in Boston. Thank you is not enough, so maybe explaining some of my experience would show how much I have to be thankful for. The highlight of it professionally was attending the institute where I learned more about conducting a group in two days than I have learned from attending many groups and reading lots of books. The conference itself offered great learning experiences especially at the child and adolescent group psychotherapy course and workshop that I attended and it was the first time for me to attend experiential training in child and adolescent group psychotherapy after having been told that it can not be done. As always the experiential experience leads to more learning than any other method. but there were other things that helped me learn like the book display which helped me understand what people were reading and finding important.

Meeting the conference attendees from all over the US and internationally has allowed me to network on newer levels, really appreciating what other people are doing in their practice compared to me, and the career paths and different trainings that lead them to it. Which has effectively broadened my horizons and gave me a number of very useful ideas for my practice as well as research ideas one of which maybe a joint work with researchers from the US. We also agreed at the child and adolescent SIG meeting to continue communication. I volunteered to help with a session at the conference because I wanted to contribute something, I also was very impressed by the organization that went into preparing this so thoroughly. I have been supported by Diane Feirman since before I came to the conference, she
was the first person I made contact with at the AGPA and she has shown me what real
dedication looks like before and during the conference where she helped me a lot.
Last, but not at all the least, I am leaving the conference as a renewed person. This
is experience has had a profound effect on me, especially at the institute, but also ever since I
put on the "new member-first time attendee" ribbons. These were like magnets that attracted
kind hearted, interested and professional people to get introduced and share work and personal
experience and just to smile.
Coming from Egypt the experience of attending the annual conference has helped
me put into perspective where I stand in the world and how my culture compares with other
cultures. I have really soaked the feeling that though we may appear, think and speak
differently, at heart; all humans share the same hope, pain and joy.

Having just returned from my third AGPA Annual Conference, and best experience yet, I wanted to forward a
note of thanks and acknowledge the incredible experience I had at this year’s amazing conference. A special
thank you to all the staff and volunteers at AGPA for the top-notch organization and flow of the week which
made 2014 a phenomenal success!

I am deeply honored and humbled to have been awarded one of the Saul Scheidlinger Scholarships, and to have
received special recognition at the annual luncheon. Having learned a little about Dr. Scheidlinger and his
work, from a few longtime AGPA members sitting near me at the luncheon, sparked my interest in learning
more about this inspirational man.

In addition to discovering a treasure-trove of articles and books Dr. Scheidlinger authored or co-authored
relating to child and adolescent group psychotherapy, I was drawn to an interview Gerd H. Fenchel, Ph.D. did
with Dr. Scheidlinger in the Group Journal in 1983, where I learned about him, his family, and the great
obstacles he overcame.

Highlights from this year’s conference are many. Reconnecting with folks I’ve met before and making new
friendships are the reason I come to this conference. Everyone is incredibly welcoming, generous with their
time, expertise, and offer to help.

The two-day institute and various workshops I attended were exceptional. The panel discussion entitled, “From
the Psyche to the Soma” was thought-provoking and inspiring, and I was particularly drawn to Nanine Ewing,
and how she uses body movement in her groups.

In addition, I thoroughly enjoyed the Child and Adolescent SIG dinner where I was warmly welcomed and got
to meet others doing life-changing and meaningful work with children and adolescents using group
psychotherapy.

Lastly, one of the ways I take the conference home with me is through the audio recordings available for many
of the workshops. Last year’s discussion called “Busting out of Binaries - Gender and Sexuality” fueled an
extensive and thought-provoking discussion and paper for the LGBTQ class I took last semester. It also
broadened my awareness’s and hunger to learn more about special populations and diversity.

Thank you again for your generosity and the opportunity to be inspired.
I am the 2014 recipient of the Ruth Hochberg Scholarship. This year was my first experience at an AGPA Annual Meeting and it was definitely a memorable one. I found the workshops and institutes of a consistently high caliber beginning with a Special Institute with Susan Gantt on Systems-Centered Therapy in which she amazingly led a group experience with the entire room. The experience definitely forced me to move outside my comfort zone and as a result I gained new insights about myself as well as the dynamics of groups. The same could be said about many other experiences I had throughout the week.

But just as valuable as the workshops and institutes I attended were the individuals I met. AGPA welcomes all mental health professionals and this diversity of training and experience is in part what makes the Annual Meeting such an enriching experience. Everyone was most welcoming and I made many connections that I hope to build on throughout the year and at the 2015 Annual Meeting in San Francisco. I truly feel that I have found my professional home. Thanks again to the foundation for making this experience possible for someone fresh out of training.

I am writing to express my appreciation and gratitude for receiving a scholarship to this year’s conference in Boston. This was my second year in attendance and my second year as a scholarship recipient and I am continually blown away by the generosity and friendliness of the AGPA community. As a student, I have always felt welcomed and encouraged by the more experienced practitioners and this attitude has enabled me to show up more in groups, take risks, and allow myself to vulnerable around people I just met. This year, I participated in the Somatic Experiencing 2 day institute and found the information and group experience to be invaluable to the therapy work I do with survivors of sexual assault and I am looking forward to co-facilitating my first group with teen girls next month! Without the Group Foundation scholarship, I would not be able to afford to attend this conference and I am deeply touched and forever grateful to the generosity of the Foundation and the generosity of individual donors who allow students and new professionals the opportunity to experience such a life changing event. Thank you so much and I look forward to attending many more AGPA conferences in the future!

I want to again express my appreciation for the scholarship to attend this year’s AGPA conference. This was such a meaningful and powerful experience! Upon returning from the conference I have shared many pieces of what I had learned from attending the presentations (e.g., about humor in group therapy, leader resiliency, religious trauma, use of art therapy in groups, women in leadership) with my fellow doctoral interns and the staff at Iowa State University’s Student Counseling Service. I also highly emphasized that the didactic pieces from these seminars were only a fraction of what I have taken away from this experience. Being an active and engaged member in both the institute and in the experiential pieces of presentations, allowed me to learn a lot about myself both personally and professionally, and I have encouraged all of my colleagues to attend AGPA if they ever have the opportunity.

My original goal for attending this conference was to grow in confidence and competence as a group therapy leader. Experiencing so many styles of group leadership helped me to achieve this goal. I did not expect to feel so connected to so many new people in such a short period of time. I feel grateful to have made several professional connections as well as some great personal connections. I look forward to attending AGPA again in the future.

Having the opportunity to attend my first AGPA conference was wonderful! I packed my schedule with everything I could as a way to absorb this unique experience. I attended morning early-bird workshops like Diversity in Groups, and Social Media and Groups. Both of these were helpful in confirming the importance of things I was already doing, but they also provided important information from colleagues and handouts that
better informed my group practice. The two-day institute for 0-4 year group therapists was a once in a lifetime experience. I knew from talking with colleagues that this particular part of the conference would be challenging, but I had no idea how exhausting the institute would be! While it was a reminder of the experiences our group members encounter while participating in a group, I was able to more clearly identify useful interventions, and viewed a completely different approach to practice at the same time. I attended Inviting Ambivalence and Avoidance and learned a great deal about ways to encourage group member participation through anticipating their desire to avoid situations. I bolstered my understanding of outcome measures when I enjoyed the presentation of the Group Questionnaire statistics by Gary Burlingame and others at Brigham Young. I also really enjoyed watching others share of their “misjudgments” of group member experiences. This reinforced my human-ness and that even being a seasoned group leader does not make you perfect.

The enormous number of attendees to this conference could have made it unwieldy to identify particular people to engage. However, I found that I forged new relationships with psychologists, mental health counselors and social workers from my particular institute experience. They are LITERALLY from all corners of the country. These are people with whom I am still in contact and I believe it has further allowed us to invest in AGPA. In the course of attending numerous other events (College Counseling SIG, Women’s SIG, AGPA lunch, Bar 10 gatherings) I met a whole host of other new colleagues and friends. I also became acquainted with group therapy providers from different college counseling environments. This was useful as we were able to share about the nuances of our particular environment while also identifying new and different ways to provide groups to our students.

Finally, I was able to attend the Principles Course, which was the remaining piece needed for me to apply for the CGP. I am terribly excited to have had a chance to experience two days of leadership provided by well-respected and seasoned group therapy veterans (Michele Ribeiro, Robert Gleave, Helen Chong, Larry Viers, Anne Macenaney, to name a few). I am currently hoping to team up with others in AGPA to submit a proposal for next year’s conference. I, along with another colleague who attended the conference, will provide my FSU University Group program with a presentation to highlight recent trends, as well as information taken from the Principles course as a way to reinforce the importance of group initiation, planning, preparation of group members, and providing a safe environment in the group room.

I can honestly say I would not have had the opportunity to learn so much, and establish so many new contacts without the scholarship offered to me. My application for the Certified Group Psychotherapist credential is now complete and ready for submission! I am invested in continuing the tradition of AGPA leadership and quality provision of group therapy. I thank the contributors to AGPA that make this possible. I’ve now received the gifts of knowledge, leadership and uncompromised skill that I can now carry with me into every group session I facilitate.

Attending the AGPA Annual Meeting in Boston was a wonderful experience, and receiving the Group Foundation for Advancing Mental Health Saul Scheidlinger Scholarship made it all possible for me to attend. As a recipient of this award for my interest in working with children and adolescents, I was able to attend the conference institutes, where I was able to learn more about the roles of facilitators and members in group process. I was also able to attend invaluable conference workshops to add to my knowledge and skills base for facilitating groups with children and adolescents as well as college student populations and individuals affected by trauma. I look forward to applying what I learned to my continued work with children, adolescents, and young adults involved in the foster care system. Each of my areas of interest were represented, and despite my itinerary being full, there seemed to not be enough time to fit in all of the wonderful experiences offered. I was also able to attend meetings and gatherings that allowed me to make connections with professionals with expertise in my areas of interest, allowing me to expand my network and take full advantage of both AGPA and SIG memberships. I was able to take from my experience multiple insights that I was able to share with my
colleagues about starting and leading different groups. For example, I gained much needed clarity that will be useful in my plans to organize, develop, and cofacilitate an ongoing group specific to interpersonal trauma.

As a result of my attendance at the 2013 Annual Meeting in New Orleans, I was confident that my experience at the 2014 Annual Meeting in Boston would be immensely informative and beneficial to my development as a group facilitator. I even encouraged colleagues to attend, and their feedback following the Annual Meeting reflected positive experiences as well. I look forward to continuing to apply all that I have learned through my participation and networking to my practice in group, and I look forward to attending again next year.

I recently attended the AGPA Boston conference for the first time, where it was highly recommended by another CGP therapist at my work. I have been finishing up my final year as a psychiatry resident in Oregon, focusing on group therapy, and saw this opportunity as a way to gain additional exposure. Due to limited income, and literally filling the role as the “starving student,” I became ecstatic when I received a full scholarship to the AGPA conference in Boston.

I first attended Dr. Van der Kolks lecture on trauma. I came away from this lecture with a completely new perspective on trauma. I had never considered “developmental trauma” as a unique subset of trauma, requiring something different that CBT in regards to treatment. Hearing how yoga, EMDR, and physical activities plays an integral role in trauma has made me look at my trauma patients differently when developing treatment plans. It was very inspiring to sit through Dr. Van der Kolks lecture.

I also attended multiple workshops throughout the week, including ones involving addiction processes and religious trauma. To provide some additional background, it was in a young adults addictions group, where I had previously rotated in my residency, where I initially saw the power of group therapy, seeing very stoic young men open up in the presence of others. The addictions workshop I attended provided me with additional education about the moving experience I had, which in a way reinforced my passion to pursue addiction medicine.

I only knew of the one CGP therapist from my work at the conference before arriving. When I initially arrived, I was assigned a roommate, who was a psychologist from Texas and had gone to AGPA multiple times. We hit it off very well, and found ourselves going back to the hotel room in between classes and groups to discuss and debrief our experiences.

I later attended the breakfast for first time members, where I met a few other new members, who invited me to walk to Fenway Park during lunch as a sight seeing adventure. This initially caught me off guard, but went along and later became friends with those individuals and socialized with them throughout the week.

Before I went to this conference, I had been running my own young adult process group for individuals with mood disorders. When I returned from the conference, I met with my group again, but noticed a subtle difference this time. One of the patients in the group was finally opening up and expressing himself this time. Was it coincidence this is happening the week after I returned from the conference? Did I carry something over from my experience back to the group that facilitated this process? After I had discussed this phenomena with my supervisor, it came to my attention that perhaps because I had such an intense experience with my own process group at the AGPA, I brought back and displayed a nonverbal sense of confidence and ability to tolerate the affect of the group. This perhaps is what provided that opportunity for change in my group. So, without a doubt, the AGPA conference did indeed facilitate a positive change to my patient population, and will continue to do so in the future.
I am very grateful that I had the opportunity to participate at the 2014 AGPA Annual Meeting. It was a truly transformative experience. I am at a point in my life where I'm facing many transitions, both personally, and professionally. Professionally, I am in the process of starting my private practice, which will include both individual, and group therapy. This conference gave me the knowledge, encouragement and professional confidence that I needed.

The conference not only provided me with the opportunity to meet and learn from fellow group therapists from all over America, but it also gave me a safe and very rich environment for personal growth.

I especially enjoyed the two day Institute with Michael Hegener, during which I felt equally nurtured and challenged as a group member, and which also taught me many valuable skills as a group leader. I can still hear Michael's voice asking us, "There is a feeling behind every question. What is it?" Or also the simple but effective question, "...are you: mad, sad, scared or glad?" The immediate and intense transference in the group was so powerful that I feel I learned more about myself in those two days than I did during ten years of individual therapy!

The two workshops that stood out for me and that I found most helpful were Pamela Enders' "Leverage the Social Networking and Social Media to Enhance Your Professional Profile and Build your Clinical Practice" and Larry Kron's "Money and the Group Therapist's Countertransference". Both of these workshops offered very valuable knowledge that I will use in setting up my private practice.

I also found the networking aspect of the Conference very valuable. I connected with many therapists, but I also made many friends there. Several of these colleagues have offered to meet and brainstorm about ideas for my practice.

Upon my return to work, at the Adult Partial Hospital at Westwood Lodge, which is a group based day program, I felt invigorated by what I learned at the Annual Meeting. Most of the patients at our Partial Hospital are lower functioning, and they need a safe group environment with a relatively low stimulation level. That requires the leader to apply interventions to keep the emotions in the room contained while doing as much therapeutic work as possible. Right away started to incorporate some of the new approaches that I learned at the Conference in my work.

I must confess that, before the Conference, I felt afraid and intimidated by such an intense curriculum, however, at the end, it was the best experience of my professional life. I eagerly look forward to future meetings. I cannot thank you enough, it was an amazing adventure!

This year amounted to my third year of attending the AGPA conference, and I find that each new year adds a layer to the experience. I have professional colleagues and friends who I am excited to see when I come back and I feel more at home in the organization. I am also starting to figure out more about my own style as a group therapist, which is something I am appreciating more as I see how other clinicians approach the work. This was one of the things that I enjoyed about my experience in the institute with Bob Klein and Suzanne Phillips this year. I felt like not only was it an opportunity to recognize different ‘choice points’ in the process and see them work with us in the group, but I also recognized more about the rich range of possible choices that a leader can make. These choices underscored the subtle and overt ways that a group leader impacts the development of the group. I’ve come home thinking about my own group and the ways in which my choices are interwoven into the life of the group.

While at the conference, I also attended two day-long workshops that I found particularly interesting. The first was the Thursday workshop “Introduction to Process Addictions for the Group Therapist”. I have a background as a drug & alcohol counselor, and it was interesting to see insights from the field of substance addictions carry over to other behavioral issues.

Perhaps the workshop I most enjoyed during the conference was the second day-long session entitled, “A Tale of Five Cities: Toronto, Haifa, London, New York and Boston”. This workshop described disaster and/or crisis situations in each of the five cities. In particular, it raised important questions about how the contextual factors in organizations and communities impact the collective response. This was a powerful workshop and the
cornestone of it was a role play led by the presenters in imagining a parallel situation. This proved to be a very realistic and very engaging exercise that well illustrated the challenges and complexities of their work. I feel like I have both a better sense of group dynamics as well as how I as a clinician and a professional might respond in a constructive way.

On a personal note, I can also add that I was grateful for a little serendipity this year. I will be moving to Boston in the coming months, and it was lucky to have a chance to get to see and know the city during the conference. It was also exciting to meet local clinicians and I hope to be involved in the regional conference in June as a way to build more personal and professional contacts by expanding on my experience at AGPA. I am always very deeply grateful to the association for their generous financial support. Without that, I would not be able to be involved at this stage in my career.

This past weekend in Boston, Massachusetts, I attended the American Group Psychotherapy Association’s Annual Meeting. Although the Meeting is several days long and offers a rich variety of topics that can be explored, I focused specifically on three of them. Working alongside practitioners from all over the world, I participated in three groups that explored how to help clients survive and thrive in the midst of medical illness, the role of the practitioner in the emerging field of international social work, and the different ways one could approach dream interpretation with clients.

While it was my first time attending this annual conference, the fellow attendees were not intimidating. They were incredible knowledgeable and because of their diverse cultural and professional backgrounds had some incredibly unique perspectives and advice. It’s important for me to point out that although I definitely heard various languages being spoken while at the conference, it seemed that everyone had at least an intermediate level grasp of the English language. I point this out because one critical aspect of any event where people from all over the globe are participating is effective communication. Without that, there would be little progress made. Although one could enter into a debate of which languages seem to dominate international conferences (English, French, etc.) at the expense of others, that’s a valid argument for another time. For now I’ll just say that I appreciated being able to communicate with essentially everyone who was present because this helped our exchange of ideas.

Although I attended this event because of my internship, where I run various psychoeducational groups in different schools in Paterson, I must say this is an event I’ll likely keep attending for my own educational and
professional benefit. Getting to speak to folks who work my field in places like Iran or Guatemala was especially educational because I got to hear some of the social justice issues that are more prevalent outside the United States of America. Moreover, it was really incredible to hear of the different challenges that arise as well. This helped expand my understanding of our field and of the work others like me are doing. This conference was a great learning opportunity when it came to trying to conceptualize what international social work looks like and how it could be developed and improved over time.

All in all, this was an incredibly rich experience that helped me grow professionally in several ways. The knowledge, connections, and inspiration that come from attending events like this could not be more valuable. These events help to keep us grounded while exploring new possibilities in our line of work and this can only help us better serve our clients and the rest of the world.

I had a wonderful experience at the AGPA conference this year. I am grateful for the scholarship that made it possible.

The process group experience was the most beneficial program I attended, followed by the "Processing process" workshop and the "Weighting for inner peace" workshop.

Collectively, the conference was full of learning and growth. I met so many clinicians from across the country, and I feel that those relationships will last through the years. I really appreciated the opportunity to network, even with individuals from Houston who I did not know prior. AGPA truly feels like a family.

Thank you and the others at AGPA for the scholarship and opportunity to attend this year’s annual conference in Boston. The entire experience was educational, enlightening, and enriching. To start my time at the APGA conference, I attended a session in which Dr. Burlingame, my mentor. There, I got to meet some of Dr. Burlingame’s colleagues, authors of articles I have read and cited for years. It was exciting for me to meet with them and learn with them about updated research in our field.

After attending the research session, I attended a session on therapist counter-transference (“The Monster Under the Bed”). Thus far in my academic program, we have not spent much time discussing this concept. As such, I was especially interested in the didactic portion when I signed up for the course. As I expected, this was especially helpful for me and providing insight into my experiences during therapy. What I did not anticipate is how helpful and educative the process element would be. In fact, I didn’t realize that there would be an in-session group at all. This element of the presentation perfectly tied the didactic portion to a hands on learning experience that was priceless to my education. The two group leaders implemented what they had taught
beautifully. I thought it was especially helpful to implement two 30 minute groups instead of one 60 minute group. This way, the leaders were able to discuss what they had done and process with the group what they had seen and how it applied to their practice. Conducting the second 30 minute group allowed the leaders and group members to continue to explore more deeply the concept that they were teaching. I thought the entire presentation was excellent.

The next presentation I attended was conducted by two leaders from my University. They presented on a population that particularly interests me: eating disorders. Before starting graduate school, I worked as a psych tech at an inpatient eating disorder facility where one of the presenters was a therapist. I attended groups that she presented at the center regularly. It was exciting for me to hear her present on theoretical and clinical reasons for her interventions, and to see them in action with a group of therapists. It was also especially helpful that they provided a handout with numerous examples of experiential interventions.

The next morning I presented my research with another student from our lab. This experience was helpful and educational for me for many reasons. The preparation required to do the research and write the presentation was helpful for my broad education, my dissertation, and my career. Having the opportunity to present this research to others who care about group therapy was exciting, but also nerve-racking. I think it went well, and was helpful for me to get experience presenting in this type of atmosphere.

The final presentation I attended before returning home was about processing process. While I thought the presenters were well prepared, I thought the format (less interactive discussion during the didactic portion) was less effective that the other presentations I attended. I also found the in session group to be less effective, but still interesting.

Overall, the experience was beneficial and educational to my career in research practice, presenting experience, and clinical training. I definitely intend to return in the future and am very grateful for the experience, and the scholarship that made it possible. I will take the things I learned with me into my practice with clients I see.

Attending the AGPA special institute and conference was a rich and unforgettable experience. The conference’s experiential approach offered me a unique opportunity to acquire expert clinical knowledge while also receiving invaluable feedback about myself and the way that I relate to others. I left the conference with an almost overwhelming amount of new insight, which I felt eager to integrate in both my personal and professional life. AGPA is the type of conference that leaves you thinking about everything you learned during that short week for the rest of the year, until the next conference arrives and sparks a whole new collection of insights.

Through the special institute, conference, and social events, I had the pleasure of meeting individuals from a variety of mental health professions and at varying stages of their career. As a Registered Mental Health Counselor Intern, I found it comforting to interact with fellow trainees and inspiring to be amongst some of group therapy’s most accomplished veterans. The conference made me hungry for more – more knowledge, more experience, more opportunities to grow. In just a short amount of time, I forged intimate relationships with strangers, whom I now hold very dear in my heart and my thoughts. The conference offers such a welcoming and friendly atmosphere that it is almost impossible to leave without forging at least one lasting connection. I found this environment refreshing. Now that I’ve attended, it makes sense to me that so many
attendees return year after year to reconnect with old friends and to serve as a friendly, welcoming face for newcomers.

As a counselor at a college counseling center, I was impressed by the number of college counselors that attend the AGPA conference. The conference offered me the opportunity to network with professionals at colleges around the country, comparing programming and sharing new ideas. I returned to my counseling center with a list of ways to improve our quality of services to students. For instance, after discussing this with an attendee at AGPA, I returned to my counseling center with the information needed to run an effective eating disorder process group, a service that our students desperately need.

The insights that I developed about myself and my clinical practice during the AGPA conference will stay with me for years to come. I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to attend this conference, as my financial limitations would have prevented me from participating in this rich learning experience. I will spend the rest of this year exploring how to implement the training that I received at AGPA to improve my center and to grow as a clinician. I look forward to attending next year’s conference, where I am sure I will acquire and integrate a whole new breadth of knowledge.

I was thrilled to be able to attend the annual conference of AGPA in Boston. The workshop I attended with Dr. Bessel Van der kolk was highly relevant and useful to my work as a group scholar, teacher, and clinician. In addition, I was able to participate in a 2-day special institute. Through the support of the group leader and other members, I was given a unique opportunity to learn more about myself as a person and professional – in addition to learning more about group process. It was a rich, layered learning experience that I am still sifting through, several weeks later, and one that I consider a gift. Lastly, I deeply appreciated the opportunity to meet other AGPA members from a variety of disciplines and training backgrounds who share my interest and passion for group work. I look forward to continued personal and professional involvement in AGPA, and my deepest thanks to the scholarship committee for the support that made this possible.

I want to thank the American Group Psychotherapy Association for their generosity in providing scholarship opportunities to attend the 2014 annual meeting in Boston. As a graduate student, the AGPA’s Two-Day Institute helped me to gain valuable insights into my own group roles, and I am now better able to observe how each member informed the group’s dynamics. I gained exposure to new theories and cutting edge interventions that I plan to integrate into my practice. I was privileged to hear Stephen Porges discuss the Polyvagal Theory, I took part in a discussion on the use of humor in groups, and learned about animal assisted therapy groups. Having access to seasoned professionals in the field from several walks of life and various theoretical orientations enabled me to see a broad variety of interests and interventions that may not have otherwise been in my purview.
I also made valuable connections with other professionals through the Institute, open sessions, workshops, and new member events. Several people I met referred to the Annual meeting as their “professional home”, and as a new member I felt very welcomed and eager to make it my professional home as well.

I have seen how groups are unique and powerful tools for change, and group dynamics are ever-present, and inescapable in everyday life. I consider these dynamics to be crucial to my efforts to affect change on individual, interpersonal, cultural, and institutional levels, and I intend to use groups to foster affiliation in an increasingly divisive society.

I am very interested in working with adults and families, and my experience at AGPA has informed this intention through evidence of group psychotherapy’s efficacy across several populations. I also have a budding interest in the relationship between the arts and group psychotherapy. While I am only beginning to gather research and ideas on this subject, I intend to use my experiences with groups to contribute to the field.

My time at the Annual meeting allowed me the experience of re-orienting in a community of professionals different from the ones I normally experience, and exposed me to new and different philosophies of group work. I was able to expand my repertoire, and seek new challenges as a student and as a group facilitator. I look forward to more opportunities to learn and support the organization and the field of group psychotherapy, and am anxiously awaiting next year’s meeting in San Francisco. Thank you again to the members and the board for your support and generosity.

I am so honored to have been awarded a 2014 Durkin-Glatzer scholarship, and I am especially touched that it would be in honor of my work as a woman entering the field of group psychotherapy. Thank you so very much for choosing to support my growth in this meaningful way.

The conference was outstanding! I decided to choose workshops and presentations that would provide me with personal “nourishment” in addition to professional information, and I was not disappointed. The highlight of my week was the experience group that I attended with Arnie Cohen. Not only did it deepen my understanding of group leadership and build on what I have been learning through the observation of Scott Rutan and Annie Weiss’s group at the Boston Institute of Psychotherapy, it also allowed me to be fully present as a member and learn more about what I bring to groups and how I interact with others. I am still in awe of how much I truly miss my group members and leader after only being with them for two days.

I attended several workshops over the course of the week and was impressed by all of them. Andrew Eig’s workshop intrigued me as an exercise in process and looking at boundaries in a relational context. (Plus, I found myself sitting next to someone I hadn't seen since the early 1990s—we didn't even know we both ended up as clinical psychologists!)) I attended two workshops on therapeutic authenticity and shame (one led by Michelle DeCola and the other led by Paul Kaye), and I found them to both be intense and provocative. Tony Sheppard's workshop on using structured role-play techniques helped me to emotionally connect with a particular patient.
who has challenged me, and it brought me in connection with other clinicians who work with adolescents. I look forward to staying in contact with Tony as I build my own group psychotherapy practice serving adolescents and their families. Myrna Frank's workshop on Home left me feeling grounded yet somewhat wistful for my island home of St. Croix, where I haven't lived since the late 1980's. I appreciated the “work in progress” feeling of the experience and the hope that group can offer for creating and sustaining a “home” for us as members and as leaders. Finally, Sara Emerson and Neil Spivak's workshop on leadership had me so energized around understanding my own ambivalence to lead. The sharing in that group stretched me personally and professionally, and I'm feeling more confident in figuring out where this path of leadership may lead me. I am most grateful for the opportunity to give myself over to the AGPA Annual Conference experience, something I never would have been able to do except with this award. While I had started the process of beginning a process group for adolescents under the mentorship of Oona Metz just prior to this conference, I left the conference with two goals: adding 2 more process groups for adolescents and one for parents by the end of this year as well as figuring out how best to grow my involvement with my local group psychotherapy association, NSGP. I have been enormously impressed by the warmth and depth of experience exhibited by everyone I met over the week at AGPA. I certainly have so many reasons to attend next year, and I'm already looking forward to immersing myself in the experience again. Once again, thank you for allowing me to partake in such a powerful week of learning about myself, both personally and professionally, and about the transformative power of group psychotherapy. I know that my work in my community will be better served by my taking the time to fully immerse myself in this conference experience. I can't wait to attend next year!

I am writing this letter in appreciation of my scholarship to the 2014 AGPA annual meeting in Boston. I’d like to walk through a bit of my week to let you know how much I gained…

I started the week in Gaea Logan’s Mixed Level Institute. This was a total accident and it was exactly where I was supposed to be. Her focus on mindfulness will help me immensely as I continue to try to incorporate those principles into my practice. As always, the other members of my group were lovely people and valuable colleagues that I look forward to working with again in the future.

Thursday, the highlight was a workshop on money and countertransference. One of the true values of the AGPA experience, as opposed to other conferences, is that I can depend on a wide variety of topics, some not so comfortable. This was a tough workshop and we were asked to delve way beyond the surface questions of how to profit in your practice. I will carry this experience into my encounters with all my clients.

I am always so thankful for the Friday dance. The format of AGPA allows for the richness of connection and it is so important that these connections continue to be nourished before we all leave the conference. It was delightful to be able to catch up with old friends and continue to bond with my new network. So much fun! AND invaluable to my professional development as a young clinician. These are people I will “grow up” with and turn to as my practice develops.

Throughout the conference, I participated in the Large Group experience. This is how I ended my week on Saturday. The Large Group at AGPA is a blending of many experience levels and a chance for me to try on my voice as I get more in touch with my feelings and my professional style. This year, it was especially interesting to be blessed by two international psychotherapists that allowed us to experience conflict and tolerate moments where no repair was reached. I look forward to working with them next year.

Thank you so much for all of the experiences, and more!

My professional development depends so much on your generosity!
I learned about Systems-Centered Theory in the Special Institute led by Susan Gantt, and participated in a demonstration process group with Richard Billow whose modeling of relational group psychotherapy was inspiring.

The conference helped clarity my thoughts on the critical adaptive ability of experiencing emotions without being caught in the false choice of either suppressing them or acting them out. In many of the workshops I attended, I discovered a common thread of acquiring the ability to experience emotions as rich experiences in themselves, with an understanding that one always maintains choice about what, if anything, to do in response to the events that give rise to them.

The Internal Family Systems workshop was particularly impactful in making this skill concrete for me. The very act of framing a statement “a part of me” reduces shame and invites exploration with the inherent suggestion that our feelings are visitors, and parts of us, but that we need not identify with them at the expense of experiencing them fully. It is an avenue of exploration that I am excited to continue.

One of the most inspiring elements of the conference was to be at the hotel with so many thoughtful, talented, and committed group practitioners. I had interesting encounters every time I left my room - in the elevator, on the escalators, or walking into the lobby. I was always engaging with new friends and colleagues from workshops. As a new student and beginning practitioner, I am so grateful for the accepting and supportive culture of this conference.

In addition, I was introduced to the basics of psychodrama, attended an experiential workshop in existential therapy, received a foundational introduction to Internal Family Systems therapy, saw an eye opening presentation on Social Connectedness as a Biological Imperative by Stephen Porges and participated in a two-day institute that was challenging and fruitful personally and professionally. And this is just to mention a few of the events I attended!

With the addition of the Friday night dance and the lunchtime performance by the Krokodiloes, it was an amazing week.

The Scholarship Foundation is a jewel in the AGPA conference program. It allowed a student such as me to access an astonishing array of experience and learning. It is not an exaggeration to say that I returned from the conference a changed, personally and professionally.

I would like to thank all the Scholarship Foundation donors whose generosity helped make my conference experience possible.

The AGPA conference in Boston provided another amazing opportunity to connect with people who I wouldn't call colleagues; I'd call them families. In my institute, it seemed as if each member felt able to bring in multiple parts of their selves, something that allowed us each to connect on a deeper level. Personally, I felt a safety that can take me a great deal of time to experience when I'm normally a member of a group. Since the institute, I've received warm messages, emails, and calls from various members.

The workshops were filled with rich learning opportunities. Whether it was understanding how and why scapegoating occurs in groups or exploring authenticity and differentiation, I felt challenged to take risks. Each leader had a unique style and I learned new ways that I can integrate their work into my practice.

I am forever grateful for what AGPA has provided me and can't wait for San Francisco!
I have very much enjoyed attending my second AGPA annual meeting. The attendees and the conference organizers were friendly and welcoming. The presenters were knowledgeable and I was able to learn a great deal. Specifically, I have truly enjoyed attending the two day institute and learning experientially. Attending the institute and the large group are the two events that consistently help me to grow both personally and professionally. An opportunity to chair a presentation was another learning opportunity that I am extremely grateful for having. The social aspect of the conference is something that I looked forward to every single day. Meeting people and simply socializing every evening was a highlight of my entire conference. I was able to learn as much, if not more, out of conversations at a dinner table. I am looking forward to attending AGPA next year!

I wanted to take a moment to thank you and other members of AGPA leadership for granting me the opportunity to attend this year’s AGPA conference in Boston, 2014. To say that it was a remarkable experience would be an understatement, for it was nothing short of professionally and personally transformative. This is the first such event that I have attended in my newfound professional career as a therapist and it did not disappoint! I enjoyed it so well that I hope to return again next year so that I can participate in the San Francisco Conference. The two day institute was exhausting, but in a marvelous kind of way. To have the opportunity to sit for two days with my peers and share my feelings unabashedly was such a gift; and that they in kind trusted me to listen to theirs was an honor of the highest order. Allowing myself to be vulnerable with my peer group is not something that I have historically practiced, so it was both at once scary and life-affirming to be able to do that at AGPA within the context of the institute and subsequent groups. As for the other work I participated in at AGPA, I most enjoyed the Lacan Group with Dr. Conklin. That experience stands as my absolute favorite because I am quite the fan of Lacan from my past work in cinematic theory. My takeaway from this experience in terms of what I can bring to the population I serve is that, while often uncomfortable, making oneself vulnerable in therapy can open up a world of possibilities for growth and change. If we are able to just briefly sit with our discomfort, we will soon see that it is safe to feel our way to the other side where we will find the gift of that experience, whatever it may be. I am a different type of therapist now that I have participated in APGA - I am stronger in my resolve to heal both myself and others and I find even greater depth and meaning in the reciprocity of the client-therapist relationship.

Thanks again for a wonderful experience! I am beyond grateful!

This year’s AGPA was encouraging and rejuvenating for several reasons. First, it always feels good to be a part of the cohesive and connected AGPA community that rallies around each other in support and motivates one another to do more. Catching up with old friends, colleagues, and supervisors from last year’s AGPA and making new networking opportunities from this year’s workshops provided a wonderful outlet to increase my professional development. In addition, the plenary talk about polyvagal theory was fascinating and related well to my current work with Veterans who have PTSD. I was thrilled to bring back my notes and discuss my new knowledge with my Veterans Affairs (VA) supervisors and apply it in therapy with Veterans. Also, joining the special interest group meetings were informative and assisted in collaboration with other VA providers across the country. I was pleasantly surprised and hopeful to find a handful of VA professionals at this conference. I hope to stay in the VA and begin to establish a long-term support network in this field that enjoys doing process work with Veterans.

Second, this being my second year attending AGPA, I felt more prepared to explore process and engage in discussions. From last year’s conference I could clearly see the changes that I made in becoming a more resilient group leader. This year I wanted to increase the degree of change to areas that I knew little to no information about. I thoroughly enjoyed the coupling workshop with Dr. Coche and the psychodrama workshop with Dr. Treadwell. These workshops provided new material and an innovative way of presenting therapy, which was highly stimulating, rewarding, and refreshing. I also found it helpful to recalibrate and retune my emotional state (and take a break from examining
my cognitive and behavioral states) as a person who does therapy, and to examine ways that I can better utilize my client’s emotional state in a session.

Third, I am so blessed to have had the opportunity to be awarded this scholarship. AGPA is the most unique conference that I have ever attended, and when I try to explain it to other peers they are amazed that such a conference exists. I am a huge advocate for AGPA and am always trying to get my supervisors and peers to attend. I was happy to see that one of my previous supervisors came for the first time this year.

When the conference ends, I always feel more knowledgeable, more accepting of where I am, and a little drained from the intensity. However, I also feel leaving wanting more, and excited about next year’s conference. Thank you so much for providing this opportunity to trainees and early professionals.

I am writing to express my sincere gratitude to you and the donors for making the 2014 AGPA Conference in Boston, Massachusetts a reality for me. I was thrilled to learn of my selection for a scholarship and I am deeply appreciative of your support. While attending the three-day conference, I had the pleasure of participating in fascinating groups which included Dialectical Behavior Therapy for Co-Occurring Conditions, Bibliotherapy in a Group Workshop and Object Relations, A Dream Not Explored is Like a Letter Not Opened, “The Invisible War”, Managing Anger for PTSD as well as Containing and Exploring Persecutory Self-States in Group. As a recent graduate in a counseling program, I decided to focus on areas of interest based on my internship experience, education and areas in which I crave more knowledge. As a counselor intern, I facilitated groups, often utilizing Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), which proved beneficial to a majority of our clients. Participating in groups with skilled therapists during the Conference was an eye opening experience and I was able to recognize aspects of DBT, that I had yet to incorporate as well as ways of introducing that material to future groups. Discerning techniques to use with clients who deal with co-occurring concerns will be beneficial in many settings within the mental health field. I was enthusiastic to attend and participate in groups during the Conference focused on trauma. While I notice trauma is rampant, I feel inadequately prepared to facilitate groups in which it is the main topic. I was eager to gain a better understanding of the ways in which trauma is experienced and knowing at the same time that it plays out in a distinct way for each individual. I am under the impression that this will be an important part of successfully connecting as a group facilitator in a trauma focused group. During the PTSD group, it was clear that anger is prevalent and if given full expression can bring the group into a direction that may be unhealthy. I witnessed first hand, techniques used to diminish the anger elicited during a group, while respecting the feelings and information that the individual has courageously brought forth. My experience of the group facilitator’s role-play of challenging scenarios was inspirational and educational. During Integrating Two Models for the Treatment of Addictions, I was in awe. This group demonstrated for me what can transpire when a facilitator is passionate, caring and open. The environment that was created, fostered vulnerability and was a spectacular learning experience that I am lucky to have had during my lifetime, much less my first year at the AGPA Conference. Meeting Counselors, Psychiatrists, Psychologists and Social Workers from around the world will be an experience I never forget and the relationships developed will always be special. What I have learned from those whom I have met has begun to shape my journey and I am hopeful in the future I will be able to contribute to help another student find their way. Thank you again for your generosity and support. I promise you, as I continue working towards a career in this amazing field, will give back to others, as a group facilitator and hopefully a contributor to scholarships for students in the future.
A few weeks ago, I had the privilege of attending my first American Group Psychotherapy Association (AGPA) conference. My supervisor and group enthusiast, Joe Shay, first planted the idea of my attending after discussing my enjoyment of experiences co-leading an interpersonal group at McLean and working with groups in leadership development. With his encouragement, I applied for and received scholarship support for AGPA membership and conference attendance, making my participation possible. After surveying the conference offerings, I registered for the five day program, including a two day process group and multiple child and adolescent-themed offerings that I hoped would complement my soon-to-begin child and adolescent psychiatry fellowship.

My conference experience started with my first-ever institute. I quickly discovered that my experience of the institute process group greatly differed from my experience of our residency T-group. For one, meeting with a group of mostly new acquaintances without substantial outside relationships accelerated the development of the group for me, while simultaneously allowing for directed attention to understanding process and group dynamics. I found the institute to be a powerful experience for increasing my self-awareness in group and for understanding how groups work. I am grateful to my groupmates making possible this personally important shared experience. Having completed the institute, I have been considering how to apply my experience to improving my co-leading of my interpersonal group and in other areas of my life where groups form.

Regarding the conference, I was pleasantly surprised to find that most sessions ran as groups. This was the first time that I had been to a conference that was not strictly didactic. The experience of themed, collaborative work groups of experienced practitioners and interested learners with diverse experience and backgrounds was energizing and facilitated my participation and learning. I found that I took away practical lessons from these experiences, especially from demonstration groups that included member participation and group discussions that allowed individuals to share their own knowledge and experience. After participating in an all-day workshop on adolescent groups and a few other sessions related to working with children and adolescents in groups, I felt I had achieved my goal of becoming better equipped to lead these groups when my fellowship training begins this summer.

A particular highlight was attending the Northeastern Society for Group Psychotherapy dinner. In addition to enjoying the meal, it was a great opportunity to meet other local practitioners and to share stories, have fun, and relax. And as an avid humorist, I reveled in the evening’s entertainment, and I especially enjoyed hearing the offerings of both my supervisor and my T-group leader! The dinner was a great opportunity to learn about NSGP and its offerings, including its upcoming conference in June, which I’ve started encouraging my colleagues to consider attending.

In the end, I found the AGPA to be a fun, energizing conference experience with exciting people and ideas. I learned quite a bit about groups, their workings, and their utility, and I am excited that the future for groups in mental health treatment could be quite bright. I am thankful to the Group Foundation for Advancing Mental Health for making it possible for me to attend a great conference. I am hopeful that I will continue to be able to work with groups in my professional work, and that I will be able to remain involved with NSGP and AGPA in the future.

The AGPA annual meetings have always presented me with the opportunities for self exploration and continued growth as a group therapist. This year was no different. Having almost completed my graduate training and being and on the verge of becoming a bona-fide professional, I was especially looking for workshops that would help me in my new role. I attended workshops with two dual themes: trauma and working with differences in group therapy. An additional opportunity that I appreciated from this meeting was attending a workshop on providing supervision as this is a role I will be embarking on upon graduation and for which I have not had formal training. I left the workshop with an understanding that supervision was foremost about helping one’s supervisee with the struggles they were having in therapy, which would then translate into the
patient’s welfare. I had always assumed the primary role of supervision was the patient, rather than one’s supervisee!

Another highlight for me was the large group experience. I experienced in a different way, the miracle of talk therapy, and its ability to bridge differences across political, racial, age, and gender divides.

I want to thank the Group Foundation for Advancing Mental Health for the generous support which affords students like myself the opportunity to participate in this week-long conference. Attending the annual meeting has provided a valuable component to my training as a group therapist that is not covered in my education.

I wanted to send a brief thank you note for helping me obtain a scholarship to the 2014 AGPA Conference. The AGPA’s willingness to offer this kind of assistance makes it possible for individuals like myself to manage the increasing costs associated with housing and travel. I believe this is especially important for those of us who have made the commitment to leave long-term careers to develop our new careers as psychotherapists.

I attended the Two-Day Institute and found it a wonderful way to immerse into the Group-as-a-Whole concept. In addition, I took the Certification Training in group therapy. The two, together, were a great foundation for future practice. I also had the opportunity to attend Judith Coche’s training on couple’s group therapy. These trainings were of such high caliber, motivating, and I’m excited to put the training into action.

Attending this conference, for the first time, was a daunting experience and having a scholarship made the effort easier and just the assistance I needed.

I feel so fortunate to have experienced AGPA again. This was a particularly important conference for me as it was the culmination of a three year institute for me. It is such a unique experience to be able to connect with the same people at the same time of year for the past three years at different points in our lifetime. I also had the good fortune of performing for the fourth time with the Red well Theater. This year was the most intense performance I had to do, which dealt with recovered memories, trauma, and distant family connections. I always leave the conference feeling very full and charged in my work. Once thing that I immediately took and applied to my practice is photoanalysis, which I learned from a discussion over dinner with a new colleague. This meeting has become such a standard part of my year, that I have come to expect it every year.

First and foremost, thank you for the generous scholarship to attend Dr Stuart Aledort’s Institute “Excitement and Shame in Group Psychotherapy”. With your support, my knowledge of various forms and possibilities of group psychotherapy broadens every year. This knowledge continues to navigate and direct my educational vision and future goals.

I interviewed last week for the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) with a concentration in the Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP) program at the University of TN. The department head asked me how I would use this degree. My answer? “I hope to facilitate trauma and addiction groups and prescribe within those group settings”. They requested that I repeat my intention again so they could write it down! I have an unexpected English course to take for completion of my current curriculum (RN to BSN), which may delay admission to the DNP program until next fall 2015. The end of April will bring some clarity regarding the doctoral admission date.

Stu’s institute has been profound in my own personal process. The connection with all of the institute group members has been ongoing via email. I will be staying with one of the institute group members
next week when I visit Chicago. I cherish these bonds and hope to nurture them for years to come. Through AGPA, I have come into contact with other nurses and PMHNPs who run groups. They are and will be great resources as I progress through the years.

Thank you again for affording me this wonderful opportunity to attend the 2014 AGPA Conference. I thoroughly enjoyed it, and found it to be a rewarding experience.

I attended both Thursday and Friday's conference days. First off it was striking to me how the conference attendees represented such a diverse international and national presence. I could be discussing a panel or workshop with someone from Europe, and then networking with a colleague from Los Angeles, California, or Austin, Texas. Having a sense of being part of a much larger community and hearing so many different perspectives was invaluable and inspiring. The scholarship allowed me to mix with this amazing, mix of people, as well as learn from them.

I could go into specific of each workshop and panel I attended but this is meant to be brief, so let me pull out some highlights and takeaways instead. I appreciated the discussion of marketing couples groups from the private practice lunch discussion, I benefited from hearing how some couples experts incorporated mandatory psychoeducation groups with deeper group work, and I loved the intense discussion of bringing authenticity into your practice, and addressing any shame. I also liked hearing from the leadership panel especially about finding a personal and professional balance - something many of us struggle to find.

However while I enjoyed all these nuggets, and more, I'd say the experiential components of the conference were the shining moments. While I unfortunately wasn't able to attend the full conference -- and have heard amazing things about the two day intensive -- I feel I made the most of my time by volunteering several times to be in the "fishbowl" or group demonstrations and letting myself be vulnerable to fully experience group process. Several times members commented how pleased they were to see a new member volunteering. However to me it was a no-brainer to get the most out of the experience you have to dive in! So I believe my time was well spent. It not only reminded me what it was like to be on the other side - not the facilitator but the participant- but also gave me personal insights. I also really enjoyed the older adult with medical illness movement experiential piece. It was a rewarding experience that reminds me to keep in mind more movement or art components in addition to talk group work.

Overall, the conference was an intense, well put together, high brow endeavor. It reenergized, inspired, and the membership, online community, and journal will hopefully help to keep the light burning. My only regret, not being able to attend the 2 day intensive...but perhaps in the future.

Many thanks again for your generosity.

I have been a group therapist for ten years and have been an active member of NSGP for just over a year. I have a private practice in Cambridge, MA, which I started 3 years ago. My supervisor at this time, Sara Emerson, encouraged me to apply for this scholarship to make it more tenable for me to attend this year’s conference. I am most grateful to have received a 35% scholarship to attend this year's AGPA conference in Boston.

I attended all six days of the conference, beginning with the Special Institute by Dr. Bessel van der Kolk, “The Body Keeps Score.” I specialize in running groups for adults with childhood developmental trauma disorders. As a psychotherapist and a biochemist (I also have a Ph.D. in
biochemistry), Dr. van der Kolk’s presentation was the most relevant to my work. As part of my treatment approach, I have utilized experiential interventions, such as expressive therapy and psychodrama with groups and have found them to help move clients through their trauma so that they can be more present-focused in their lives. What I took away from Dr. van der Kolk’s presentation was the increased understanding of why, on a physiological level, these and other body-oriented therapies work with trauma survivors. The presentation also inspired me commit to getting more training in specific areas of body-centered therapy for trauma and to begin to put these into practice with my clients and with my groups.

I also had the privilege of attending a two-day institute with Dr. Robin Good as the group leader. Having previously attended a one-day institute through NSGP, I was excited about what a two-day institute experience would be like. As with the NSGP institute, I found that it was an opportunity for personal and professional enrichment. On a personal level, I was able to learn something about myself. What I learned was something of a surprise and I value it deeply. The group treated my personal feeling and experience with respect and understanding that was very healing for me. Dr. Good’s “noticing” was an important part of this positive experience.

On a professional level, I was able to learn from Robin’s here-and-now affect-oriented style and directly apply what I learned from observing Robin in my ongoing group. Robin redirected members to focus on their feeling response and on what was happening in that moment. I found it valuable to have experienced that redirection myself as a member and notice where it brought me to emotionally. It reminded me of the importance of staying focused on affect and the here-and-now as a leader in my own groups. In a group wherein members have past traumatic experiences, it is often important to keep them in the moment and have them notice that this moment is different from what history has taught them to expect.

I attended a variety of workshops over the last three days of the conference. I focused on themes of trauma, interpersonal neurobiology and psychodrama. The Workshop entitled “Using Psychodramatic Techniques to Maximize Group Process: Through the Lens of Interpersonal Neurobiology” by Sue Barnum and Kate Cook pulled us right in by inviting us to participate in a number of basic psychodramatic techniques. These were simple tools that I could put into practice immediately in my own group. Kate Cook’s passion for psychodrama was infectious and fun to witness.

I also enjoyed the workshop entitled “Assimilating Psychodrama Modality into the Group Cognitive Behavioral Model (GCBM): New Directions for Action Methods” by Dr. Thomas Treadwell. I appreciated how creatively Dr. Treadwell has integrated these two well-known models. Beginning with the cognitive modality as a way to set up the psychodrama seemed to hone the work done in the psychodrama so that it was more productive. It also allowed me to see how cognitions were being played out behaviorally and how to work with the problematic behaviors themselves, rather than stay in an intellectual realm.

Joeseph Shay’s presentation, “Couples Gone Wild, “ was both entertaining and educational. I thoroughly enjoyed his wit and humor and walked away with some concise strategies to help me with my couples work. (I also left with the reassuring sense that I was not doing so badly with my couples, based on the video clips he chose for our analysis!)

Dr. Mitchel Adler’s workshop, “Hunger and Longing: Building Intimacy Through Mind/Body Integration and Interpersonal Neurobiology” was also memorable. It was the last workshop of the conference and everyone’s hunger and longing was very activated. There was no problem filling the fish bowl for the demonstration. Indeed, participants were practically fighting over the opportunity. Dr. Adler
presented a nice balance of didactic and experiential that made the material accessible and easy to apply to my own practice. I particularly appreciated Dr. Adler sharing his Agreement and helping us think of dependency as a natural part of being alive, rather than something that needs to be managed or escaped.

Overall, my experience of AGPA was one of sticking my finger in many different pies and discovering which ones I liked best. I found myself surprised at times by what theories or methodologies I was drawn to (or was not drawn to). It has allowed me to identify the directions I would like to take in my own training and practice. The conference allowed me to put aside my everyday life and get in touch with my own goals as a practitioner.

I was also able to make new connections with other group psychotherapists. When I joined NSGP, I had just started my therapy practice and was thrilled to find a place where I could join together with other like-minded therapists. I hope for AGPA to be an extension of my NSGP ‘home.” A place where I can continue to learn, grow and develop relationships that are meaningful. I am very much hoping to attend the conference in San Francisco next year!

I had a wonderful experience at the AGPA conference in Boston this year. With the help of a very generous scholarship from AGPA, I was able to attend the special institute with Dr. Bessel van der Kolk and the two day institute entitled “Safe Enough to Find Words,” a trauma-focused group psychotherapy process. Being a somatically-based trauma therapist, I found Dr. Van der Kolk’s seminar inspiring and affirming. Truthfully, I was so tickled I felt like I could sit there for days soaking up the information he was delivering!

The two day trauma-focused institute with Dr. Robert Klein and Dr. Suzanne Phillips was equally informative and encouraging. I had attended the institute two years ago and found my experience there to be the most life-changing aspect of the conference for me. The institute this year certainly lived up to my expectations based on my first experience. The group process was healing, educational, life-affirming, and professionally confirming in a way that I have never experienced before in any of my post-graduate training experiences. We cried. We argued. We shared. We examined. We found words. We made friends. It was incredible.

My family has experienced an unexpected financial crisis in the last year that hasn't allowed for the luxuries of as much professional training and travel as I would like. What an absolute gift it was to be accepted for a scholarship and get to experience both the special institute and the two day institute! My experiences far exceeded my already high expectations of the conference.

My experience at the AGPA conference 2014 was one of the more transformative and meaningful experiences, personally and professionally, I have had in some time, and I am grateful for the AGPA scholarship fund for helping to make this happen. It was my first time having ever participated in this conference, and due to my own availability, I only attended the 2 day institute. This experience was, as I said, transformational. Having never actually participated in a process-oriented therapy group before, my eyes and ears were opened in a new way.

The institute was challenging, to be sure. After the first day, I was confused about what to make of the group. The leader was using a modern analytic theoretical approach, so the focus was entirely on the “here and now” in the room. This approach, as well as the group members, helped me get more in touch with what I was feeling in the room and then encouraged to express it in a way that felt comfortable for me. Of course, a lot of what was going on for me internally was quite distressing and
negative. Things I didn't like about the leader or group members or whatever. Feeling encouraged to share these things, and then listened (for the most part) when I did, was a growing experience and left me feeling relieved and more connected and closer to many of the people in the group. It was too bad the group was only 2 days! Felt like there was so much more to be processed—and issues and dynamics that were left untouched and unexpressed. Of course, these issues and dynamics continue to be processed and explored (to a lesser extent) within myself one month later.

After the institute, I noticed that my personal relationships and my sessions with clients felt deeper and more open. I was more willing and able and interested in exploring and teasing out the "here and now" with the people I was with. I was able to help my clients, as well as the groups I am a member/leader of, get more to the heart of the matter, while at the same time staying patient and attuned to where the person is at the given moment.

Having had such a positive experience at AGPA 2014, I am looking forward to next year, and have hopes that scholarship funds will be available once again!

I want to thank The Group Foundation for Advancing Mental Health for providing me with the scholarship to attend the AGPA conference. This conference is like no other. What other conference is there out there where one can learn about a subject such as group therapy in one of the best ways possible – by being in their own group therapy experience.

The Institute was one of my highlights of the conference. Not only was I able to work on some of the deepest issues affecting me, but I was able to see others working through their dark and troubling issues as well. My Institute had it all – anger, grief, longing, laughter and care. I witnessed a younger female group member weep as she discuss her troubled relationship with her father. An older male group member looked at the younger woman and stated “If I was your father, I would encourage you. I would encourage you.” The group was silent and everything to seemed to slow down in that wonderful moment. The female group member gazed at this man and wept due to the deep empathy she was receiving. And I was moved as well of the incredible display of affection that I was witnessing. This is exactly why I love this conference because amazing occurrences like this happen.

In addition to the wonderful training experience I received, I also was able to network with other therapists who also work within a veteran’s hospital setting. The conversations I had sparked a fire in me to form a network of individuals who will not only work towards becoming Certified Group Psychotherapists, but will also spread the word to other individuals in our organization who don’t currently know about AGPA. Our dream is to establish group therapy training, led by AGPA, across all the veteran’s hospitals. In doing so, we can ensure that the group therapists are prepared and confident with their skills and knowledge to offer effective group psychotherapy.

Living and working in the most remote archipelago in the world (Hawaii) it is very easy to feel isolated. Add to that the fact that I am in the throes of building a private practice and the sense of community I felt to be among so many who are passionate about group therapy has given me just the energy needed to strive on.

The "Process Group Experience," led by Dr. Arnold Cohen, continues to impact my life and practice in a myriad of positive ways, only some of which are conscious. The Two-Day "Principles of Group Psychotherapy," was especially helpful in enabling me to know myself so that I can more effectively help others.
Sometimes it is the "accidents," in life that have the most meaning. I accidentally wandered into the Big Group on its first day. What an adventure that was! Literally not-knowing where I was, I was existentially sucked into the vortex of being in one mysterious and thrilling present moment after another. Having a self-described Palestinian and Israeli as co-facilitators brought the raw emotions, the unlimited possibilities for our self-destruction or salvation as a planet into our hotel room in Boston. Everything was right there.

Once again, as we say here, MAHALO, for this fantastic opportunity!

This was my first AGPA Conference, and I am both grieving the end of this experience and excitedly anticipating next year's Meeting. I continue to feel grateful for my scholarship, which allowed me to participate in the full week's events. I am a beginning practitioner who is transitioning from student to professional, and I could not have attended the conference without the aid of a scholarship.

The 2014 Annual Meeting in Boston marked many impactful firsts for me- my first Annual Meeting, my first encounter with AGPA, my first two-day experience group, and my first large group experience. My week began with my first two-day Institute, which was an exceptionally intense and meaningful experience. I found myself acutely aware of my own complex feelings, and observant of how our leader worked with affect as it surfaced (or didn't) in the room. In fact, this became the learning theme of my conference- how to work with hidden affect as it surfaces, both within oneself (as a leader) and within and between group members. Since completing the conference, I have taken this awareness into my practice and am "trying on" new strategies to facilitate here-and-now processing of reactions, feelings, and attachment patterns within the context of my groups. This experience also reminded me of how much there is to learn in this area, and inspired me to join an online group experience aimed at better understanding the relationship between attachment, emotion focused therapy, and group therapy.

Perhaps the most moving element to my conference experience was the warm and welcoming atmosphere, which allowed me to feel connected and supported in ways I couldn't imagine. I was moved by the generations of members who seem to have found a secure homebase in AGPA, and who so kindly and intentionally are creating this "home" for us new members. This connection was so palpable that I felt a loss and an emptiness when the Conference ended, which has left me yearning for more next year.

I am a new professional and have attended the AGPA Conference for the first time this year. It has been an incredible experience. First and foremost because I have experienced every seminar as a gift, filled with new insights (and I am stating this after having attended a lot of conferences).

Specifically valuable to me has been the combination of content and process in most of the seminars.

With one exception (an elderly man who tried to teach couples therapy, but was, obviously because of his age no longer capable of doing so) all seminar leaders were committed, sophisticated and impressive teachers (many thanks to all of them!).

It is hard for me to make any suggestions regarding a possible improvement. But let me mention one issue: As someone who is new to the field and who had not known anyone before showing up at the conference it has been difficult for me to make contact to people beyond the boundaries of the seminars.
Nevertheless, I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity. Hopefully I will be able to attend next year's AGPA Conference.

I felt like an adolescent packing for band camp. I'd never been to an AGPA conference before, let alone Boston. And if I'm going to go, I'm going all in! — roommate and all!

“I'm getting too old for this,” I told my wife. “This is a second career and I'm pushing 50. Besides, what if my roommate snores?”

“Then you'll get along just fine!” she said as she pushed me out the door, “You two can serenade the hotel floor with a duet.”

I knew this was an opportunity too good to pass up. The Wilkenfield scholarship provided me an opportunity to attend this conference. I would have never attended if not for the generosity of this husband and wife team. I'm doing a residency in psychiatry...a second career, and admittedly, I've attended some awful groups in my time and I was excited to see how it is supposed to be done.

Eight months ago, a faculty member in my residency program forwarded an email to another faculty member who forwarded it to another who eventually sent it to me. It announced the meeting of the Tri-State regional conference for group therapy in Dayton, OH. I totally enjoyed it. Everyone there kept asking me if I was going to the "national meeting" in Boston. “Sure!” I said and looked into registering that weekend. “Apply for the scholarship!” they said, “you'd be a perfect fit!” I did and am very grateful that it all worked out.

During the week of the conference, I met a great guy in a roommate who kept me laughing and after spending only a couple of hours with him, felt as if I'd known him all my life. I attended an intensive, two-day institute...no need to worry about snoring, the institute was exhausting! I slept quite well that night! Themes of connection, unique experience revealing universal truth, and comfortable vulnerability permeated my dreams. I met former therapists who greeted me with a big hug and introduced me to their friends and I felt genuine warmth that secured my feeling that I belonged here. I met Dr. Wilkenfeld, the man who made this scholarship possible and his wife. The welcoming warmth was overwhelming. After commenting at lunch that my wife and I had spent some time in the San Francisco Bay Area decades ago, Dr. Wilkenfeld's wife insisted that I bring my wife to the conference in San Francisco next year. “While you guys are in conference, we'll go play!” We've set the date for next year. During the following week, I attended a workshop on mindfulness, listened to a lot of one-liners cleverly disguised as a workshop on humor, and held back a tear or two during a workshop on religious trauma. After returning to my residency program, I'm in the process of getting my own group started under the guidance of a CGP faculty member and hope to have it underway by summer.

Thank you again for this opportunity!

Attending the AGPA Annual Meeting has been a highlight of my early professional career. The opportunity to meet and collaborate with the best minds in the field is truly a gift and energizes and inspires me as I move forward with my career. The level of knowledge and expertise exhibited by those in attendance and those presenting is unparalleled. The relationships and connections formed will continue to sustain me throughout the year until I can return for another helping of AGPA! I am so thankful for the support of the contributors to the Group Foundation for supporting my attendance.
Thank you for the opportunity to attend the AGPA Boston conference this year. I gained a great deal from the experience, most notably the institute, of course. My institute (Straus) was particularly helpful as a young clinician for the self-understanding I am still developing in my clinical work to identify countertransferences and emotional reactions of my own. I would say that aside from the institute, the more memorable educational groups included the Lacan group (23) and the Gestalt group (12) and I have incorporated the "Encounter" technique into my thinking already. I also brought that lesson back to my supervision group (David Panzer’s GPS clinic group supervision at Rutgers GSAPP). The Endings group (93) was also very memorable, given the individuals and AGPA members I met in that setting. The Special Institute with Bessel Van der Kolk was also exceptional, and a highlight of the conference for me. Personally, my interests as a young clinician are in existential approaches to schizophrenia and severe mental illness. I attended one educational group on each of those topics but since these are difficult areas for group psychotherapy, wished I could have learned more about how to help me better deliver psychotherapy.

More specifically, I would say that in regards to my group therapy practice, I have learned from the conference how to better manage my own anxieties as a leader. I noticed in my institute that I shared the same mistrust of others to operate in the group the way I wanted them to as I do as a leader of my own group in my clinical training. This helped me to question why I wanted others to behave in one way rather than some other way in the first place, and how to relinquish more of my (fantasied) control over the group. I noticed immediately when I returned to my own group that I felt less of a compulsion to act, intervene, and direct the flow of the group and allow the group to emerge on its own.

As I mentioned briefly, I shared the “Encounter” method with my supervision group, and might be sharing my increased knowledge of Lacanian theory to another supervision group I am part of later this semester. As I am preparing for my internship year at a college counseling center in the summer, I expect to take an active lead in group therapy promotion at that setting. The center has some groups running at the moment, but due to the high volume nature of college counseling, I expect a more organized and coherent group program would be of great benefit. While this knowledge, strengthened at AGPA, will aid those relationships, at the conference itself I would say I improved and generated new relationships with AGPA members as well. I met a number of group therapists who are alumni of my graduate program, and managed to meet some new friends through my current peers that I attended the conference with.

Thank you again for the opportunity and the generous scholarship. I hope to attend future AGPA conferences, given the positive experiences I had in Boston.

What a great experience this year’s AGPA Annual Meeting was, again! I travelled to the conference from Switzerland three times and this time I was a local here in Boston, which was a special experience. I had an amazing experience in my Institute where I built some very special relationships and took some interpersonal risks which helped me to go on growing. During the entire conference I met so many great clinicians and people, connected with new people and deepened existing friendships. I carry these people with me all year long, they are with me as mentors and friends, inspiring me in my work, sitting on my shoulder and giving me strength in difficult (clinical and private) moments.
Totally unexpected, but wonderful was, when, a couple of weeks after the Annual Meeting, I got a call from a new AGPA-friend who referred a patient to me. AGPA-connections also help you establish yourself in the community and get referrals.
In my training program I’m encouraging all my friends and colleagues to attend AGPA meetings and to get involved with group work, it’s a hell of a modality!
This year I met another clinician who works with a forensic population for the first time. We decided to found a new Special Interest Group (SIG) for forensically working clinicians! I’m so looking forward to next year’s conference and new „forensic connections“ and exchange.
Again, this year’s Annual Meeting was an educationally and personally inspiring and enjoyable experience for me, I’m already looking forward to the AGPA Annual Meeting 2015 in San Francisco!

I was awarded an AGPA scholarship and attended the 2014 Annual Meeting in Boston this year. I was a first-time attendee and also am a graduate student currently working toward my MSW, so my contribution to discussions were limited. This made me like a sponge, trying to soak up as much information as possible in one day. Although I only attended the conference for one day, I was able to learn a lot and take some new skills and techniques home with me to hopefully use in my future career.

I am interested in the older adult population, and thus selected three presentations that focused on this demographic. I attended: Surviving and Thriving in the Midst of Medical Illness: Facilitating Deep Connections in Older Adults through Group Therapy; Treating Depression Using Interactive Cognitive Group Therapy;; and Are You Ready for the Silver: Creating Groups for Aging Adults. Each presentation was interesting and interactive, something I was surely not expecting but very much enjoyed. The interactive portion of each presentation was by far the best part of the conference. Because there are so many professionals from all over the world coming to this conference, the interactive portion allowed everyone to share their experiences and collaborate. This showed me that the people who attend these conferences each year have a very tight-knit community and value each attendee tremendously. The interactive aspect was also helpful because the attendees were not just being lectured by one person, but were able to contribute to this positive learning environment. It was a very comfortable setting to be in, which was very important to me because I was a first-time attendee.

The first presentation I attended, Surviving and Thriving in the Midst of Medical Illness: Facilitating Deep Connections in Older Adults through Group Therapy was my favorite of the three I attended that day. This presentation had three components to it: lecture, interactive dance therapy, and interactive group therapy session. The lecture explained the older adult population and how it is growing rapidly. It also touched on topics
of what themes should be presented in a group experience for older adults, what is important to older adults in their lives, greater themes such as hope and quality v. quantity of life, being self-aware, and problem-based coping. This was extremely helpful in my understanding of the older adult population and what topics they would like to focus on in group therapy sessions.

The dance therapy was fun, relaxing, and very therapeutic. I was unaware that dance therapy existed until this, and I can see how helpful this type of therapy can be to so many older adults. We did a lot of movements in our seats and then began interacting with the people around us by touching, mirroring, and moving through and around them. There was a huge emphasis on touch and how this can be very therapeutic to this population, because they are seldom touched physically in their lives. I am very interested in this type of therapy, and may even look into studying this in my future.

The group therapy session simulated what a group therapy session would be like for older adults and was really helpful to hear some of the concerns of older adults. Themes included dying, listening to the doctor, medical illness, and loneliness. Watching this session was not only helpful to see the concerns of the population, but also how the therapist interacted with the clients.

The second session I attended was Treating Depression Using Interactive Cognitive Group Therapy. This presentation was less interactive than the last presentation. The presenter lectured the group on how cognitive thinking and strategizing can help lessen depression. He gave four strategies for this:

1. Teach connection between thought and feeling
2. Identify thoughts
3. Cognitive treatments
4. Use cognitive tools to challenge and explore dysfunctional thoughts
All the methods were shown on pieces of paper that the therapist has the clients fill out themselves. It seemed like a very distant approach to treating depression rather than a more interactive approach. But some strategies work better for others, so this approach could be helpful for some.

Lastly, I attended Are You Ready for the Silver: Creating Groups for Aging Adults. This presentation looked like it was going to be very interesting, and I was most excited to attend this presentation than any of the other ones. Unfortunately, the presenter was only given an hour and a half time slot, and the presentation she used was usually for much longer periods of time, one of which was an all-day presentation. So we barely got into the material before our session had ended. I do not think the presenter had prepared well enough for an hour and a half time slot.

Overall, I was very pleased with this conference. I learned various techniques in therapy and about the older adult population. I really enjoyed the community aspect of this organization, and that will most certainly be a lasting memory. I hope to gain even more knowledge attending these conferences in the future, and to contribute my experiences once I get into the field.

A deep, heartfelt thank you for the assistance you provided to me, as I was able to attend the AGPA Annual Meeting for the second time as a student. I decided to come to Boston for a corrective experience, as I had a very difficult time at the AGPA in New Orleans after my institute. During this meeting, I was able to voice the pain I had lived the year prior, as well as ask for the support of the group as I moved forward from that experience. There is something so deeply wonderful about being in a small institute group with colleagues, as the encouragement and care was sincere and healing. I moved into the rest of the conference with ease, and was able to be engaged and active in the remaining days of learning.

I enjoyed the various programs that I attended, from using projection in Gestalt Therapy, psychodynamic work in group process therapy to psychodrama. I loved the experientials I gained in hand out form to then be used with future clients and groups. What intrigues me most about the meeting is the scope of the background of the members that attend, having travelled internationally to come and share their knowledge. Being able to have access to those in the field from other countries is fascinating and beneficial, as it broadens my cultural knowledge as well as points out the limitations I have in my training.

As I am finishing up my internship, I find that I have a strong understanding of group work and process, a lot of that being credited to the AGPA conference. I have a level of confidence leading a group, that others new to the field may not. I have already begun to envision what it will be like to attend the conference as a member of the field and not as a student. My vision includes becoming a certified group psychotherapist in the near future, a vision I put together after attending this last meeting in Boston.
Thank you again for your time, commitment, and gracious giving up scholarships to those who may not have been able to attend otherwise. You have had a piece in shaping the Psychotherapist I move forward as today.

I would like to thank the selection committee for providing me with a scholarship which allowed me to participate in this year’s AGPA annual conference.

The scholarship received allowed me to attend the two-day institute. This was my second year participating in AGPA and my first time attending a two-day institute. I had a rewarding experience and I hope to continue my participation at AGPA. My participation in the two-day institute allowed me to grow as a person and as a group therapist. In addition, attending the different workshops/open sessions, etc. was also rewarding. I took a lot of good information back to my place of work and we are already thinking on how to implement some of the ideas gathered at AGPA. It also allowed me to network with some colleagues and I’m currently working on a proposal for next year’s AGPA in San Francisco. I’m excited to collaborate with these two colleagues from two different universities.

Again, thank you! Thorough the scholarship received I was able to have a good experience, grow as a person and professionally and to network with others.

I am honored and appreciative to have been the recipient of a generous scholarship to attend the 2014 AGPA Conference and Institute. The highlight of my time at AGPA was the two-day institute. It was my first experience in a process group and something that I will never forget. As a beginning clinician and current graduate student, I haven’t had many opportunities to facilitate groups. My understanding of group process and the member perspective was greatly deepened by the taking part in the two-day beginning clinician institute. Specifically, I’ve been able to integrate this understanding into my work with an eating disorder process group that I co-facilitate on a college campus. My time at AGPA improved my ability to notice and navigate the group process and has helped me gain my voice as a co-facilitator.

Another important program that I attended was the panel on Friday morning exploring the impact of vicarious trauma on therapists. This panel presented their work, stories, and experiences in a beautifully touching and impactful way that led the audience through the process of witnessing and healing. I was both touched and inspired by the vulnerability that the panelists demonstrated by sharing some of the painful and haunting ways that they have been impacted by their work with clients. This sort of sharing and story telling is especially helpful for me as a new therapist as I bring intentionality to my own work and self-care practices as a way of supporting my work with clients. I have been able to bring conversations around vicarious trauma back to my work at the university counseling center where I am interning though conversations in clinical team and with the other trainees.

As a graduate student, I wouldn’t have been able to attend any of AGPA without the generous scholarship. I am grateful beyond measure the substantial support that I received and the opportunities for growth and development that it afforded me.

The annual meeting for the AGPA was the culmination of my educational experience in a graduate psychology program at Naropa University. I feel completely nourished by this experience. After the process group for the two-day institute I am left with complete conviction in the power of groups to heal and the necessity of connection to others to thrive. The skillfulness and warmth of the process
group leader made the experience useful both personally as well as professionally. It was amazing to watch how a leader can bring a group of people together in a journey of exploration of self, other, and relationship. I feel extremely privileged to have had the opportunity to connect deeply with a group of people who at first were strangers and who I now consider friends. One relationship in particular, which I developed in the institute, is one that has changed my life forever through a simple act of timely kindness. After this experience alone, I feel like I got more than I could have imagined from the conference, even though it didn’t end there. The next three days of lectures, workshops, and socializing put the experience over the top. The only major problem was that I didn’t have enough time to take in everything! It was hard to choose which events to attend, when at any given moment, at least three strongly peaked my interest. As I attended the workshops and symposia over the course of the week, faces began to quickly become familiar. With the combination of the kindness of the administrators for the event, the hotel staff, the people I encountered in Boston, and the long-time AGPA attendees and faculty that I would meet in elevators or line-ups, I had an overwhelming sense of belonging and acceptance. Everyone involved with this event are so passionate about what they do. I don’t believe there is a single attendee who is not on fire with enthusiasm for bringing people together. The palpable zest for life is infectious in this community, most notably on the dance floor. Even though it was a “professional” event, the atmosphere during the week was one of celebration for life. The week was catalyzed by connection and serendipity, from start to finish. Even my taxi to the airport was amazing. The listserv put me in contact with two long-time participants who had flights at the same time as I did, and during the ride, the lively conversation between the taxi driver and the other participants made me feel like I had attended a private symposium on international relations and multicultural awareness. Great administrative set-up, that listserv! Great for bringing an already thriving community together!

I am grateful and proud to be a part of this vibrant and inspired community. There is a strong sense of support here which will undoubtedly help me when I begin leading groups in my internship. What I think will help me the most from this experience is my belief in the efficacy of groups to transform people's lives – my belief in what I’m doing – borne out of my firsthand experience from this meeting. This conference has changed me. I believe my aspiration to develop the skills to help create the causes and conditions for groups to heal will continue to unfold as I learn more about who and how I am as a group member and about what it means to affect and be affected by others. Without a doubt, I have found my professional home.

As regard my experience in BOSTON, I feel like in my home. I learned how I respect the needs of people and How I communicate with them. Also, I learned How I manage my time perfectly. I learned How I can manage a single session group. In my country, I arrange to participate in a workshop for group psychotherapy and to share my experience in BOSTON with my colleagues. Honestly, I look for attending the next annual meeting of AGPA next year in San Francisco.

I am writing to express a profound sense of gratitude for my 2014 AGPA Meeting experience, which would not have been possible without the generous scholarship I was awarded by the Group Foundation for Advancing Mental Health. My thank you letter has been delayed up to this moment due to a possible unconscious reluctance to consolidate the richness of my experience this year into words. As a new professional, my first AGPA experience was enriching in numerous domains of my professional and personal life, and hopefully this thank you letter express some of them.

On Monday I participated in SI-2 with Bessel van der Kolk where I expanded my working clinical knowledge of the neurobiology of trauma and trauma treatment. Dr. van der Kolk’s integrative lecture has enhanced my work with trauma survivors in areas such as self-regulation, memory, and
modalities for trauma resolution (EMDR, YOGA, IFS). I found his presentation of the research to be validating on many accounts in relation to how I currently work with trauma clients, and my hope is to further integrate many of the aspects of his presentation that I was unaware of into my current work.

On Tuesday I began my special institute participation as a member of Section XIII: Minding the Body and Embodying the Mind: Somatic Experiencing the Self in the Group. Roger Saint Laurent and Peter Taylor were astounding in their ability to create both didactic and experiential group experiences employing SE techniques. Their invitation to stay with bodily sensations while in group demonstrated to me that groups can become a profoundly safe container for the processing of trauma without necessarily relying on memory or verbal reports to facilitate healing. Dr. Saint Laurent and Dr. Taylor were remarkably sensitive to group processes which allowed me to integrate a considerable amount of the SE technique for my own future clinical use; their work also allowed me to experience directly what SE work feels like within my own body. The special institute alone was worth attending.

On Thursday I began the day with Dr. Porges’ opening plenary speech, which augmented much of the information from Dr. van der Kolk’s lecture in addition to inspiring me to deepen my own understanding of the polyvagal theory. In the morning session I attended K. Brynolf Lyon’s workshop 10: Containing and Exploring Persecutory self States in Groups. I experienced this workshop as very focused, allowing me to quickly integrate methods of directly working with persecutory self-states that inevitably emerge in groups. The discussion among the members of this workshop and Dr. Lyons was particularly lucid and illuminating on the subject of self states.

Thursday afternoon I attended Scott Conkright’s Master Workshop 23: Lacan, Desire and Group Psychotherapy. Dr. Conkright skillfully introduced the group to Lacan’s concepts and then used a Lacanian framework to lead a process discussion. I learned an incredible amount about the ways in with a Lacanian framework create a very exciting and profound group experience. Specifically, how group members express desire can be a rewarding theme to track and process. Similar to the other groups I attended at the conference, the leader created a very safe space in which I was able to process some of my own anxieties, inevitably leading to a very rich and moving workshop for me.

Friday morning began with Session 307: Current Trends in the Application of Modern Analytic Group Theory chaired by Dr. Elliot Zeisel. I found the emphasis in this session on body language to have instant application for my own work in groups. In addition, the fishbowl demonstration by Dr. Zeisel was amazing! The depths arrived it in one hour were inspiring and I have since looked into training further in Modern Analytic Group Theory.

In addition to the workshops I attended, I participated in the Lunch-Time Open Session Large Group on both Thursday and Friday. During these sessions I learned a great deal about my own anxiety in large groups, sub-grouping, and intergroup conflict. Also, I gained insights into possible political dynamics in the room as a result of the co-facilitation team being of Israeli and Palestinian origin. Previously, I had operated under the assumption that in large groups political affiliation and conflict was typically employed to defend against more ‘primitive’ anxieties; working in this group demonstrated to me that it can be detrimental to ignore political realities symbolized in specific members of the group.

Finally, in the afternoon on Friday I co-facilitated Workshop 66-5: Playing in Vulnerability: Using Improv Principles to Access, Explore, and Connect Through Vulnerable moments in Groups. Conducting this workshop was the initial impulse for my applying for a scholarship to the AGPA conference. My workshop was well attended and the response from the participants opened up new aspects of using improv in groups that I was previously unaware of. Specifically, I saw how groups could powerfully influence the content and behavior of improvisers in ways that illuminate dynamics.
within the group. I also saw that improv techniques could be used to facilitate and deepen group process. The improv scenes that emerged during the workshop ended up being springboards for themes that were resonating with the larger group as a whole. In general, I would say that the experience of conducting a workshop on a topic that I am passionate about at the AGPA conference enriched my own understanding of improv to a depth that I will be mining for years to come as I continue to expand on the subject in writings, didactic presentations, experiential groups, and my own personal experiences in groups.

In addition to the educational enrichment I received at the AGPA conference, I forged numerous personal and professional relationships with other attendees. I have continued to be in communication with many of the members with whom I connected during the week. I feel as though the safety of the conference and the intense nature of the group work at the conference enhanced my experience to a degree that is difficult to put into words. The experience of being immersed in an international community of professionals who share my passions was a deeply validating experience for me. I was reluctant and sad to leave on Saturday morning, and at the same time I feel like the connections that I made are so strong that they can survive spatial separation and they will continue to thrive into the future.

My life since the conference has been marked by enthusiastic conversation and sharing about my AGPA experience. I have discussed a considerable amount of my SE experience with other professionals who are curious about the SE modality. I have also expressed many of my insights about group process at with youth workers at a teen center that I work at. In addition, I have taken the observations about groups and improv to friends in the mental health profession and the improv theatre community alike. Finally, I have reached out to former professors who introduced me to many of my areas of interest (trauma, group relations, SE, and relational psychodynamic theory) to share with them many of the ways in which my experience at the AGPA conference expanded on the foundation they provided me with as a student.

In conclusion, I wish to re-state my gratitude to the Group Foundation for Advancing Mental Health for providing me with a scholarship to attend this year's conference. As a new professional my finances have been strained, and without this generous scholarship I would not have been able to attend. As previously stated, I feel like my professional, interpersonal, and intrapsychic life has been deeply impacted by my experience at the AGPA conference. I plan on attending the conference in the years to come, and I will likely continue to present at various times. My hope is that once my finances stabilize I will be able to pay this scholarship gift forward and contribute as a donor. Please feel free to use any of my comments to promote the conference, and do not hesitate to contact me if you have further questions about my experience. It was amazing!

I soaked up everything at the conference from the beginning I set foot at the Western to the very last minute of the last day. The institute I attended with Jim from Texas set the tone for the entire conference: openness, honesty, connection, and community. Wow! I feel that I made friends for life both with faculty and fellow attendees. I realized soon after the first event following my two day institute that each time I took the leap into ‘unchartered territory’ and participated directly such as in the ‘fishbowl’, my learning increased exponentially and I grew.

This is awesome at age 67 to experience the thrill of shifting internal boulders to allow room for new experience and insight.

Already my groups are reaping the benefits at my agency of AGPA conference. I feel that I walk into my leadership both taller and yet more humble and my increase confidence has meant freer expression on my part, more risk taking, and fuller and richer group member response.
I am grateful to have received a scholarship for this year’s conference. I am coming away deeply inspired by the connections I have made. I was privileged to have had the opportunity to be in groups with people who I consider mentors, some of whom welcomed me to become friends. I was inspired also to attend a conference which is so deeply grounded in the analytic tradition, and open to so many different perspectives. I attended a workshop on Lacan, a day-long seminar on Systems-Centered Groups, a class on psychodrama, and a 2 day process group at the institute. And many others. It's wonderful to be welcomed into this community of dynamic practitioners and learners.

I am grateful for the scholarship to attend the AGPA annual conference. While I had anticipated that it would be a meaningful experience, I had not quite appreciated just how profound it would be. I had the opportunity to attend a two day institute, a day long workshop on process addictions, and the two day principles of group psychotherapy course as well as plenaries and the gala. I learned a great deal as a group member in the institute process group. The experience was very intense and the insights I gained continue to unfold over time. The group psychotherapy course was a rich opportunity to learn both experientially and also didactically from a number of instructors. I met new people and also strengthened past relationships throughout the multi-day experience. I have had the opportunity to share my learning with colleagues at my agency and also to apply my experience to the groups that I lead. I am regularly reminded of how my attendance at the conference has enriched me and strengthened my group leadership skills.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your generous scholarship you awarded me the 2014 AGPA conference in Boston. Upon returning back to Los Angeles, to my job and private practice, my first response to my colleagues was feeling energized and rejuvenated. This was my second time attending an AGPA conference and I was just as amazed of how much work and energy has been put into training professionals about groups.

As in the first year, I had a difficult time choosing which workshop and presentation to attend out of so many wonderful choices. The two-day institute provided me with the opportunity to connect to other people in the group in a very meaningful way and the opportunity to learn more about myself. I also enjoyed the other group experiences and grateful for the opportunity to expand my perspective about different group leadership styles. Working with older adults and their caregivers, I joined the workshops which addressed working with this population and joined the older adult SIG.

As mentioned above, I would like to thank you again for your generous scholarship. I already marked on my calendar next year’s conference in San Francisco.

Another year, another week of incredible personal and professional growth made possible by the generosity of Group Foundation donors. This was only my second year at AGPA, and already, as someone in my process group remarked, I seemed so "comfortably integrated" into the AGPA family. Indeed, the AGPA family's nurturing, support, kindness, and generosity have been personally and professionally empowering. I am grateful for, andjoyed by, all that AGPA has given me and made possible.

AGPA has empowered me to discover incredible richness professionally, from my group relations involvement to the workshop I got to co-present this year on my two passions of improv and group dynamics. I am continuously grateful for all of this.
What I really want to talk about, however, is the personal enrichment that I have found at AGPA. Given the coincidence of some major crises in my personal/familial life with the AGPA Annual Meeting, I especially appreciated and leaned on the warmth, support, nourishment, and love I received in Boston from individuals (such as Gaea Logan, Katie Steele, and Jeffrey Roth) to groups (my process group, IGPS, and the Large Group!) to everything in between. I am grateful to have found mentors and friends and colleagues who guide and nurture me through highs and lows, and who celebrate my personal and professional milestones.

Now for a list of some of the things I have gotten out of some of the formal sessions at AGPA:

1) What a privilege to learn about trauma from Bessel Van der Kolk!
   • The two types of self-awareness (i.e., the autobiographical self and the moment-to-moment self) that Dr. Van der Kolk described was something that my co-presenter and I directly cited in our workshop on improv (i.e., improv cultivates this moment-to-moment self) on Friday.
   • Dr. Van der Kolk's repeated allusions to improv, theater, boxing, and other body work as being a crucial part of the training of trauma therapists are validating and inspiring.
   • It was also helpful and validating to hear Dr. Van der Kolk's perspective on the CBT vs. trauma-informed approaches to trauma. Currently training in both, I very much resonate with the painful tension between these modalities.
   • This was also the first time I am learning of the differences in etiology and treatment between trauma and disorganized attachment.

2) Cecil Rice gave a delightful send off to our institutes. I later used the following Dr. Seuss quote, which I heard from Dr. Rice, in my group dynamics guest lecture with Northwestern undergrads: "If things start happening, don't worry, don't stew, just go right along, and you'll start happening, too."

3) Steve Van Wagoner's 2-Day Institute was memorable. Recovering from dissonance is one of the most rewarding, powerful, and healing things to experience, and I certainly got that in Steve's group. I also enjoyed his willingness to take a risk in service of the task, as well as his gentle and precise work, which one member compared to delivering a baby. The more I reflect on the institute the more significance I uncover. I think I may have hit rock bottom with some personal issues between the first and second days of the institute. Steve contained and managed not only my stuff but also the rest of the stuff that was stirred up in a very active and intense group on competition, envy, and shame. The things I learned and the connections I made in my process group will continue to enrich me for a long time.

4) Scott Conkright's workshop on Lacan was inspiring. I continue to learn from it and to make connections to my clinical and improv work everyday. For example, for my guest lecture for the Northwestern undergrad group dynamics class, I cobbled together an improv exercise that was inspired by Scott's workshop and by my improv classes to illustrate the Lacanian limits of symbolic expression. I had pairs of students improvise scenes with designated premises (e.g., first date). I asked them to just be themselves and to respond authentically to one another, with the caveat that the only word they can use in their dialogue is "hamburger." As you may imagine, there was a lot of emotional connections and discoveries in spite of what was said.

5) The panel on Modern Analytics and its demo group, as well as Paul Kaye's workshop on shame, provided me with powerful group experiences that stretched my window of tolerance and warmed me up to face greater challenges in groups.

6) The colloquium on Silence in Groups: A Japanese model gave me some insight on my own tendency for silence in the beginning of groups. It also connected me to the psychodrama community in Japan, to which I will be moving this summer!
Well this essay has been a very Lacanian effort in how inadequately it has captured the fullness of my experience at AGPA and my gratitude for the myriad forms of support - financial and otherwise - that AGPA has given me. Thank you.

Being able to attend the 2014 AGPA Annual Conference after being unable to for the last two years was a wonderful experience. It was like a homecoming. The number one thing was reminded of the connections I feel within AGPA and how much I learn, especially experientially, from AGPA. I got to reconnect with people I haven’t seen in three years but the connection was still so strong that it felt like little to no time had passed. I am also a second generation AGPA member so I got to not only spend time with my father (who lives and practices several hundreds of miles away from where I live and practice) but I also got to forge relationships with other second generation AGPA members. It reminded me that sometimes the best understanding and connection comes from others who have had similar experiences (which I will now try to apply to future groups I start).

Because so much of my wonderful experience came experientially, it is hard to list facts or concrete interventions I learned. I suppose the most important thing I walked away from the conference with is a better understanding of myself and my reactions to different events, which I believe will serve me a lot more than facts or concrete interventions. Another experience that is so important to me that I receive at AGPA, is a sense of feeling connected and supported that helps so much with my self-care. Although of all of the workshops I attended, Exploring the Erotic Self was the least concrete and group experiential, it was probably the one workshop that I walked away having felt a deeper connection to myself AND realizing many thoughts and feelings I would like to and would benefit from exploring more.

There is NO WAY I could have attended the 2014 AGPA Annual Conference without a scholarship (and discounted hotel room). I have been licensed for a little bit more than a year and building a private practice is the only way it seems I can make money after having moved to a new area during the licensure process. Therefore, I am not making much money and cannot see any way I could have gone to the conference without a scholarship. By being able to attend the conference on a scholarship, my interest and passion in group work and AGPA has been renewed. I am 99% sure I will be registering for the 2015 conference and it greatly helps knowing that, if I need to, I can apply for a scholarship for next year’s conference as well.

At the AGPA annual meeting I was able to attend 3 days of the program, for Bessel van der Kolk’s presentation and for two-days of the group experience. This was a life-changing opportunity for me and I would like to express my gratitude for your financial assistance that allowed me to attend. Not only did I learn wonderful new information about trauma in the population that I work with, I learned about myself in the context of the group experience. I returned to my workplace and shared this experience with my staff; it has now been arranged for my group facilitator, Arnie Cohen, to provide outside consulting work for our group work at Faulkner Hospital.

In van der Kolk’s presentation I learned very powerful neurobiological findings about PTSD and the brain which I have been able to use as educational material in my psychoeducational groups and with my individual patients in order to validate their symptoms and biological response to trauma. I have been able to discuss the biological effects of abusive relationships, acute trauma, and recommend and explain EMDR and other effective trauma treatments for my patients. I work in Brigham and Women’s Faulkner’s Partial Hospitalization Program on a team of four clinicians. We each structure and run one group a day; these range from psychodynamic process groups to psychoeducational groups. Thus, at the conference I was able to take away new skills as a psychodynamic leader as well as educational tools.

The two-day group experience was the most life-changing element of the conference. I understood what it is like to be a group member in terms of the anxiety it raises and how exhausting it can be to be in therapy all day. This allowed
me to have more empathy and understanding for what patients in our day program are going through. During my time in the experiential group, both evenings I spent a lot of time thinking about myself and the other people in the group and how the group works to build incredible insights into the way people show up in the world. The way I showed up in that group represents exactly how I show up to my friends, family, coworkers and my partner. I gained a new respect for group work and I was very inspired by how powerful a group can be, with such seemingly effortless work on the facilitator’s part.

When Dr. Arnie Cohen debriefed his strategy for facilitation and decision making process for wording and time of interventions, I learned that although the role seems overwhelmingly important and powerful, there is also a basic framework to the art. I learned about the essential nature of creating a sense of safety and helping participants to put feelings into words. This knowledge gave me a new confidence and understanding of the purpose of a group leader. In the context of the group experience we were able to look back at Dr. Cohen’s choice of timing and words and see how all of his comments were applicable to these basic principles. We also learned about the group process of first finding similarities to draw connections between members before it shifts to efforts to differentiate from other group members. As a group member, I, for the first time, was able to see how vulnerable one feels in a psychodynamic group. I was able to look back on the moments that Dr. Cohen refocused the group to stay to the goal of putting feeling into words and keeping the focus toward what is happening in the room itself. We were able to see how this made the space feel safer, contained, and boundaries. I saw that all of Dr. Cohen’s interventions were decided on these basic principles, and I daily incorporate these ideas into the groups I lead in the Partial Hospital.

Never had I been able to conceptualize the purpose of a group so simply. This new insight into leading groups has been incredibly helpful in shifting my approach and focus in facilitation. I have also realized how helpful it can be in partial hospital to rearticulate this purpose and goal in simple terms at the beginning of each new day as there are new patients integrated each day who may not have been in any group setting before.

Upon return to the staff at the Partial Hospital Program, I was able to describe my experience and articulate the importance of group therapy and the important opportunity we have each day to effect significant change in our patients lives through effective facilitation of a safe space. This inspired my boss to look into hiring Arnie Cohen to provide consultation to our program to help us learn and practice new ways of facilitation of PHP groups which are vastly different from my group experience at AGPA, but also similar in many ways. Dr. Cohen will now be coming twice a week to train our team on group facilitation. This entire experience has shifted my mindset for how I imagine my future work in social work. I now am highly motivated to work on my facilitation skills, and I have redirected my long-term goals towards group-work when I eventually build a private practice.

Receiving a scholarship to attend the 2014 AGPA annual meeting in Boston is the gift that keeps on giving. This conference was one of the most meaningful conferences I have ever attended. My experience began with my participation in the two day institute titled Safe Enough to Find Words: Trauma Recovery in Group with Robert H. Klein, PhD, ABPP, CGP, DLFAGPA and Suzanne B. Phillips, PsyD, ABPP, CGP, FAGPA. As a trauma therapist myself, it was an invaluable experience to be a participant in a group that I would normally facilitate. The group leaders created a safe space in which our traumas could be processed and the way these experiences impact our current lives explored. I gained from the institute in countless ways, as I felt the group allowed for my own personal healing and allowed me to understand my group therapy clients more deeply than I ever have.

My positive experience did not end with the Institute but rather carried throughout the conference. Knowing that I had been given a gift by receiving a scholarship, I made sure to get the most out of my time in Boston. On the first day of the conference I attended, Challenges and Lessons Learned from a DBT-Based Skills Group in a College Counseling Center, Group as a Secure Base, “The Invisible War” Making the Reality and Recovery from Military Sexual Trauma Possible. Day two of the conference I attended, Current Trends in the Application of Modern Analytic Group Theory, Creating Connection: Mindfulness-Based Groups for Veterans Coping with PTSD, and The Heart of the Matter: Authentically Relating in Group. The last day I attended, Your Body Is Your Supervisor: Using Body Awareness and Expressive Movement to Explore Group Therapy Dilemmas and Not Again!! The Compulsion to Repeat Toxic Relationships with Abusive Partners and How Group Therapy Can Help. As I moved through the conference I was continually impressed with the level of excellence of the speakers along with the caliber of the conference attendees, who participated in enriched discussions and asked meaningful questions. One particular standout session was the Current Trends in the
Application of Modern Analytic Group Theory chaired by Elliot Zeisel, PhD, LCSW, CGP, DFAGPA. I was in complete awe from beginning to end as I heard the 4 speakers present and Dr. Zeisel facilitate a fishbowl group. I work as a therapist at the Rape Treatment Center in Santa Monica, CA part of the UCLA Health System. The type of trauma groups I co-facilitate are emotionally engaged psychodynamic group treatment. The learning objectives addressed during this session were particularly poignant for my work. I walked away from this session truly inspired.

Throughout the conference I was impressed with the warmth and openness of the attendees. I arrived to Boston knowing one person and left with many new acquaintances. As the time passes since the conference, I continue to email and stay connected to many of the special people I met. There is something about what AGPA fosters when hundreds of group therapists come together for this conference that is magically heartwarming. Even watching conference participants reconnecting with people they have met in conferences past, was touching. I imagine myself, years from now, as I continue to attend the conference to have a similar experience.

Upon my return I had the opportunity to share about my experiences with my coworkers and management. I have already begun work to expand The Rape Treatment Center’s group therapy program. I have spoken highly of the AGPA annual meeting and encourage many of my therapist colleagues and friends to attend next year’s conference in San Francisco. I tell them it is hard to capture in words, but you will be extremely impressed and you must experience it for yourself. I tell them I feel changed both personally and professionally.

Without the scholarship I would not have been able to attend this conference. I am so fortunate to have been awarded the opportunity. I definitely plan on attending future AGPA annual meetings for years to come. I left Boston with my heart and mind full and I am forever thankful.