LETTERS OF APPRECIATION RECEIVED FROM RECIPIENTS OF SCHOLARSHIPS TO ATTEND THE 2015 ANNUAL MEETING OF THE AMERICAN GROUP PSYCHOTHERAPY ASSOCIATION

Having just returned from the 2015 Annual Conference in San Francisco, CA, I wanted to write to express my deep gratitude to the AGPA organization for extending a scholarship to me.

This year's conference was exceptional in so many ways, from my institute on love and hate, to an all day workshop on working with adolescents, to learning to how to start a thriving private practice, and finally a body movement workshop that brought it all together for me.

In addition there were special interest groups to connect with, lunch and dinners to enjoy, fun and dancing to be had, and so much more.

This being my fourth conference, I felt even more a part of the AGPA family in there being so many more people I knew from previous years, and new relationships made this year.

Thank you to all who made this year's conference possible and exceptional. I am getting to grow up as a therapist with such wonderful and talented individuals.

I want to thank you for your generous scholarship which allowed me to attend the AGPA Annual Meeting in San Francisco.

I am a second-year psychotherapy student at Naropa University, and am planning to incorporate group psychotherapy into my future practice as well as my internship next year. After attending the annual meeting, I am now planning to pursue a certification in group psychotherapy (CGP), and I hope to make it to many annual meetings in the years to come. I had a fabulous time and will be digesting what I learned for a long time. The community at AGPA is a special group, and I look forward to deepening my relationships with these future colleagues.

I have already convinced several classmates to join me next year in New York, and will continue spreading the word throughout the year. Thanks again, and I hope to see you next year.

The annual conference of AGPA in San Francisco, California 2015 opened a new world to me. I heard different voices about therapy, about how to help our patients. I met friends from different part of the world. I refreshed my theories and my cognition of therapy and myself. Everything is familiar to me, however everything is new to me.

So many new thoughts hitted my head. I couldn’t keep them in my mind, I want to write them down to share with who might be interested in the conference who might want to come too. I went to lectures on trauma, on gender, on group for inpatients, on NVC, and I also attended two days of process group. Then the following thoughts came to me.
Sometimes psychoanalysis is so passive. We remember and keep telling ourselves to face to disappointments and accept it, but don’t forget the hope. People feels relief when they accept the disappointments, but they feel happy only when they can make wishes, can dream, can imagine and can hope that good things happening. Actually good things always happen, always.

We need to mourn our loss and be happy of our gain. We should emphasize the positive as strongly as the negative. When we go deeper into a therapy we understand more and more profoundly. But don’t shut off the door to different views. When I only listen to one voice, I become very narrow minded. I even don’t hope and couldn’t believe other possibilities. Even there is no miracle, there are still many possibilities. I tell myself be wise to catche them.

When we only know telling our patients to face their suffering and give up thoughts of miracles, that is really upsets. It’s not the only way to heal. It’s our fear of dreaming, cause we fear of disappointments, then we prefer not to dream.

That’s what upset us most. And makes us angry, resentful, passive.

Possibilities are what you make impossibilities possible. This is not about narcissism. It’s strength. Human beings’ strength. That is how we survived for centuries. For centuries we have made so many impossibilities possible. How can we forget our strength.

About the process group
I am so lucky again choosing the process group.
The leader of the group needs to make sure everyone in the group is safe and nobody hurts. From my own experience in process group, when you look up to the leader and want her does more for the group or want her to be more active in the group, that’s when you feel unsafe or not safe enough and fear of communicating with others. So consciously or unconsciously you expect the leader, the expecting powerful one to fix the problem for you. But I doubt most of the very disturbed patients couldn’t have such sense of this action. When there is a scapegoat appears in a group, the leader is responsible to figure out with the group members what happens and what does this mean to everyone.

The leader always ask what is happening, what does it mean to you. For example, “If…then what do you think would happen?” Keep exploring. Not much explaining but understanding and empathy and support.
About the open sessions

There are so many ways of understanding ourselves and patients. Just keep trying. I was really shocked by the great faculties of our AGPA. They are very professional, competent, skilled in teaching and experienced in their work. They have open views, integrated ideas of theories. I was impressed by their attitude of doing research and pursuit of the truth. So I learned different theories and at the same time, their positive attitude of career and patients. I can feel they are happy of their work, they are happy to share their discoveries in the field of psychotherapy. They affected me a lot. This is the most important to me.

Thanks to AGPA, thanks for the best conference, thanks to the generous scholarship to me, helps me attending such a great conference, thanks to the very organized conference, all the lectures, workshops and open sessions. The content of each part is so rich and colorful. Thanks to the faculties of AGPA, presented their best performance to us. I was very lucky to attend this conference, I hope more and more lucky persons can come too. I strongly recommend the annual conference in New York 2016 to all of you who want to improve your professional world. Please Do Come!
I was honored to be awarded a Durkin-Glatzer Scholarship. It enabled me to attend the Annual Conference I would not and could not have attended otherwise. The Conference is inspiring me to review my professional past, imagine and plan for a stimulating, engaged future.

Over the last decade caregiving needs of dependent parents plus my post stroke challenges limited my professional involvement to a part time private practice. Since 1991, my work life included a focus on the development and leadership of at least one small group for stroke survivors. This work is a variation on the theme of the Institute I attended, From Estrangement to Engagement: Mourning Life’s Losses with Your Tribe. It set the stage for, and describes the arc of my experience, at the Conference.

Over the course of two deeply moving & thought provoking days, in the presence of honest, reflective colleagues ranging in age from 30-86 years old, Faculty and first timers like myself, guided by masterful, empathic leadership, I moved from self doubt, feeling separate from/different than, too old, to a renewed sense of self. In this group I experienced personal and professional strength, competence, willingness to be vulnerable & pro-active. I left the Institute and the Annual Conference with a new sense of my maturity, respect for my inner work and wisdom, and a fresh desire to hone my skills with further consultation.

One of the learning objectives included current thinking about grieving. Promoting ‘letting go’ and ‘holding on’ affirmed my personal experience of grief and the how I think about my group work with the stroke survivors. The level of safety I experienced in the Masterfully led Institute and in most of the workshops I attended, is contributing to an active review of how I work, encouraging me to think about additional training with local & non local colleagues I met, and is nourishing new excitement about potential contributions I might make, even at age sixty eight!

Thinking about how I structure my group, do intakes and promote safety was stimulated in the workshop about Creating and Sustaining Thriving Group. I intend to purchase and use Dr. Ann Steiner’s new book. I was reminded about the importance of ongoing consultation and additional training. I will pursue both. The Conference modeled that at every level.

The workshop on writing builds on my success writing an article Grief & Gratitude: Working with Stroke Survivors published in psychotherapy. net. Hearing how other Therapists have combined complex lives, work and writing, as well as publication choices they made is practical ‘food for thought’ as I rethink goals including writing.

The workshop on the use of the Internet for group therapy confirmed my belief in its potential efficacy with an underserved population of chronically ill adults who live with mobility, cognitive and/or communicative challenges. The talks I attended led by younger clinicians affirmed my work with marginalized populations, illustrated the cross cultural manifestation of PTSD, and a wise use of meditation in group. They also affirmed my growing sense of myself as a wise and secure presence, the feasibility of my ongoing contribution & continued usefulness. I even find myself wondering if I will find a new way to contribute to the work with the partners aging and returning Vets as I experience new hope for the future of our profession.

Attending several movement/activity based workshops exposed me to my new creative edge and opened the potential for new creative collaborations using the body, movement, sound in group with the help of local presenters who work in my community.

I plan to remain a member of AGPA. I am revisiting how I will use a Curriculum I wrote with prior grants. It maps out an eight week group for stroke survivors. In-put from old & this newly expanded network will assist me as I develop and implement this program. I was inspired to risk approaching Haim W. to speak about the future potential use of stroke survivors as a population to be served & studied when his research on Internet
Group is ready. The possibly of making a contribution to the training of younger clinicians and to the expansion of group treatment with stroke survivors is revitalizing my imagined future.

As the dust settles and I re-enter my life I find myself more confident about cooking up new well thought out professional contributions. Perhaps, Keeping Hope Alive, the the non-profit I founded (www.keepinghopealive.org) and had to set aside, will revive its usefulness my my renewed energy and new allies.

I want to express my sincere gratitude for providing the opportunity for me to attend the 2015 AGPA Annual Meeting. As a social work grad student living on a shoestring budget, I rarely get the chance for travel and professional development. My Smith College professor informed me of the conference and encouraged me to apply for a scholarship. As I eagerly awaited the results, I found myself scrolling excitedly through the captivating workshop descriptions while doing my best to self-inoculate against future disappointment by reminding myself of the assuredly stiff competition. As you can imagine, when I learned that I had not only received a scholarship but in particular one named for the amazing Anne Alonso (whose work on feminist psychology I have long admired, ever since reading a few papers in a Women’s Studies class sophomore year of college), I was deeply honored and overjoyed.

From the moment I entered the Hyatt, I felt rather like Cinderella at the ball: a humble MSW candidate surrounded by distinguished PhDs and long-time luminaries in the field like Elliot Zeisel and Irvin Yalom. I was utterly bedazzled. And that was just the beginning: before me lay a sumptuous multi-course feast of lectures, institutes, sessions, and workshops. It was an unforgettable experience. But apart from my learning, perhaps the greatest joy of the Annual Meeting was getting to meet and share ideas with likeminded colleagues. I was thrilled to connect with the exceedingly warm folks in the Puget Sound Group Psychotherapy Network, as well as with the passionate members of the Racial and Ethnic Diversity Special Interest Group. As someone committed to working for social justice, I was very inspired by the ideas voiced in the RED SIG meeting aimed at making the AGPA a more welcoming and accessible space for people of color in the years ahead. I also want to tell you how much I enjoyed meeting you and Dorothy, and chatting with you at the Donor Reception and the Group Foundation Luncheon about Anne’s work, Harvard, your contributions to the Apollo program, and your work on developing computer models to predict semiconductor failure rates.

All told, my experience at the Annual Meeting has furnished me with something I did not yet realize I was searching for: a professional home. My six exhilarating days felt less like a temporary stay at a guesthouse, and more like a jubilant homecoming to a place where I can grow, develop, collaborate, and hopefully someday even join the faculty. And I want to say thank you to you for making this homecoming possible for me. Hope to see you next year!

THANK YOU to you and AGPA for supplying me with scholarship money and an opportunity to be a part of such a rich experience.

Thank you so much for giving me an opportunity to participate in AGPA annual meeting. As an international student from Japan, the experience of being there with many professionals was irreplaceable. I learned a lot from them. Also, thank you so much for accommodating me at the hotel and caring about me. I felt supported by you. I really appreciate your kindness, warmth, openness, and generosity. I want to attend the next annual meeting, so I hope to see you there.

I am writing to thank you and the scholarship committee for the generous scholarship I was afforded to attend AGPA.

I am so very grateful for the amazing teachers, presentations, and groups I was able to attend. This conference was very rewarding both academically and personally.
I look forward to the day when I can give back to the organization through volunteering time as well as financially to the scholarship fund.

I believe the experiences I have had at AGPA has been very valuable to my life and to my professional development. I am proud to be a member of such an incredible, enriching, and upright organization.

The following letter will provide a summary of my experience attending my first AGPA conference. Before I begin I want to express my sincere gratitude. Thank you to everyone who played a part in organizing the event. From the beginning as I applied for a scholarship to the end of my last program it was a warm welcoming experience.

I had the pleasure of attending skype training for my group psychotherapy hours however I was still very nervous about what to expect at the various seminars and sharing a room for the week with a stranger. As I traveled Sunday I was filled with excitement and nerves coming from a small town to a big city as well as feeling new to the AGPA world. As I met my roommate and settled in to bed with excitement to attend Doctor Wallin’s presentation I was proud I had navigated my way from the airport to the hotel. About an hour later the emergency alarm went off asking everyone to evacuate the building. My roommate and I questioned the need to evacuate then headed out in our pajamas to the stairwell. This may seem insignificant to my conference experiences however it was just the opposite, prior to this point I had not met any AGPA members. Not knowing who everyone was at the time was not important there was a connected feeling as everyone headed out then joked as they returned safely to the hotel. I was able to witness long term members smiling and joking as they returned to the hotel including everyone.

The next morning registration was a breeze, I ate breakfast in the hotel and was greeted by members welcoming me to the conference and they always reached out with a warm hello and smile throughout the week. As previously mentioned I was new to the AGPA experience so walking into the institute sessions was overwhelming. The anxiety I experienced was much more than I had anticipated, the encounters with the other group members was more intense then I had imagined. While my goal was to experience just that I felt like escaping thinking to myself I wanted to observe the leader not become consumed with the process. Doctor Barth provided a safe space to challenge myself and learn from my interactions with others. I not only reflect on my personal experience but also the experience of the patients I serve at work. Already in a short time from leaving the conference my sessions are richer from my emotional and cognitive learning.

Thursday opening with a presentation from Doctor Yalom was a wonderful experience. He charges energy and passion for the practice which is priceless. I then attended the Principles of Group Psychotherapy, feeling exhausted from the prior two days with a new group I was not sure what I could give. And again with 2 great leaders Craig and Michelle I was able to reflect on the experience with a significant amount of identified learning. During lunch on Thursday I attended a large group session. In my area this is not something that is readily available if at all. Wow is the real reaction. I had no idea this type of setting could impact me at such an emotional level. At first I thought I would sit back and enjoy my lunch however within 5 minutes I was immediately drawn in and at times choking back tears. The leaders did a wonderful job. I wonder if they are aware of the impact as they do not get the direct feedback that you would in a smaller setting.

Friday I attending an all day workshop with Doctor Crosby which gave wonderful material that I have been able to take back to work and apply. Now for Friday evening, I was nervous about going to a dance and questioned whether I should give my ticket to someone else as I saw emails indicated others had wanted a ticket. My roommate and I decided to head down and see what it was all about. As we stepped in the energy was immediate. Such high energy welcoming people. I have never been anywhere when I didn’t know many people and had so much fun. I was able to connect with others I had met through the week and welcomed by laughs and warm smiles. I said to my roommate if anyone ever wants to fill their dance floor at a wedding they should invite group psychotherapist to get it started. So many people dancing and having fun what a wonderful way to end the week. So glad I didn’t give my ticket away.

I wrapped up my weekend with Saturday sessions again very informative and provided material I am able to apply at work. Also found direction in some areas I would like to further research. The luncheon and entertainment were wonderful. I was able to sit with Eleanor Counselman as I received the Lorelle H.
Machen, PhD memorial scholarship. Becoming aware of who was behind the scholarship made the experience that much richer. We realized we had shared the hotel evacuation experience as we walked down the stairwell in our pajamas joking and giggling on the way back to our rooms.

I am sure I left out many parts of my week, it is most important that I convey how much this experience impacted me both personally and professionally. I look forward to future conferences and appreciate the organization of such a large event. I could not have asked for a better experience. It truly provided a safe challenging space for me to grow as a group psychotherapist and work towards becoming a certified group psychotherapist. Thank you!

Thank you so much for providing financial assistance for me to attend the AGPA meeting in San Francisco. This was my first group psychotherapy experience, and it was eye-opening and educational. AGPA is so warm, casual, and inviting, and I particularly enjoyed meeting therapists across various disciplines.

The Institute was an incredible experience! In those two days I learned not only about my own behaviors in a group setting, but I also learned about effective strategies of working as a group leader. The workshops were fantastic as well. It was highly educational to watch more seasoned therapists in a fishbowl setting. The experiential components to the workshops were useful in working with charismatic group leaders. I chose workshops that focused on diversity in groups, and it was eye-opening to learn about my own unconscious biases.

The six-day conference is highly recommended, and I have talked to numerous psychiatry residents about the option of this unique conference as an additional component to our training. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the AGPA members, workshop leaders, and AGPA committee for this scholarship.

Thank you so much for the incredible opportunity to attend the AGPA conference this year. Weeks later, I am still humming “If you're going to San Francisco.” From the opening session to the life-changing Institute, to the wonderful workshops, I have become a believer in group therapy. In the short weeks following the conference, I have found myself planning future groups and approaching my current groups with a keen eye directed at the process.

AGPA is truly a special organization. When I arrived at the conference, I was immediately struck by the heartfelt greetings conference attendees were giving one another. It seemed like everyone knew one another and many of them did! By the end of the week, I realized that members go every year to see one another and continue to improve their group therapy skills.

Without receiving the Donald T. Brown GLBT Memorial Scholarship, I would not have been able to attend the conference. Thank you! This scholarship came at a pivotal time in my pre-doctoral training and has helped me to hone in on what I want to achieve in my psychology career. I will see you all next year!

I want to thank you for awarding me with such an incredible opportunity to be part of this year’s conference in San Francisco. The time spent in the workshops gave me new insight into techniques that I can use for running groups at my internship and beyond. One of the workshops that I attended taught me to use pictures and postcards to promote visualization in groups. Using this technique has helped stimulate visualization for a particular client of mine who uses cutting as a form of relief when in distress. While visualizing herself in a happy place, she was able to imagine a serene world filled with people she loved. Momentarily, this was able to alleviate some thoughts of sadness and despair. In addition to learning new practices, I was able to meet so many inspirational people from all walks of life that are pursuing careers in psychotherapy as well as people who are already practicing. I was impressed by the variety of people who traveled oversees from Europe and Africa to attend the conference. After attending, I can see why so many people would be present. The workshops were informative and motivating which makes it perfect for students pursuing a career in
psychotherapy. There is so much to learn about group therapy and attending the conference was an excellent way to gain new perspectives. This was a wonderful learning opportunity and I hope to be lucky to attend next year. Thank you again for the opportunity.

I would like to thank you sincerely for giving me the opportunity to attend the AGPA 3-Day Conference. You made the application and scholarship process easy and you were very attentive to my needs. Also, I learned a plethora of new knowledge and life skills that will help me throughout my career. The experience that I got at the conference was something that one could not just receive from school itself—and as an MSW student, I really appreciated this education. I thank you for all of your time and effort in assisting me throughout the course of events and I will definitely be attending the conference for years to come!

Thank you all very much for the opportunity to come to San Francisco and become part of the AGPA community last month.

I very much appreciated Scott Conkwright's facilitation of my 2 day institute (process group for facilitators with 4+ years of facilitation experience). I experienced Scott as a very intentional group leader, both when he shared or reflected upon a topic or an interaction, and when he chose to refrain from doing so. This made a strong impression upon my own style as I facilitate groups here in San Diego.

I appreciated the air of positivity in two specific workshops: Jan Morris' neurobiology workshop and Eric Eichler's mindfulness workshop. Both of these seemed to bring out a different tone of discovery and curiosity that inspired my own work, both with other participants as well as with my own work away from AGPA.

The level of transparency brought forth in the Naropa University's group facilitator from a power/ multicultural dynamics perspective was enlivening to me. It seemed that the group facilitators were freeing themselves from the unique role of transference object to allowing some fluidity where their identities in society could become known to group members as a way to empower group process. This was refreshing for me to experience.

I bring all of this experience with me back to San Diego where I currently facilitate psychotherapy groups for gay-identifying men with Out of Control Sexual Behavior. These experiences will help me both to become a better facilitator as well as to better identify with how challenging it can be to integrate as a member of a group process and some of the obstacles to participation that participants have to overcome - that may reflect positively on their level of resilience, persistence and desire to make positive changes in their lives. So thank you.

Before closing, it bears mentioning that the many positive personal connections, about a dozen by my count, of clinicians from all over the country and all over the world was a truly enlivening part of this meeting. These are connections that I will never forget and hope to continue to solidify over the coming months and years.

All of this was made possibly by your generous support.

I am writing this essay as a reflection on my experience at the 2015 AGPA Annual Meeting (AM) in San Francisco, CA. To begin, I’d like to express my gratitude for the generous scholarship award, as without this award I would not have been able to take advantage of the wonderful opportunity provided by the AGPA AM. These sorts of scholarships are crucial for extending transformative learning opportunities to beginning and training therapists, like myself.

I find it difficult to capture with words the profound impact this first AGPA AM experience has had (and continues to have) on me. I left feeling emotionally and intellectually drained, the kind of fatigue that one feels after they’ve stretched their mind in a way that stimulates continued personal and professional growth long after
the conclusion of such a powerful experience. For the sake of conciseness, I’ll only briefly touch on some conference experiences that seem most memorable and impactful for me now.

The 2-day institute in which I participated was a process group for beginner level group therapists. This was without a doubt one of the most transformative training experiences I’ve ever had. I gained invaluable insight into some of the challenges patients experience as they bravely engage in group therapy, most strongly illuminated by how difficult yet therapeutic I found it to turn my attention to and openly share my own inner experience with a room full of complete strangers. I was struck by the thoughtful, skilled, and measured interactions our group leader used to guide our group through the experience and to make each member feel safe enough to allow themselves to be extremely vulnerable.

The “Mapping Theory to Technique” session was incredibly helpful in opening my mind to multiple styles of group therapy based on various theories. This experience deepened my appreciation of the fact that there are so many different theoretical approaches to group therapy, each with their own therapeutic value and each more suited to certain therapists and patients than others. As a young therapist, I’ve found myself stressing about providing “exactly” what my group members need most in the moment. This session demonstrated that there really isn’t a universally perfect theoretical approach to group therapy and that the same person could find therapeutic value and healing from a variety of approaches. I left that session feeling that I should be trying to find the style and theoretical approach that resonates most with me as a therapist so that I can focus on achieving the level of mastery each of the panelists seemed to have in their respective theoretical approaches to group therapy.

“No! Again!! Why Some People Repeat Relationships” was tremendously helpful in providing a deeper and more compassionate understanding of the various reasons that a group member might repeatedly engage in abusive and destructive relationships as well as the effects that this can have on group members and the group as a whole. I learned more about how the dynamics of the abusive relationship originate in formative relational experiences during childhood and manifest in therapy group dynamics, and how group therapy can help members to better understand and break free from these destructive cycles.

“Introduction to Mindfulness” provided a very helpful overview and experience of mindfulness practice. It was especially helpful to learn about various scientific studies and theories behind the proven therapeutic advantages of having a daily mindfulness practice. I also very much appreciated the presenter’s advice on how to get further training as a therapist such that I can one day use mindfulness as a therapeutic tool with my clients.

“Transcendent Laughter” was a delightful and thought-provoking session about various types of laughter, evolutionary theories of laughter, and how laughter can be at times helpful or harmful in group therapy. This session helped me feel more comfortable with and knowledgeable about laughter and how a group leader can foster a therapeutic environment which encourages therapeutic laughter and thoughtfully addresses destructive laughter.

Overall, I’ll say that I found the experiential learning opportunities at the AGPA AM to be TREMENDOUSLY helpful, and I very much enjoyed meeting and learning from others in the group psychotherapy community. I will assuredly be attending and participating in future AGPA Annual Meetings, as I feel my experience this year provided me an incredible stimulus for both professional and personal growth.

I am very grateful for the opportunity to attend the AGPA conference. There is no way I could have done this without the support of the scholarship.
I feel as though my experience at the 2-day institute was transformative, and that in this setting I grew leaps and bounds as a professional in my understanding of group dynamics, as well as in my understanding of self. It as useful to me as a professional than a year of therapy and graduate education.

Furthermore, my experiences in the workshops that followed helped to bolster the needs I felt were indicated by my experience at the institute. I adored the experience I had with Greg MacColl in immediacy and emotional bridging. But there were so many skilled practitioners leading workshops. Each was lead, no doubt, by an individual at the top of the field. This widened my horizons, I gained appreciation for the variety of approaches to work with groups, and began to identify my place within this olio.

Many thanks! I hope we meet again, AGPA.

As a recipient of a scholarship to this year's AGPA, I wanted to write a little in my summary about how much I appreciate the continued support of the organization. The only way that I have been able to afford staying involved with the Association during graduate school has been through the generosity of its members. While my interests have not waivered, I can only imagine that I would have had to take several years away from the conference due to the financial exigencies of getting through school. Instead of drifting away, however, I feel confident that I have found a home. The scholarships not only speak to the value in this organization for continuing education, but it also reflects the strong sense of community and support.

This year, I attended an institute with Susan Gantt to learn more about system-centered work. I found the workshop challenging and engaging in new ways. I feel like I learned more about how to use structure and boundaries constructively to help clients explore their lives and their relationships. It showcased for me the depth and range of different ways of working in groups, and it reinforced for me the value of coming to a place like AGPA to learn from experts in the field.

I also attended various workshops that introduced interesting and exciting ideas. The Neuroscience of Racism was a fantastic seminar that provided important insights into how neuroscience confirms social theory and substantiates a wide array of other areas of research. I also had an opportunity to learn more about DBT and IFS groups from Claudio Arlo, and Tracy McNab and Anne Weiss, respectively. I attended the termination group at the end of the conference and appreciated the meaningful connections that everyone expressed.

Again, the conference continues to be a source of inspiration, learning and regeneration for me. Thank you again to everyone who made my scholarship and attendance possible.

After attending AGPA’s annual event, I became braver in being able to reveal to others how much I want to connect and belong and found a way of shattering the confines of my own preconceived notions and unfounded assumptions. During the process group I participated in and also in a Bruce Aaron’s Gestalt Approach to the Impact of Shame on Leadership and Clinical Practice which was lead in an experiential manner, I found myself getting out of head, letting go of theories and protocol as a safety measure, not talking “about” something, but experiencing the room, the group dynamic for what it was and being as authentic as possible in showing myself, my hopes and hurt to others. As always, to my surprise, I was disarmed by the gestures and acknowledgments of warmth and mutual interests. I felt a shell broken and a greater sense of love extending beyond the people I know.

This I took home with me, but may I also add that the didactic learning I received leaning on research and decades of experience apprised me with a road map and tools to lead successful groups for specific populations, made the conference a truly educational and experiential journey. Specifically, Martyn Whittingham lead a phenomenal day-long course on Focused Brief Group Therapy for college counseling centers and he was able to diagram precisely how certain personality types will implode a group and how specific measures can be taken to inoculate hazardous behavioral traits and advised when to avoid the matching of certain personality traits.
I feel grateful to have had such an experience and am eagerly counting down to next year’s annual event in NYC.

My experience at the AGPA annual meeting in San Francisco was only made possible through the generosity of your scholarship program. Without the assistance provided I would have not been able to cover the cost of the conference or travel to San Francisco.

I cannot adequately describe how much I learned through the educational programs I attended. In each and every program something new, helpful, and applicable to practice was highlighted for me. The programs that stuck out the most for me were Stephanie Covington’s "Why Gender Matters: Creating Trauma Informed Services for Women and Men," "Women in Group Leadership Roles," and "Truth, Choice, and Consequences." I have already applied techniques discussed and demonstrated in Covington's workshop, as well as shared resources with those at my field placement. "Women in Group Leadership Roles" was so helpful as a young women entering the field. Hearing the experiences and feelings of others was so helpful. Finally, the "Truth, Choice, and Consequences" workshop was extremely powerful and moving for the entire session. It fully brought home the impact of staying in the here and now.

I found the members of the AGPA to be very welcoming and supportive throughout the conference. I met many people with whom I hope that I can maintain connections.

As I move forward in my clinical work after the AGPA conference in San Francisco, I frequently reference a number of powerful learning experiences I was afforded at the conference. In my role as co-leader for an interpersonal group for individuals with personality disorders at McLean Hospital, I have turned my attention more squarely on my role as boundary-keeper: as we consider inviting new members to the open group, I am more aware of the impact of the breaking and re-forming of the group boundaries, both on the group and on individual members. I have been more attentive to maintaining the boundary and making room for our members’ reactions to the process of opening the group to new members – the threat of disruption, the possibility of losing something which was becoming comfortable, perhaps a loss of relationship, or perhaps excitement at the prospect of a new connection and new energy. In my experience as a process group member with Larry Viers as its leader, I observed how the group was able to quickly move into a powerful working space when its safety was being looked after by a keenly observant leader. It appeared that while he did other things to facilitate the group’s movement towards a deeper working level, the establishment and maintenance of safe boundaries was the primary mechanism by which he achieved this.

My role as a co-leader has also been enriched by the day-long workshop I attended on group co-leadership. As a trainee, I had been largely unaware of many of the practicalities of designing, considering, and starting a co-led group. Since the workshop, I have eagerly applied a number of the exercises we used to gain a better understanding of my co-leader and, more importantly, the dynamics of our relationship as co-leaders. I had prior taken for granted a lot of the work he does to maintain the group which kept me in a more junior, dependent role. I have been able to open up new avenues of work in our group and deepen our working relationship.

Several of the experiential groups I observed allowed me a window into different stances of leadership, which shift depending on the group type and setting. This allowed me to learn new tools and broaden my capacity to lead new kinds of groups. The workshop on community building was a particular highlight in this regard, as it offered a divergent but powerful framework and the workshop leader offered a toolkit along with the experiential group. I am now inspired to try to start a community group as I move forward. It also allowed me to observe commonalities between leader roles and thus cement my understanding of what the leader role in any group situation calls for.
I have also become more sensitive to the forces at play in any group, thanks to The Large Group: the visceral experience of the clash between group and individual identity (which is analogous to the tension between the majority and minority), the drive to have an aim or purpose, and the power of projections about the group leader(s) that oscillate between uncertainty and trust. By learning to see these forces less as characteristics of some individuals within a Large Group and more as characteristics of the Group itself, I believe that I will be a more stable, wise leader for my group members, and also within my field of practice and community.

My process group members were a humbling group to be a part of, and we have established a mailing list by which we are staying in touch. We have shared readings and experiences since the conference ended and I feel very grateful to have had the chance to get to know that such a thoughtful, energetic group of people can come together as we did.

I cannot express enough how grateful I am to have received the Foundation’s support to attend the Annual Meeting this year. I feel that I have grown immensely (my wife can tell you that I have not stopped talking about the Meeting since I returned) and I know that I would not have had this opportunity without the scholarship. It means a great deal to me. Thank you. I can’t wait for next year!

My experience at the AGPA’s 2015 Annual Meeting was a profoundly impactful experience. As with my previous attendances, the areas in which I grew were in both professional and personal realms. Beginning with David Wallin’s Special Institute, I was amazed at the quality of the events and the passion of the attendees for group psychotherapy. Participation in the 2-day Institute challenged me to look at my own interpersonal interactions, a process which continued in experiential workshops and the conference as a whole.

As I am in training to be an addiction psychiatrist, my selection of courses focused on addiction topics. The most memorable of these was “Contemporary Approaches To Addiction,” in which I was introduced to the concept of harm reduction group psychotherapy. Although I was familiar with the harm reduction model, hearing from leaders in field and witnessing a group process with this approach re-invigorated my desire to pursue this form of treatment. I have taken steps to create and lead a group with this modality, which will begin next month!

Thank you kindly for providing me a scholarship, without which I would not have been able to attend. I greatly value my membership in the AGPA community and am excited to continue to grow within it for years to come!

I am writing to express my appreciation for my full scholarship to this year's AGPA meeting in San Francisco. I am incredibly grateful for this opportunity. In attending this year's meeting, I had the chance to participate in a couple of workshops that were highly relevant to my starting a group practice, including two programs on technology in groups and one on setting up group(s) in private practice. Personally, I am extremely excited to develop telehealth groups online for individuals who are homebound due to physical limitations but whom need emotional support of others who live in relative solitude like them. Online groups are the perfect solution for this. I believe that by attending these programs and making connections this year at AGPA with individuals with like-minded goals, I have been able to gain a significantly better understanding of how to begin this process. If not for receiving the opportunity to attend this year's meeting via scholarship, I would have been completely unable to take advantage of such wonderful opportunities to advance my practice and my career. A big and heartfelt thanks to you, the scholarship committee, and all of those board members and contributing members to AGPA's scholarship fund for giving me this gift!

With great enthusiasm, I want to thank the American Group Psychotherapy Association for granting me a scholarship to attend the 2015 Annual Meeting in San Francisco. Over the course of an invigorating five days, my knowledge of group therapy expanded. I arrived knowing quite little about group technique and left filled with many inspiring ideas. The Process Group Experience with Oona Metz went far beyond my expectations.
Reflecting on the simultaneous dread and allure of the dynamics that unfolded turned me into a group devotee! Unlike any other therapeutic experience I have had, the intensity of the small group was emotionally exhausting, and also thrilling. The didactic portion helped to illuminate what transpired over the two days (that felt more like two weeks!). I felt eager to incorporate what I learned into the group I co-facilitate in my agency setting in Brooklyn, NY. Core concepts of group work were instilled, such as building boundaries by keeping time consistent, provoking the group if it became too complacent, and nurturing (while also nipping) at subgroup dynamics and emerging themes to work toward a cohesive whole.

The other workshops I attended offered much to think about as well. Engaging with Dreams in Groups taught me how to recognize different types of dream material and their potential to share within a group. The Family Genograms and Sculpting all day workshop was a powerful experience, which the teacher led with deep care and attention to the poetry of the moment. Overall, the range of courses and their attention to theory and practice offered much to think about. From an experiential point of view, the Large Group was strange and destabilizing. I left feeling frustrated about my own role within the big room and its cast of characters. What frustrated also fueled my curiosity, and I hope to participate in it again next year!

Thank you, AGPA, for the opportunity to participate in such an incredible meeting!

The 2015 AGPA Annual Meeting has been one of the highlights of my professional development so far and I am grateful for the scholarship I received to make my attendance possible. The institute I attended on healing trauma in a group setting, led by Suzanne Phillips, was both moving and transformative, leading me to a deeper appreciation and acceptance of my own vulnerability. At the conference I made new friends and found myself experiencing a rich sense of family with other therapists, both invigorating and grounding. Finally my participation in a demo group near the end of the conference connected me with my love of group process in a deeper way than I have experienced before. I'll always remember fondly this week in San Francisco and look forward to attending future meetings.

In February I had the opportunity to attend the AGPA Annual Meeting in San Francisco after receiving a scholarship. Although I didn’t have many expectations going into the meeting, I have to say that I was really pleasantly surprised by how much I learned and took away from this experience. The first day I chose to attend a presentation on gender and trauma which went into great detail regarding how to practice in a way that is both trauma-informed and gender-informed. This was particularly relevant for me as I hope to work with trauma survivors in the future. I appreciated how the presenter was continually open to feedback from the group and was willing to take questions throughout the day and engage in open-ended dialogue rather than talk to us all day long.

Upon my return to Portland, OR I had a hard time verbalizing to others what I had experienced while at the Annual Meeting in San Francisco. All I could say was that it amazing and sort of life altering and I can’t wait to do it again. Having such an integral role within an intensive group process made me look forward to running groups in the future. It was especially beneficial talking with my group leaders at the end of the day and learning about what had motivated specific interventions and responses. Having known little about modern analysts prior to this experience, I also look forward to reading more in-depth about this. That said the Annual Meeting was extremely informative and an experience that I will remember for a long time to come. It was both overwhelming and humbling in the best of ways and I couldn’t be more grateful to have had the opportunity to attend and look forward to working more with the AGPA in the future.

I am deeply grateful to be a scholarship recipient of the 2015 AGPA Conference. From the moment I entered the conference, I was overwhelmed by the welcoming spirit that was present. It was so clear that old timers & new attendees were excited not only by what they were learning in the workshops, but also by the transformative experience that group offers.
The plenary session with **Irvin Yalom** on Thursday, re-ignited deeper passion for group work & the commitment to excellence. From there I went to Group Therapist As Corporate Trainer & all I can say is, WOW. I was amazed to discover how easily the presenter & group connected at a deep level. It also, opened my eyes to a natural business progression with the clientele that already exists in my practice & this workshop unveiled the mystery of coaching for me.

Through this experience, I also became armed with some new tools to enhance my experiential groups for our sex addiction recovery groups. Already, I've had the opportunity to implement two new groups that I have been procrastinating on. I purchased the AGPA manual for use with process addiction groups and I've been using it as a framework in two new groups. We were also able to share with our staff & bring a sense of renewal to our commitment for group growth as a priority.

There were people that live in my backyard that I had to go to San Francisco to meet, I'm so happy to have new & lasting connections. My husband & I found & have engaged a business coach that is located 5 minutes from our office that we met at AGPA.

I could go on & on, in one word my experience was AMAZING, professionally, personally & spiritually. This was my first of many AGPA conferences to come! By far, this was one of the most transformative conference experiences I've had, & there have been many.

Here's to next year, the year after, the year after that & on & on...

My experience at the AGPA annual meeting was significant in so many ways. It was a week of connections that surprised me. My institute experience was a group of people who valued the work and really went there with one another. Those relationships have already begun to continue. The gift of being with such a conglomeration of group therapists in so many different settings was rich in a way that makes me want more. Since the conference, as I have come back to Seattle, I have felt the energy continue to motivate me in my work in my own group that I lead, it has also helped me in my my work with individuals and couples. I am on the board for the Puget Sound Group Psychotherapy Network and am also the co-chair of our Annual Spring Conference coming up in April. My enthusiasm from the AGPA annual meeting has flowed over into others as I talk about our own Spring Conference. I also was able to make connections with therapists that are in the Seattle area who were not aware of PSGPN, and are now members of our organization as a result of the AGPA meeting. They are also coming to our Spring Conference as well. The list goes on. The group I lead, I actually co-lead and much of my experience at AGPA has been infectious to him as I share. He is now interested in the annual meetings. As I lead group, I am also now reminded weekly as a result of my time at AGPA, what it is like to be a member of a group. I significantly have felt that shape my work since I have been back. Not everything that I attended at the meeting was exactly what I was looking for, however the experience as a whole, will stay with me forever and affect my work continually, and it has also hooked me to do the work to be at as many annual meetings in the future as possible.

The AGPA 2015 Annual Meeting was a great experience for me in educational, professional and social settings. I had some question marks about coming from a far away country just to attend the conference in my mind before attending but after spending a week with AGPA family I can say that I understand why every single people I’ve met there keep on attending the conference every year. I wish to be one of them as a part this community in the following years, too.

The program of the conference gives the motivation to attend every single event, not to miss any part of it. I had chance to listen the experiences of valuable professionals, be a part of an amazing group in special institute, learn from workshops which had really rich contents. The workshops I’ve attended helped me to gain knowledge on how to work with different perspectives in a group setting. I especially choose the ones which I
thought that would be helpful for my work in the college counseling center and I’ve gained an important amount of sight. That workshops I’ve attended were really informative on how to organize a group therapy (especially short term therapies that are useful in college settings), how to choose participants, which instruments to use and how to adapt useful behavioral elements for change as a psychoeducational part.

The special institute was also a great opportunity for personal development, to learn the practice from experienced group therapists and to gain more insight, to understand myself better in the process of communicating with other group members. The group process has loaded me with lots of emotions, that makes every single detail much easier to learn and remind. This is a unique experience of learning about the group therapy and exploring yourself. I had chance to analyse my own feelings, think about my own view and experiences and how they shape my perspective as a psychologist. I was in a special interest group, (XII) that helped me to see so many different perspectives based on cultural diversities. What I learnt from my group experience and the workshops gave me an important amount of idea about how to set up groups in different populations and different subjects.

My aim for attending the conference in educational setting was both to learn different methodologies and be involved in different group processes to see the practice. The conference served a lot for my aims of attending. The conference also had a really strong social part which gave me the chance to meet many professionals, make new friends with whom I had great time during the whole conference. I would like to thank the AGPA family for helping me be able to attend this great conference. The scholarship for the conference fee and the discount in hotel rates made it possible for me to attend the meeting. Because of the cost (especially when it is out of the country), attending these kind of events are generally not easy for new professionals like me. I feel lucky that I could do that, I left San Francisco feeling so renewed, so motivated about my work and also with desire for attending next year’s conference. I turned back to Turkey with a great experience and lovely memories. I advise everyone to see that atmosphere of a real professional event in which every single part is worth attending.

Thank you so much for my scholarship! As always, AGPA 2015 was a wonderfully rewarding experience. As a repeat scholarship recipient, I can honestly say that I feel myself growing up with the AGPA community. Coming back each year, visiting with my peers, and pushing myself to each new growth-edge, is an integral part of forming my identity as a clinician.

This year, my institute involvement exposed me to a new style of group and the variety of workshops that I attended furthered my integration of theory and practice. As a clinician in a public mental health clinic, I see a lot of different clients with various diagnoses and have to apply different techniques and resources. It is invaluable that I can go to one conference and learn from masters in different specialties and with different perspectives.

All of this would not be possible without the generosity of my scholarship. I am so appreciative of everyone who contributes to the foundation and enables clinicians like myself to be a part of this amazing community.

My experience at AGPA was truly a career-changing one. As a student, it can be difficult to get training experiences in group beyond the one course that is a part of our curriculum. While I was able to co-lead a process group for one semester at my second practicum site, this has been my only structured opportunity to do so. At my first practicum, only psychoeducational groups were run, and at my current practicum, the only group opportunities available are those that are formed and led fully by students, with no psychologist or other staff member who specializes in group psychology. Thus, for a graduate student who is interested in group, AGPA is an invaluable training resource.

My experience in the two-day institute was not only greatly enriching on a personal level, but professionally, as well. I learned so much about skilled group leadership from watching Oona Metz, and above all, I realized for the first time just how much I don’t know about process group leadership! When my three co-presenters, two of whom are also students, arrived on Wednesday evening for the conference, I told them in no uncertain terms that they must find a way to attend the institute next year. I found wonderfully enriching learning experiences in
numerous workshops. Three that particularly stand out were one about the use of psychodrama in group and two on different aspects of multiculturally-competent leadership. I had fantastic experiences in networking, whether at social events, with the CC Sig, while volunteering at the registration table, or in workshops.

All of the things I have mentioned would make a wonderful conference well worth the time and expense; however, perhaps the single most impactful aspect of my experience was the inspiration I received. I feel that I have found my professional home in AGPA and have found one of the primary areas in which I want to focus my career. During the plenary address by Dr. Yalom, it struck me very clearly that my current dissertation topic, on methods of online survey data collection, was one in which I was only marginally interested. My thought at the time was, "Erin, what are you doing?" As a result, I have since changed my dissertation topic to one regarding training and competence in group psychotherapy. This has required scrapping the literature review work I had already done, starting from square one, and making a change to my committee. Despite this, I couldn't be happier.

I plan to continue to attend AGPA for many years. It is no secret that it is significantly more expensive than many conferences, but clearly well worth it. While I know that this will not be a problem at all later in my career, as a graduate student I certainly would not have been able to attend the entire meeting, and perhaps not at all, without the scholarship I received from the Group Foundation. I am immensely grateful for this opportunity that has had a profound impact on my training and on my career as whole.

Again, AGPA Annual Meetings are a highlight of my year. As I am advancing in my still young career, and doing more training in psychodynamic therapy, I start to really understand what people talk about in workshops, and understand better what’s happening in Institutes. In my first years at AGPA „magic things“ happened and I experienced „transformative moments“, without understanding what had happened. More profound studying, learning in my training program and at AGPA make it possible for me to understand better, and become a better therapist for my group and my individual patients. I reconnected with friends and colleagues from previous years, and these friendships and professional connections are very valuable to me. I enjoy the openness of people at AGPA and the intensity of the relationships and encounters. As I am looking to get my Swiss credentials transferred to the US and apply for licensure here, I experienced support around that from the AGPA community, practically and emotionally. I am already looking forward to next year’s meeting in NYC!

It is difficult to summarize all that I have gleaned from my time at the 2015 AGPA National Conference. Not only did I attend a number of workshops and seminars that filled in the gaps in knowledge that my graduate program just did not have time to touch on, but I left with a stronger connection to my fellow mental health counselors in this field. I have also come away with a strong conviction that group counseling is the modality that I want to continue pursuing in whatever ways I can in the future.

AGPA is such a unique conference, with such a unique set of topics and contributors. In no other place could I learn so much about the different forms of group therapy, and I am still using the strategies and styles that I picked up from the conference presenters when I lead groups at my setting. Why just last week I decided to do family sculpting with my adolescent group, after being reminded at AGPA how vulnerable family sculpting can make you.

Attending the educational workshop on Adolescent groups gave me a greater appreciation for the myriad ways an adolescent group can present. Furthermore, I was able to put my group facilitator skills to practice and get honest feedback from my peers on my strengths and abilities when it comes to working with adolescents. I also took away from the course a greater understanding of how structuring an adolescent group is even more important than structure in an adult group, in order to foster safety and security, which they may not be receiving at home.
I also attended a CBT workshop that was truly amazing! The presenter, Greg Crosby, LPC has an incredible ability of incorporating a number of different theories and research findings into his CBT approach. I have taught my adult groups the belly breathing that he taught us as well as a simple, yet invaluable mantra of ensuring goals are simple, realistic and achievable. I have heard many times about implementing SMART goals, but Mr. Crosby had a very simple way of explaining their true power, so that with simple, realistic, and achievable goals, we can ensure our clients experience success early and often.

Because I was afforded the opportunity to attend the AGPA Annual Conference in San Francisco, I not only learned invaluable skills to apply to my group work in my agency setting, but I forged stronger mentor relationships with my supervisor and exemplars in the field. A giant in the field is a mentor of my mentor and I have been hoping to form a professional relationship with her, and was able to due to my attendance at the conference. Since the Conference she has engaged in a number of discussions about ways to change group dynamics and takes the time to listen to my opinion, knowing that I am committed to advancing myself in the field of group psychotherapy.

Most importantly of all, due to my receipt of a scholarship to the AGPA Annual Conference, I was able to reveal my true love of group counseling. It was not until my attendance at the conference that I realized my strength lies in facilitating group counseling. The unique way group mirrors relationships in real life makes it a lively and challenging form of therapy that I hope to be part of for the rest of my life.

I wish to thank you once again for enabling me to participate in this unforgettable conference experience. This year, I attended one day of the conference in addition to the Institute. As I had experienced many times before, the Institute experience, which for me was the 2nd year of a two-year continuous institute, was deeply moving and personally transformative. This Institute experience was also very unique this year. We as a group did not, as in past years, focus on a particular topic, nor did we explore particular narrative themes. Instead, we spoke about our emotions in the group, the histories that were evoked by the present, our fears and losses, our anger and longings. In the same way that a good masseuse touches and attends to the entire body, I felt the whole of my emotional being during the Institute experience. I had engaged in a very thorough emotional cleansing.

Coming back from AGPA can be somewhat jarring. I feel caught between the desire to extend the emotional openness and the high I experienced during AGPA and the pull to communicate with others so that they can understand what an amazing experience this had been. But people who have not attended AGPA cannot really understand what it means to be a part of that experience. I remember being very present to myself and to others that first week after returning home, and sharing with co-workers my observations and thoughts about our clients and our experiences as therapists. One colleague looked at me and said, “I love how present you are, but I don’t trust it. I am filled with worries today, and your presence seems almost surreal.” And slowly, after a week of getting back, I too began to slip into my habitual worries and preoccupations. The intense presence and willingness to sit with the entire spectrum of human emotions were waning.

Noticing that shift inspired me to ask myself, what is it about the AGPA experience that I can truly carry forward with me into my clinical practice and everyday life? I came up with two answers so far. First, through the practice of sitting and observing myself in the Institute, I understood how capable I actually am in sitting back, listening, and attending to my own habitual reactions, desires, and responses. By welcoming other’s words and actions and allowing them to touch me, I am better attuned to the larger group-as-a-whole perspective, which creates space that allows me to pause before being pulled into making a counter-transferential statement. For example, with a client who is in a habitual state of crisis and expressing anger toward the world, I side-stepped the old pull toward crisis management, problem solving, and making apologies. Instead, I sat with her in her despair, felt with her the depth of her helplessness, listened carefully for other layers of her emotional experience, and brought these other voices to our mutual attention. AGPA teaches through experience a deep way of empathizing that can in itself be transformative. And second, the Institute experience teaches a trust in the process of participant observation. When I can attend to my experiences, share
these experiences with others, I can trust that there will be a shift in my feelings, that through the alchemy of
time and interchange they will transform into something else. I may feel as “stuck” in sessions with clients, but
now the “stuckness” feels more contained, situated, contextualized, and held. I am less likely to perseverate on
the “stuckness” and instead listen for the larger themes of human suffering and overcoming, of which this
“stuckness” is a part.

Thank you for your support of me over the years! I am gladly indebted.

I would like the Group Foundations scholarship committee to know that the institute and conference was
instrumental in my passing this exam. I got very little formal group training in graduate school or within my
employment so the packed week of mentors, speakers, educators and professionals gave me the group treatment
knowledge I needed to answer the group therapy questions on the exam. Because of the meeting I was able to
identify the correct strategies to use within group treatment, how to guide group members in the group, what to
process within the group and what necessitates individual attention. I was also able to identify different group
treatment stages and what facilitation within each stage looks like.

I am grateful for receiving a scholarship to the 2015 annual AGPA meeting. It was the best conference
experience I have ever had and the techniques I learned and observed were priceless. I have already used
the knowledge I gained in my group treatment practice and because of the institute with Stephanie Covington, a
formerly mixed gender group has split into two gender specific groups. I shared the meeting handouts with my
supervisor and coworkers and introduced them to books by meeting presenters. Many of them will be attending
in 2016. The friendships I made were amazing; I have kept in touch with my roommate and several others.
Thanks to Ruth Hochberg for offering this scholarship. Getting to spend time with her and her daughter was
fabulous and I appreciate how open and friendly they were.
I hope to attend next year and for many years to come. Thank you again for this valuable experience.

To begin the conference, I attended Wallin’s “Therapist as the Attachment Figure” presentation. I increased my
knowledge of the theoretical underpinnings of attachment theory, as well as my relationship to my own
attachment history. This presentation was superbly helpful to me in reflecting on my own attachment to my
therapist of several years, and how that impacts my work, as I attempt to provide “a secure base” for my clients.
As I have been able to provide a secure base in the room with my clients, I am increasingly aware of how that is
the primary change agent, as my clients grow and move forward with their lives. Finally, I am more aware of
the importance of continuing to increase awareness of my own dissociated experiences that can impact my work
with clients, “taking possession of my own subjectivity,” to provide the security which can allow incorporation
dissociated experience in my clients.

The two-day process group was enormously beneficial. For me, the most important gain from the experience
was increased confidence in my ability to tolerate the anxiety of such an experience and still hold on to my truth
in the process. Although I was not able to honestly claim every threatening thought/feeling that emerged, I was
able to take more risks and increase my ability to express threatening thoughts and feelings. From this
experience, I learned so much about what affects my interpersonal relationships and increased my awareness of
countertransference issues, i.e. where my buttons are that tend to get pushed and why! I am inspired to continue
to push to the point that I can feel completely myself in such a group, able to own and integrate all of my
experience with others, regardless of the response.

While tremendously helpful, the adolescent group workshop on Thursday allowed me to see that I do not want
to work with adolescents any time soon. I gained a tremendous respect for those who do work with adolescents,
as I became more aware of the enormous amount of skill that is necessary to work with such a complex age-
group. Mostly, I was impressed with the experienced, skilled faculty who ran this workshop.
My favorite workshop was “Longing for the Secure Base” with Aaron Black. I loved his style, and was
inspired by the events that transpired in the experiential portion. I felt similarly regarding Judye Hess’s
workshop “Truth, Choice, and Consequences”. Both of these leaders were able to provide an environment which was safe enough to explore risky business. I am inspired to learn how to better attend to my groups and individuals in this way.

In summary, attending the AGPA conference for the second time solidified some of my feelings experienced after the first conference, mostly that AGPA is a unique world of its own that is both challenging and comforting at the same time. I was able to re-connect with contacts from the first meeting, and continue to forge new relationships that will continue to nourish me as I grow in my career. As I continue to work with low-income adults in a mental health agency setting, I am continually inspired by how universal the teachings of AGPA are in working with a variety of clients, regardless of level of functioning or income.

Attending an AGPA annual meeting is like going to the family tree in the Avatar movie. The family of therapists gather, the roots are deep and the wealth of knowledge is the ground water from which to drink. And I drank until saturation this year and, for the first time, I added my knowledge to the well, as a faculty member!

I feel a deep appreciation for the scholarship committee’s decision to open up the criteria for recipients to include a therapist in my situation. It is a humbling experience to be included and supported in this manner.

The first day’s institute with Dr. Wallin gave a good foundation for the AGPA meeting and for recharging my knowledge of attachment. I took away from it many thoughts about my own attachment style and needs which has since affected my interventions, by adding another layer of questions to reflect on.

The institute experience with Jim Fishman and Linda Rose created an opportunity to see how seamless co-therapy can be when there is a willingness and an ability to share the time without the ego interrupting the flow of connection between group members and each therapist. This theme has been on my mind for many years as I have struggled with the question of how much of myself to share and when. As everyone in the institute worked on the theme, it illuminated their struggle as well and validated the worth of it. This institute was like a symphony with two conductors making beautiful music.

I have learned from other conferences to balance my intellectual workshop with ones relating to my body and movement. I was not disappointed in having chosen to participate in the Medicinal Drumming workshop. The release and recharging of energy was quite remarkable as was the deepening perspective of the value of drumming with those intentions.

The overall theme of the workshops I chose had to do with intimacy, secrets, authenticity and sustaining healthy attachments. Working in my practice with a high percentage of older adults, I am realizing the importance of being authentic with them as they have so little time left and don’t want to waste it by being with anyone who doesn’t measure up to their time constraints. I learned from the conference workshops that my capacity to be vulnerable with a purpose enriches my ability to attach to a client as he/she struggles within their vulnerability. I also discovered in the institute that I have developed a patience in my sitting in silence that hasn’t been present in the past. My intuition has been supported by my developing wisdom which has been nurtured by the outstanding opportunity to come to the AGPA tree of knowledge.

I cannot finish this letter of appreciation without mentioning my feeling thrilled to be in the room with Dr. Irving Yalom. What a gift to see him in this time of life. As I read his new book I can still hear him speak to us in his warm manner. Lifelong learning and the capacity to share it at any age is part of what I truly value about the AGPA meeting. We all gather at the tree of knowledge and share the strong feeling of connectedness and purpose in our work.
Right up to the end of the conference, Saturday night in the hotel lobby, and the Sunday morning as I left, as saturated and tired as we all were, there in the van going to the airport, still talking about what “caught” our attention at conference.

Each other.

I feel so fortunate for being able to attend AGPA this year. I was delayed with my scholarship application as I was starting a new job and had a lot going on in my life. However, AGPA was there for me. They said, "We will consider your application if you apply," and they did. I was able to attend all 5 days at a discounted rate. I realized part of the delay in my application was that last year I had a growing but challenging experience in my Institute. This year couldn't have been more supportive and corrective.

I never imagined I would be a group therapist, and never could I have imagined there would be such a well respected clinical home for me. I felt in awe of the experience that surrounded me at the AGPA conference this year in San Francisco and the passion others feel about helping others make connections in groups. We live in groups. Since the beginning of humanity, we have loved, hunted, created, and explored in groups. In a world where technology can initiate new connections and also create distant gaps in communication, I truly feel that enhancing group work is the way of our future evolution. AGPA is helping me develop this skill set, support my own "work" as a therapist, and feel legitimized in the field. Thank you for supporting my journey and being there for me and the many Soldiers whom I serve.

It has taken a month or two to begin to digest what I experienced at 2015 AGPA conference. I participated in Dr. Stewart Aledort’s institute for the second time. Processing my own Shame in Excitement has given me more compassion and insight to that of patients and society as a whole. The workshops on Somatic Techniques and Group Psychotherapy and A Healing Herd: Working with Hair- Pullers and Skin-Pickers has opened up a new area to explore as I consider what I want to do as a practitioner. As always, the Large Group spurs my awareness to hidden prejudices and unspoken feelings and thoughts. Just to observe Large Group is exhaustingly educational. Love, Lies, Secrets, Shame: Healing Addictions and Trauma spanning generations was fascinating to watch. The vast talent of the staff running the fishbowls and workshop was amazing. I hope to develop some of their techniques. Every event that I attended was worthwhile and networked with colleagues. I’m aware I have much learning to accomplish and consider AGPA a primary resource for professional connections, competent, current education in group psychotherapy and professionalism. Thank you so very much for contributing to my personal and professional growth. I plan on giving back one day.

I wanted to take a moment to thank the members of the scholarship committee for having so graciously provided me with a full scholarship to the 2015 AGPA conference in San Francisco. Without that scholarship I would not have been able to attend. The experience was beyond valuable, provided me with many new insights and tools, but also, the chance to make many new friends in the world of mental health and well as to reunite with those I met the year prior.

True to form, AGPA really delivered this year. I learned so much – not only about the power of group, but moreover, about myself and my own internal processes. I have attended many conferences in my life, but none have I benefitted so greatly from as those that the AGPA puts on each year.

I participated in so many wonderful session this year, and it is difficult to pinpoint a favorite. If I had to choose, I would say that the two-day Institute with Dr. Susan Gantt on Systems Theory and Functional Subgrouping was enormously eye-opening. Being able to see how and where my similarities and differences overlap with others within the context of the group was a powerful and very emotional experience for me; one that I am sure
to carry with me for a lifetime. Since having returned from AGPA I have found that I am ever-mindful of how this process unfolds naturally both within the group and in day to day life.

Of additional import; I Would be remiss if I failed to mention what a thrill it was for meet to hear Irving D. Yalom speak at the Plenary. He has long been a hero of mine and to be able to be so close and personal was indeed a treat. Being able to meet him at the book signing was an existentialist’s dream come true.

In closing, again, please allow me to express my thanks to all of you for your generous financial assistance. I look forward to many years of attendance at AGPA conferences in the future.

I was deeply honored to receive the Cunningham Tervalon Scholarship and attend the conference this year. One of the highlights for me was meeting the two women who chose my scholarship application, during the Group Foundation Luncheon on Saturday. After speaking to them and learning that I was the only selection for that scholarship, I felt extremely fortunate and so grateful.

I participated in the Minding the Body and Embodying the Mind: Somatic Experiencing the Self in Group Institute on Tuesday. I had been very interested in learning how to work more effectively with my group and individual clients utilizing a more somatic approach. I facilitate groups at Family Service Agency of Marin for men and women who have co-occurring disorders of PTSD and substance abuse. I am trained in EMDR and was very interested in learning more about Peter Levine’s approach to utilizing the nervous system’s plasticity and the body’s intelligence to help my clients cope more effectively with their triggers and unsafe behavior. I immediately began using some of the techniques I learned at the institute and will be providing interns at my agency with an introductory training based on what I learned at the institute.

On Thursday, I attended Yvonne Agazarian’s workshop called System Centered Phases of Group Development in Small and Median Groups, which was truly amazing! Just to watch Yvonne work in the group was enthralling. The take away for me was experiencing the process of the group’s various stages and obstacles that arose, which inhibited the group from moving from one phase of development to the next. The material was rich and complex.

On Friday my colleague Jamie Lavender and I were presenting a workshop called Adapting Group Psychotherapy to Work with Marginalized Populations. I had been encouraged to co-facilitate the workshop by two of my mentors, Jeannie Little and Elaine Cooper. I learned so much from the experience. I was very nervous but we received some very positive feedback and were encouraged to submit again for next year’s conference in New York. Some of the people attending our workshop were already working with marginalized populations and very interested in learning more about interventions and how to work with their clients using a Harm Reduction model. I made some great contacts and am planning to work with my co-facilitator on another project in the not so distant future.

On Saturday I attended a daylong course called Process Addictions for the Group Psychotherapist: From Isolation to Attachment. It was wonderful. The facilitators offered a variety of learning modalities, which I found stimulating and engaging. Being a kinesthetic learner, I appreciated the experiential group exercises and activities as well as the didactic portions. Each facilitator offered something unique and valuable. We were given helpful handouts and information related to trauma and addiction including interactive exercises exploring 12 step models. I found the content and the way in which it was presented offered me a new perspective and approach to working with this population. It was extremely educational and enlightening to observe the group leader while participating in the experiential group with others who were at various stages of awareness about addiction and recovery. I have been able to integrate some of the group leader’s approaches in my group work.

This was my second AGPA conference and I feel extremely fortunate to have attended. Thank you very, very much!
I received a partial scholarship to attend this year's AGPA conference, which was my first. I found it to be a worthwhile and heartening experience. I thoroughly enjoyed and benefited from the process group experience, and found that I was exposed to a very different style of therapy than usual, which was beneficial in challenging some of my perceptions and rounding out and providing more options for ways of being as a group leader.

In addition, I thoroughly enjoyed all of the panels and workshops I attended, including the plenary by Yalom, which I will draw from in presentations on social media that I provide at home. I directly and almost immediately was able to apply and incorporate strategies into my practice that were gained from the workshop sessions I attended, including one on couples therapy, one on action methods, and one on the therapist's relationship with money.

Finally, I collaborated as a panel presenter with Judy Simon and probably wouldn't have attended the conference had it not been at the nudging provided by that opportunity (as well as the scholarship to offset costs). I thoroughly enjoyed meeting her and working on the panel, and continue to think about and incorporate ideas shared by the audience into my thinking and presentations and workshops that I lead in D.C. on a similar topic.

Overall, I found the conference experience to have been a very helpful one and one I am grateful for. I am appreciative of those who helped support the scholarship I received for their contribution to my learning and growth as a therapist.

I am incredibly honored and grateful to be a scholarship recipient for to the AGPA annual meeting for the second time. This allowed me the opportunity to, most importantly, learn about group therapy experientially and build networks among other clinicians from around the world. I strengthened ties with students I knew previously from my MSW, connected with new alumni and was able to learn quite a bit about group work in other areas of the country. The two-day group experience was equally fascinating and impactful as my first year of attendance. My group leader demonstrated a very different style from my first experience, which I experienced as equally effective. This creates a whole new process for me, given that after my first year experience I simply imitated what my leader did for a whole year, and believed this to be the best way without question. I learned from this year’s demonstration the idea of the group being a mother, the secure base, from which members depart from in the appropriate phases of development. In addition to learning a new style and manner in which to lead, I again felt the power of group therapy in my own self-discovery during these two days. I have learned that regardless of style, the feeling of safety in the group is paramount, and the job of the therapist. I am now slowly, year by year, learning different ways of creating that safety.

Following the experiential portion, I attended a full-day workshop in which I learned in-depth about using CBT in a group setting. I was fortunate to have a full day with an incredibly engaging and intelligent clinician, from whom I learned much more than I expected about the importance of teaching clients about physical health as the first and most basic behavior to address with groups. Most interestingly I learned that caffeine, like alcohol, could wash out the effects of anti-depressant medications. Thus, behaviors are incredible important to address as a first step, and this psychoeducation can be very effectively introduced in group therapy. This is something that will greatly impact the nature of my work, in that I see the importance in health behaviors in all therapeutic work. This has already had an impact on what I am aware of, ask, and screen for even with my individual clients. Specifically, I learned some breathing techniques and coaching techniques that I have been using already in my practice to help people both relax and also to create small manageable goals. I previously underestimated the importance of teaching specific skills and educating people about health. It is surprising what the general public is not aware of in terms of health and how it impacts their general function and thus their psychology.

I also had a full day of Principles of Group Psychotherapy and now have been able to fulfill all the requirements for a CGP certification. I participated in several weeks of review of basic group principles and theory before attending the conference, and was then able to solidify that knowledge, and experience some of these principles through another day program of group experience. It was incredible to have two group experiences one right
after another within the same conference. I was able to see yet another style of group leadership, experience a very different type of self-growth within the most diverse group I’ve ever been a part of. This again added to my repertoire and my thoughts about ways of creating safely and promoting change. It also makes me realize the importance of having diverse groups too, not just valuing or prioritizing the connections and similarity that clients have with other group members, or structuring groups around homogeneity instead of diversity. The last full day program I was a part of, was Process Addictions, a topic that I have the least experience with. I chose this topic, and most topics at the conference around what I am least comfortable/knowledgeable about. This is a big value of this AGPA meeting for me; anyone can participate in these workshops and learn about new fields that they do not always have exposure to inside our average work-day. This Addictions workshop was incredible in terms of the amount of material that was covered in one day, because of the three very different clinicians who lead it. We did many experiential and kinesthetic exercises to build trust among us and to also demonstrate what it may feel like to be an addict or to be the family member of an addict. We witnessed a demo group around the topic of addiction, and ran our own AA meeting. The hands on learning in the AGPA program fabulous, and I still remember very vividly these workshops because of this. Finally, I was able to attend several additional lectures that have also impacted my work forever. One lecture about the Hazards of Blurred Boundaries made me frightened to realize the effects on our clients when we are not careful. It has made me be more aware of things most clinicians do not carefully consider. I was also incredibly fortunate to meet Karpman of the Drama Triangle- something I ran psychoeducational groups around last year. It was fascinating to understand where he came up with the theory, and the way it can be applied to many family structures, addition, and internally as well. Lastly and possibly most interesting was a Couples Therapy workshop in which we witnessed a lengthy demonstration group of a population and purpose I had never witnessed before, or even considered to be very important. It was incredibly powerful to see couples go from feeling alone, isolated and misunderstood, to feeling like another partner could relate very well to their situation. It can be a shameful and isolating feeling to feel so resentful, so angry, or to be carrying out and shameful sexual behavior; I learned the healing power that a group can have on couples specifically. Not only were couples healed through this connection with others, they were relieved not to be alone in having to explain and defend their perspective to their antagonistic partner. Some experienced for the first time, being able to hear someone else explain to their partner what their experience is. Once again, I am so grateful for the funds to attend such a conference. This conference has impacted my work tremendously since my first attendance and it keeps my work alive as I think about different methods and ways for continual self-improvement and growth.

I was honored and privileged to have been awarded a scholarship to attend the 2015 Annual AGPA Meeting in beautiful San Francisco. Without this generous gift I would not have been able to attend this worthwhile six day event, bringing home all that I learned and experienced, an opportunity for which I am truly grateful. The two day Special Institute was particularly transforming for me, on many levels. I made positive professional and personal connections with each member of my group; and, while watching how a veteran leader functions certainly improved my skills at running a successful group, it was the personal growth that I experienced by actually being a member of a sustaining group that I believe contributed most to my future effectiveness as a group leader. What a poignantly relevant experience! I subsequently attended several workshops and was most positively influenced by the experiential components of many. Discussions about “interpersonal learning” and ‘neurological relationships and relatedness” were particularly inspiring to me, both as a school counselor and as a Marriage and Family Therapist. We really do profoundly impact one another! I also found the keynote speeches, by Yalom & Zimbardo & Ghant, very enjoyable! Upon returning to work on Maui, where I run groups for children, I was practicing the skills I observed renowned group leaders demonstrating during my week in San Francisco. The personal and professional benefits of this weeklong immersion are invaluable to me. Though I am still processing all of it, the didactic and experiential information I came away with during the week has now, gratefully, become an integrated part of who I am as a human being, as well as the work I do.
More than anything else though, as is often the case, it is the people that make the best experiences; and, for me, this was true about my experience at the AGPA Annual Meeting. I met so many great people doing great work! I was both inspired and humbled by many of them.

I sincerely appreciate the way I have been welcomed into this organization and I am truly proud to belong to it. As a way of “giving back” I have begun, together with a few other members, an affiliate group here in the Hawaiian Islands, hoping to share the powerfully positive ways groups can heal and impact our lives with other practitioners.

The AGPA has become my life-long professional organization of choice. I aspire to attend the worthwhile AGPA Annual Meeting each year. Thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for making that possible.

In preparing for my experience at the American Group Psychotherapy Association’s (AGPA) annual meeting, I sought opportunities to enhance my professional group facilitation skills, integrate creative methods, and become a more culturally competent group facilitator. I was also privileged to hear prominent, influential voices in the field, and to connect with professionals from other regions, training programs, and theoretical orientations. Indeed, attending the AGPA conference was an enlightening and encouraging experience.

During the two-day institute, I gained clarity on roles and strategies I prefer, ones I utilize less, and others I can use and experiment with. This understanding informs my relationship to empowering group members to discover their own roles and develop healthy strategies to meet their needs. As I explored my own barriers to connection, I was able to connect with others’ struggles, and identify issues that may affect group members’ needs, desires, and ability to connect.

As a Somatic Counseling student, my theoretical orientation is grounded in embodiment, creativity, and expressiveness. I connected with other professionals in the creative arts therapies in an effort to better understand and apply creativity and expression into therapeutic work with groups. In sessions that focused on psychodrama and dance/movement therapy, I witnessed and participated with other professionals in modalities that encourage empowerment, symbolic working-through of issues, expression, and embodied exploration. I feel increasingly more confident in my ability to apply these principles as I move toward internship in the fall.

I spent a significant amount of time in sessions about working with difference, power, and privilege in groups. I was fortunate to attend sections on racial identity development, neuroscience and racism, and addressing difference within co-facilitation and group member relationships. These sessions addressed nuances, complexities, and considerations of working with both clients and other professionals around multicultural, diversity, and social justice issues. Working with difference is a central part of my theoretical orientation, and I found these sections helpful in continuing to explore my own areas of privilege, particularly in ways that will affect my work with groups.

I was also fortunate to hear Dr. Elliot Zeisel, Dr. Irvin Yalom, and Dr. Steven Karpman speak on their careers, and contributions to the field of group psychotherapy. The AGPA community holds a strong appreciation for its lineage-holders as well as its new members, and the meta-process of connecting with other professionals at the conference was palpable. Having returned for a second time, I reconnected with several individuals I had met previously, and forged new connections with other professionals while discussing training, approaches, and theoretical orientation in the process. This experience has been valuable to understanding and integrating my own professional identity as it relates to others in the field.

Through this experience, I was able to further hone and develop my clinical skill in group facilitation, integrate my use of creative arts methods, explore issues of power, privilege, and difference, and connect with a variety of professionals from the field of group psychotherapy. Thank you to the American Group Psychotherapy Association for their generous support and commitment to the field of group psychotherapy.

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