

THANK YOU LETTERS RECEIVED FROM
RECIPIENTS OF SCHOLARSHIPS TO ATTEND
THE 2009 ANNUAL MEETING OF THE
AMERICAN GROUP PSYCHOTHERAPY ASSOCIATION

February 27, 2009

My experience of the 2009 AGPA Annual Conference was unforgettable to say the least. As a new member and first-time attendee I was not sure of what to expect going in, but ultimately, I found that participation in this experience was both professionally and personally restorative.

A majority of my time was spent in experiential workshops and process group experiences. The two day institute stands out to me in particular. My group was an all female process group led by Shoshana Ben-Noam. Shoshana was a phenomenal group leader and brilliant faculty member. Her leadership provided excellent demonstrations of individual and group-as-a whole interventions in the here-and-now. In addition, her comprehensive explanations for the reasoning behind certain interventions and how those decisions impacted the group process were invaluable. This experience greatly improved my understanding of the importance of the leader's role, as well enhanced my knowledge of group evolution and process. Furthermore, Shoshana's helped all of us come in touch with our emotional selves, and her attentiveness to the group process made membership and participation in 2-day institute a privilege.

Another aspect of the conference which I thoroughly enjoyed was the special interest group. My special interest group, the LGBT Sig, became like a haven for me throughout the conference. I experienced the people there like a family of choice. They went out of their way to include me and make me feel welcome as a first-time attendee, and cheered me on when I shared that I matched for internship. Some of the people who reached out to me in the SIG – I hope to know them forever! ☺ In fact, a few members reached out immediately to collaborate on projects and share experience.

Finally, the plenary speakers and workshop faculty were knowledgeable and inspiring in sharing their passion for group work and passing on their pearls of wisdom from their own work in the field. I participated in both experiential demonstration groups and didactic workshops. The hardest part was making a choice when there were two simultaneous groups going on that I wanted to attend! I serve as adjunct faculty for the Chicago School of Professional Psychology, and the didactic workshops provided me with a plethora of useful references and information to incorporate into my courses, particularly those that were geared towards teaching the principles of group psychotherapy and psychoanalytic therapy. Notable workshops that I attended included E. Counselman and S. Rutan's group for dealing with unexpected events in group therapy, and Karen Shore's fantastic workshop for Emotion Focused (EFT) couple's therapy.

I came away from this experience feeling revitalized and inspired. I connected with amazing individuals in arenas of the field and I was invited to collaborate on projects and presentations with other psychologists and mental health clinicians who share a similar vision. Being connected to groups of individuals united in openness, authenticity, and honesty was intensely fulfilling, and I felt nurtured and in touch with an incredibly beautiful part of the human

experience. I am incredibly grateful and ever indebted to all those who made the scholarship possible.

Respected AGPA foundation:

It was a really wonderful gift for me to receive the international scholarship from AGPA foundation. This was my first time to travel to America to attend the annual meeting of AGPA. Everything should be such a fresh experience. In a word, this was an exciting visit for my mind and my profession.

The first day, I enjoyed the presentation of Dr. Jerrold Post. It was about 'the group psychology of political behavior'. What impressed me was that any political prejudice and the quarrel between different religions and countries deeply originate from something which we ourselves we can not accept. This really makes sense. The institute opening plenary would become a beautiful memory of mine. Everything was so interesting. The report from Dr. Priscilla Kauff was very impressive and inspiring, which encouraged me to have more discussion with her later. It was very helpful for me to understand group psychotherapy and AGPA.

The general process group experiences organized by Dr. Hank Fallon was a wonderful spirit trip. We shared our life, our feelings and our experiences together. This was so touching. I really felt the charm of group. I also enjoyed the workshop organized by Jeffrey S. Hudson and Andrea E. Pully about 'examining the need to be liked and working effectively with anger and conflict in groups'. Everyone took part in the process of the group as an observer or as a participant. The whole process was very harmonious. It felt like a symphony. At the same time, I really understood the need to be liked in a group. The leader and co-leader also really let me understand how to work with anger and conflict in groups.

The last two days I attended the workshop organized by Dr. Robert Klein, Dr. Suzanne Phillips and other faculties about 'using groups for trauma intervention'. I learned so much from this workshop. I am interested both in the form and the contents of the workshop. Through this workshop I learned how to distinguish normal from pathological responses to trauma and how to work with the victims using the group. The organizers created a wonderful atmosphere in which we can express ourselves and have a good understanding about the trauma.

In a word, this visit gave me a lot of beautiful memories. Further more, I really experienced the charm of the group psychotherapy, which encourages me to develop group psychotherapy in China. Fortunately, this idea has the support of Dr. Robert Klein, Dr. Suzanne Phillips, Dr. Jeffrey Kleinberg, Diane Fierman and so many people of whom I can remember the faces and smiles, although I can not say out all of their names.

Now, I am in Chengdu City, China. I have organized 25 counselors and therapists who work in different universities to attend the basic training about group psychotherapy from Dr. Robert Klein, Dr. Suzanne Phillips, and Dr. Jeffrey Kleinberg. We have formed a study group for studying group psychotherapy. I think in the future we can build a formal organization with AGPA. My colleagues and I are on the road of becoming group therapists. All of these can happen just because of AGPA and AGPA foundation. Thanks a lot.

Respected

Last year, the AGPA annual meeting was held in my home town of Washington, DC. My psychotherapy supervisor was active in the organization, and, knowing of my interest in group psychotherapy, she told me about how I could volunteer at the meeting. That experience gave me a small glimpse into what this particular meeting was like, and I was intrigued. I was extremely fortunate to be awarded the Byron Wilkenfeld Scholarship, and it gave me the opportunity to participate in the meeting as a full-fledged attendee. I felt that it was an incredible opportunity to begin to understand where group therapy fit in to my other developing career interests of Addiction Psychiatry and academic medicine.

Looking back, I realize that most of the sessions I attended had to do with either teaching group therapy or with using group therapy in the treatment of addicted patients. One of the reasons why I had gotten involved with the AGPA in the first place was because, to be honest, I felt as though the group training I had gotten during my residency was, well, pretty poor. I hope to return to my residency as a faculty member after finishing my fellowship, so maybe one day I will be able to affect positive change in the way group therapy is taught to the residents.

One of the moments from the conference that I will never forget occurred in a workshop on teaching the principles of group psychotherapy. Earlier in the day, I had met one of the facilitators of the workshop at the Psychiatry SIG breakfast. He approached me before the workshop began, and asked me if I would volunteer to be the "student" and lead a mini-group, so that he could then demonstrate to the other workshop participants how

he supervised residents. I was absolutely terrified to be leading a group in front of thirty professionals who have been practicing this technique for decades longer than I have, and yet I walked away knowing that I had learned more in that workshop than I had probably learned in four years of residency. On top of that, everyone was very supportive, and throughout the rest of the conference there were more people saying hi to me in the hallways and just in general making me feel welcome.

By far, my favorite workshop was on using Harm Reduction as a model for running groups for patients who are often excluded from psychiatric care. The workshop was led by three people who regularly run groups in which the participants are actively psychotic or who are under the influence of drugs. I thought to myself, "This is why I come to professional meeting." I love to hear an idea so far from what I would consider, because it makes me stop and begin to challenge my preconceived ideas. Could I be reaching more patients who need help? Am I making assumptions about who can benefit from group therapy that aren't true? I didn't necessarily walk away with the answers to those questions, but I walked away with some e-mail addresses and some business cards, so that the dialogue could continue.

I left the AGPA meeting this year with more than contacts. I feel as though I now have a better idea of what my professional identity is going to become. I am beginning to realize that as a professional, I have a unique voice that I hope will help shape the field of psychiatry in some small way. Because of what I expect will be a long, continued involvement in the AGPA, that voice will include the fact that group therapy is a beneficial and exciting treatment modality that should play an active part in psychiatric training and practice.

Dear AGPA Scholarship Committee,

As the result of the scholarship I received, I was able to attend my first two-day institute. Last year, I attended the final three days of the annual conference; I was struck with how participants discussed the impact of the institute experience. It was then I decided I would make every effort to return, and I am thankful I was given the opportunity to do so.

My experience did not disappoint; not only did I learn a great deal about group process, I learned about myself, how I interact with others, and about "the power of the group" to modifying self-perceptions. Upon my return, I noticed a difference leading my own groups; I became aware of levels of interaction that had likely always been present but that I had never before noticed. I felt better able to navigate and direct the group in a way to address the conscious and unconscious needs of the members.

Similar to last year, the relationships I formed were a key feature of my experience. My fellow institute participants were an incredibly diverse and moving group. We had representatives from three different countries and a variety of training backgrounds; this diversity greatly enhanced my learning; several of us intend to remain in contact and will hopefully meet again at future conferences.

I am grateful to the scholarship committee and generous donors; without this support I would not have been able to participate in the conference. Attending the institute has been among the most profound learning experience, both personally and professionally, in the past year. I returned to my groups refreshed, renewed, and recommitted to help others have a similar experience.

Warmly,

I would like to thank AGPA for giving me the opportunity to attend this annual conference which was wonderful from the beginning to the very end. Even before the conference, I had received numerous phone calls/emails who welcomed me and offered to help me to get around at the conference. I felt absolutely welcomed everywhere I went. From the beginning of

the 2 day institute, to the trauma course organized by the AGPA outreach team, I was emerged in a process that continually inspired me, humbled me, and helped me.

It was also the first time since June 2008 that I got to meet in person several individuals that have made such a big difference to my trip to China. Throughout my 3 months of stay in China, Suzanne, Maureen, Robert, Jeff, Priscilla ...and the entire outreach team had been supporting me every step of the way. Their level of commitment, concern, and insight towards a relative stranger like my speaks aloud to the transforming power of the group. As I expected, the 2 day trauma course they offered was of the highest quality I could imagine.

One thing I did not quite understand was a nightly discussion of political psychology of suicide terrorism. After a rather cerebral presentation on suicide terrorist attacks, Islam fundamentalism, off shore balancing, a gentleman sitting not far from me asked the presenter, "What's wrong with the US occupying another country?"

I had questioned myself if I had heard his question right. Instead of asking what's wrong with occupying another country, maybe we should ask what's *right* with occupying another country. Never good at analyzing politics, I was at a loss again!

I am very grateful to have received the Saul Scheidlinger Scholarship to attend the AGPA 2009 annual meeting. I probably experienced more professional and personal development in a single week than in any other week I can remember. I attended a number of workshops and open sessions with a focus on children and adolescents, as well as the special interest group for child and adolescent groups. Connie Concannon's open session on school-based, strength-based groups for Latinos in Northern California, as well as the workshop on ethics and technology in adolescent groups, were particularly meaningful to my practice in how demonstrated the power of groups for young people. These experiences inspired me to start a social skills group at an elementary school where I am providing consultation. Amongst the professional connections I made at AGPA, Tony Sheppard, who wrote the AGPA manual on groups for children, has been kind enough to guide me with some ideas for my new group, even after the conference was over. I also attended a workshop on developing a sense of identity as a leader, which was a fantastic opportunity at this early point in my career. Probably the highlights of my week at AGPA were the experiential aspects of the conference, where I had the opportunity to learn about group process by experiencing it first hand as a group member. A workshop by Geraldine Alpert on group bonding through communal singing was particularly exciting in how I was able to feel the power of the group. I also participated in a mixed level of experience institute group, where I developed a deeper understanding of the roles that I tend to take on in groups. Overall, the conference solidified my interest in and commitment to group psychotherapy, and I see myself attending many AGPA meetings in the future. I was lucky enough to connect with more AGPA members in my local society, which will be immensely helpful in my career development as a psychiatrist and group therapist. I look forward to seeing you all in San Diego next year!

It was with trepidation that I sat down at the start of the Tuesday institute at AGPA last month. Initial thoughts in my head ranged from interested and open ("What's going to happen today?" and "I'm curious to see what comes out of this.") to cautious ("Are there going to be more women in this group?" and "I don't want to come across as

too 'professional'.") I soon found out that most of us shared similar thoughts and concerns. The unstated questions regarding comfort, safety, and expectations in the room were universal. We were able to bond around these topics and start sharing more about ourselves in the process. At the end of the group, the thoughts in my head included ones centering on appreciation ("Wow. Everyone really took some risks in here." and "What an amazing process.") and regret at its ending ("I don't want this to end." and "I wish I could get to know each of these people so much more.")

One of the highlights of the AGPA annual meeting was the experiential component woven into all presentations. I especially valued being a group member during the institute and other workshops. The didactic aspects were equally valuable, but fueled a different aspect of my identity as a group therapist: namely, the intellectual and cognitive part. Presentations I attended prompted my desire to learn more about modern psychoanalytic theories of group psychotherapy and provided resources for my dissertation investigating group leadership.

Beyond the experiential and cognitive experiences lies the true value of AGPA: its members. Making connections with presenters and attendees alike was a key aspect to my enjoyment of the conference. These connections ranged from a group of students and their professors from the Colorado association, to a psychiatrist from New Jersey, to a social worker in Los Angeles, and to students from my own field of counseling psychology. The richness that each person contributes to group psychotherapy is valuable.

It is for all these reasons that I can offer heartfelt thanks to all those who made it possible for me to attend the 2009 AGPA annual meeting. I'm already looking forward to the meeting next year in San Diego.

How heart-warming for me to hear your response to my gratitude!

Please do share the letter. I would love for everyone to know the wonderful difference it has made in my life.

I've already gotten promised didactic time to teach the rising 2nd-year residents this summer, on groups. I'm going to work with Karsten Kueppenbender, MD CAGP (previous AGPA scholarship winner) on that.

He's the one who started me on this path, but it wasn't until 3rd year - so now we'll catch them sooner!

I also just spoke with the administration about starting a high-functioning process group here at Cambridge

Health Alliance, and they're in the process of approving it! And Karsten will be my supervisor!

It's only been 3 days, and I'm meeting all my goals for bringing groups into our care system here!

I'll be attending the June meeting of the NGSP, and have already RSVP'ed to go to one of their "breakfast club" meetings in 2 weeks, and have started pestering them for an application for CGP training,

which looks like it will fit very nicely with my 4th year of residency (which is entirely elective).

Coming to the AGPA meeting has transformed my life, and ignited my enthusiasm like nothing else before!

With warmest regards,

I wanted to thank you for the Mary M. Tanenbaum scholarship. Coming to AGPA completely shifted my paradigms. I had held high-hopes for group therapy for a long time, before leading my first psychodynamic group last year (2007-2008) - but that group's supervisor was very classically psychoanalytic, and I was quite frustrated and disappointed after the experience of being silent, along with having no understanding of what was going on in the group - being told that a group's interaction was "classic" but having no further information on "classic what?" was very disheartening. Our "t-

group" as second-year psychiatry residents was entirely supportive. There was no process that was noted, and I don't recall much discussion about intra-group interactions. Our "t-group" this year as third-year psychiatry residents was leaderless for the first 5 months... I had given up my hopes of doing groups, despite having had a good experience in 2002, while training at the Betty Ford center. But, Karsten Kueppenbender, MD, CGP (previous AGPA scholarship winner) taught us a brief few hours on group psychotherapy this past fall (2008), and it gave me hope that groups could actually be fun! He explained the dynamics, and how groups develop - it was a little flickering light of hope, but I'd had the full previous year of not understanding my experience as co-leader of a group & dissatisfaction with my "t-group," that loomed heavily over it. He encouraged me to apply for a scholarship, praising the experience of AGPA.

I applied, with heart in hand, and hoped to come. Winning a fully-funded scholarship was the only way I could attend, and by the time AGPA registration rolled around, I had long lost the light of hope for groups. But, I won the Mary M. Tanenbaum scholarship! I could come and give groups one last shot. I was so ambivalent about attending (having to rearrange schedules, find clinical coverage, leave the family behind; & Karsten couldn't attend), but the experience was thrilling. I had an amazing institute, led by Mel Stern, MD, CGP, FAGPA - the first day, I floundered a bit, learning the rules of engagement. I was the only MD in my group, and everyone else knew what it was to be in a process group, how to work with here & now feelings between members. They brought me into the fold, and quickly we were interacting on the emotional plane, laying bare our fears and unpleasant emotions - each bringing a separate richness to the group's dynamics. By the second day, I had learned the rules of engagement; and I felt ready to play & interact, able to call fellow members out on their defenses, just as they had helped me face mine the day before, and watched our group grow & deepen in such a short time. I felt almost bereft when the institute group ended, but relieved that everyone was still there on the following 3 days of workshops. (Object constancy - yay!) A subgroup of us formed after the institute ended, and we bonded even more tightly together over those last days. How thrilling, to be known and accepted, even loved, despite all the pain and longings we'd exposed to one another.

Even without the intense new relationships, the learning at the workshops alone was incredible - it really solidified a lot of the vague psychotherapeutic concepts for me, even as an individual therapist. In my first full-day workshop with Jeffrey Hudson, M.Ed., LPC, CGP, FAGPA & Andrea Pully, M.Ed., LPC, CGP, I began to understand more fully the abstract snippets of psychological underpinnings - what it means when I try to rearrange my schedule for patients (I'm trying to be liked, instead of being a reassuring constant good-enough mother) - and the anxiety that kids develop when parents try to be liked or react from their own anxieties, instead of withstanding the child's barrage of emotions - those anxious kids grow into the anxious adults who can't handle their own unpleasant feelings, and seek out external ways of containment (drugs, provoking other people through actions/words - inducing the feelings in them, in a flailing attempt to communicate their unbearable/intolerable emotions). Watching the demonstration group helped me see the ways co-leaders can jointly hold various projected affects, admit to mistakes, and move within the group's themes. I realized that the rest of us were still part of the group, as Jeff & Andrea brought all 42 of us into the fold, by asking for each participant's thoughts/feelings/responses to the inner demonstration group.

In my second full-day workshop with Paul Kaye, Ph.D., CGP, I learned how to work as a group leader on 3 different levels - with the individual themselves, facilitating between group dyads/subgroups, or moving/commenting on the group-process as a whole. There was an entire toolbox of interventions we could use, and we could work to understand the group on the various levels, choosing how to titrate the "emotional insulation" for each person. Being part of that demonstration group helped me experience the different interventions, and let me flex my new process-group muscles.

And in my last workshop with Nancy Kelly, Ph.D., LCSW, CGP & Robert Murphy, M.A., LPC, LMFT, CGP, I faced up to my fears about sexual countertransference, but actually contributed to the small-group discussions with seasoned therapists! We were proposing ways, as a leader, to handle various scenarios - in particular, one hypothetical case involved an individual member's accusation that the therapist was seductive towards another member. One of my small-group members declared a group-process comment was needed, to check the validity of the comment with the rest of the group's reactions. I questioned this experienced clinician's therapeutic goal and intentions because I had learned from the previous two days of workshops that such an intervention, while group-oriented, may be serving the therapist's need to be reassured, rather than a therapeutic move for the group. These experienced therapists in my small group looked stunned and then agreed - who would've thought a newbie like me could learn and synthesize so much information in just a short 5 days? On day 1, I didn't even know what one was supposed to do in a process group, and by day 5, I was able to spot an experienced therapist's countertransference resistance and defenses behind a seemingly group-process-oriented intervention! I can't believe it.

But, more than the learning (which I truly appreciate & cherish), I felt like I found my people at AGPA - something that has been harder in psychiatry residency than I'd expected. My new subgroup posse of peers includes a clinical therapist, a PsyD intern, and a Master's level psychologist - no new MD's in the mix of chosen new friends, yet. Though, among my amazing teachers, the range of degrees includes all levels, including MD's. I was able to be my true self at AGPA - able to laugh again, and even touch people on the arm in conversation. One of my fellow residents (who roomed with me) couldn't believe my transformation - she'd never seen me so happy or relaxed. I feel so rejuvenated & hopeful, having finally found other young mental-health professionals/trainees more open (less tightly defended) and psychologically minded than many of my peers at home, and having an arena where we can actually work on our own process/dynamics (institute) & then learn about them (workshops)!

Because of the incredible AGPA experience, I will devote my 4th year of residency to group-work (in addition to developing a new group for higher-functioning patients to really work on process, I will work to develop an enticing curriculum for psychiatry residents earlier on than PGY-3, and I will be seeking CGP training through my local NGSP). Already, it is helping me interact more emotional-truthfully with my family (partner & 5 year-old son), my friends, and my colleagues. Truly, I cannot express my gratitude and appreciation to AGPA enough, for the generosity of funds, teaching, camaraderie, and spirit. I will bring the incredible light of this experience to my fellow residents & patients, in hopes of sharing the warmth and glow of understanding the group's power to transform.

In sincere appreciation,

Dear AGPA Scholarship Committee,

March 9, 2009

Where do I begin? Let me set this up by saying I have been heavily dedicated to personal growth since I was sixteen, which was eighteen years ago. I have traveled around the world, lived in Buddhist monasteries, been on many long wilderness expeditions, have seen therapists, and will complete a very experiential graduate program in May, 2009 which emphasizes the therapist becoming intimately acquainted with oneself before going out to become a therapist for others. With that said, I would like to say with my most sincere effort that the AGPA conference was a profoundly impactful experience for me.

Mel Stern, my institute leader, did a phenomenal job in creating a group of trusting people, where all the emotions of the spectrum were allowed. Conflict and connection were happening every hour on multiple levels – intra-

psychic, interpersonal, and at the group level. Many of my institute friends are keeping in touch and carrying our raw expressions into an email conversation that is alive daily.

In attending many workshops, I was exposed to a variety of approaches to group psychotherapy from many professionally developed facilitators. I did not expect such an experiential approach to the workshops, and tried to get in the demonstration group as much as I could. In each session, I was pushed beyond my comfort zone and saw new aspects of my shadow, both light and dark, that I did not know were there.

The Large Group was an amazing experience as well. At first, I was thrown off by the lack of feeling oriented expressions, but then was taken aback by the national and global voices that were channeling through the members of the group. I noticed waves of sadness, agony, joy, humor, and other strong emotions viscerally rush through my body in waves that seemed to be rushing through the entire room, noticeable in the types of comments made.

During and shortly after the conference, I felt very raw and open. My interactions with others were clear, warm, and fearless. I felt in touch with energies much larger than my own body's. I believe that my intense meditation practice, as well as other factors, set me up to be ripped wide open at the AGPA conference. Now that the climax of the experience has faded and my ego has slipped back in to cloud my inner brilliance, I have realized my potential far greater than ever before...and long for it to permeate more continuously—for my own clarity to shine so I can be of deeply compassionate service to others.

Being from Naropa University's Contemplative Counseling Psychology program and a Buddhist monk, I had already been a fan of the mix of Buddhist and Western psychologies, but now I am totally sold on the two—especially Buddhist practice and group psychotherapy. I am extremely thankful for the scholarship opportunity to have gone to the AGPA conference. Without it, there is no way I could have attended. It still surprises me that people are so generous as to donate money for people like me to attend. I am especially thankful for the Donald T. Brown scholarship... You know, I just can't say how amazing it was and how thankful I am!

Thank you so much,

Attending the annual meeting was everything that I had hoped it would be and more. I attended the meeting alone but never felt lonely; from the time I walked into "my institute" and throughout the entire week, I felt welcomed and wore my "First Time Attendee" and "New Members" badges with pride.

Experientially, the institute provided me with knowledge and awareness of myself that I did not believe was possible. I attended the institute, "Individual Work in Groups: It's More Than You Think." Uneasy at first, but eager to participate, I was able to open up, become vulnerable and experience the benefit of being a part of this institute and to be a part of the healing process for others. This was a precious and unexpected gift that paved the way and allowed me to carry the same openness, willingness and vulnerability to the rest of the sessions throughout the week. The institute was a great introduction to the week ahead.

On a practical level, the annual meeting provided me with a foundation and opportunity for growth as a student and soon to be new professional. I attended a number of sessions and classes and learned something from each one but the three that really had an impact were "Redecision Therapy", "Group Cognitive Behavioral Model" and "Keeping It Real: Transforming Theory Into Practice." The Redecision Therapy session provided very concrete information about the approach and increased my awareness in this area. Group Cognitive Behavioral Model accomplished the same but also had a very beneficial experiential component that was helpful in understanding the model. Interestingly, the last session I attended, "Keeping It Real", initially was my least favorite. In this session, the facilitator explained a few different theories, explained his approach and then initiated a process group with all participants. This made me uneasy because I had never been a part of this type of group

and was quite confused. Towards the end, there was a conflictual interaction between the facilitator and myself during the process group that left me somewhat upset and offended. I was determined not to let this one session ruin my experience and tried to understand and dig deeper to figure out what was the meaning of the interaction. Thinking back on it now, it still was a frustrating experience but I now realize that the challenge was to think differently and experience the group and myself in a different way and for that experience, I am grateful.

On a social level, I was able to meet so many wonderful people and take back home so many friends and colleagues to reach out to if needed. I also joined the Women's SIG and have been asked to assist with ideas to help "new members" and "first time attendees" navigate through their first annual meeting experience for the 2010 meeting.

Attending the meeting was a necessary experience for me as a student and future social worker. I petitioned for the scholarship because I thought it would be a great learning experience and would provide good exposure as a future professional. What I actually walked away with was a greater sense of self, a clearer understanding of my path as a professional, a warm sense of community and affiliation, two mentors, a group of friends and my registration receipt for the 2010 conference! My experience at the 2009 AGPA annual meeting was unforgettably transforming. From the moment I stepped into The Institute to the moment when I reluctantly left the hotel after the very last session, I felt as if I had transcended.

Hi,

First of all, thank you again for the amazing opportunity to attend this year's AGPA conference in Chicago, which would not have been a possibility were it not for the scholarship you awarded me. This year proved to be a very growth promoting and transformative experience for me personally, as well as my development as a professional.

I attended the two day institute to begin the conference and loved the experience of both connecting with other professionals in a process group format as well as learning skills and tools I can use as a process group leader. I don't believe skills can be better modeled and taught than in this experiential format and I feel I grew immensely both in personal insight as well as how I can improve as a group leader.

The remainder of the conference was filled with very valuable workshops for me. I attended a workshop on Gender countertransference and gained insight into my own views and biases regarding gender and how that plays out in the group psychotherapy context. I also attended a VERY valuable workshop on resolving difficulties with immediacy in the group format and based on this presenter's experiential format as well as article hand-out, I learned very valuable, concrete tools I can use to bring my process groups into the here-and-now. I currently frequently reference my notes from that experience as well as the article that was given to me. I also attended a few psychodrama workshops, which were very valuable as I work frequently with youth and found the ideas I gleaned to explore family conflicts and intrapersonal experiences to be very insightful and I also frequently reference those notes.

Beyond these learning experiences, I also met and developed relationships with other professionals that I hope will continue for years to come! I had a wonderful time at the conference in Chicago and hope to be able to attend every year! Thank you again for such an amazing opportunity!

Sincerely,

My experience at the conference was magnificent! Being new to the field and a first time attendee I did not know what to expect. I had no idea that I would leave the conference understanding myself better while gaining knowledge about group leadership and group dynamics. This merging of self development in the conference

setting allowed me to understand the information presented while also experiencing interpersonal growth. The experience was profound and accelerated my learning.

In particular, the workshops that offered fish bowl experiences were most helpful and interesting. I learned to identify individuals' ego functioning, attachment styles, and defense mechanisms as well as my own. For me, participating in the fish bowls allowed me to examine myself and the leader. Examining how and when the leader interjected, what the leader said and how she said it was very helpful as a new professional to the field.

I was also amazed at how quickly I formed close relationships with people I met for the first time, I miss them already. Attendees and workshop leaders went out of their way to welcome and include me in the community. It did not matter that I was new and inexperienced, I was valued and appreciated. The casual social gatherings were helpful to me. They connected me to people running groups in the Boston area. . The Boston group dinner was amazing. All the Boston members were warm and welcoming and provided me a list of contacts to further my development and training in group therapy.

I would like to share one thing that I found frustrating and confusing. The course catalogue was difficult to decipher. I think it would be helpful to put all the workshops and lectures up on a board for the entire week of the conference. This visual representation would lessen the confusion of flipping through the pages of the catalogue.

The workshops I participated in were:

S1-2,--Fantastic-- The development of the interpersonal ego

IP Institute Plenary Session IB 2-1 Process Group Experience

IB2-2 Process group Experience section

Leadership Dilemmas in Group Psychotherapy

Conference Opening Plenary Session

58 Outstanding workshop-- Building Strong attachments for secure attachment. This workshop inspired me to learn more about attachment style.

213—Outstanding workshop--Existential Aspects of Group. This workshop has inspired me to take a course in existential psychotherapy and there is one in Boston.

307 Levels of Intervention in Psychodynamics

221 Outstanding workshop-- Helping Families at End of Life

315 Out standing workshop-- Louis Ormont Progressing while Regressing

Attached is my summary of my experience at AGPA. I wanted to thank you personally for helping me to obtain a scholarship allowing me to attend the conference. To date, my experiences at AGPA have been the highlights of my training as a therapist. I've met wonderful people and forged relationships that have enriched me. I have a strong desire to be involved with AGPA throughout my career (which hopefully will get started soon... we'll see!). Without the scholarship, I wouldn't have been able to have these experiences that have strengthened me as a therapist and helped me to discover what I'm most passionate about. So, in sum, thanks for helping to make this possible for me!

This year I was able to attend the annual AGPA conference as a student for the second time. I anxiously anticipated participating this year, as my prior experience with AGPA was both a profound experience for me personally and also a great benefit to my training as a therapist. I also had the opportunity to present research at this year's conference, and as a result felt an even greater desire to be involved in the conference, to get to know my future colleagues, and gain further training as a clinician focusing on group psychotherapy.

Last year, the most personally meaningful part of the conference for me was the 2-day process group. I entered this year's group with a great deal of anticipation, as I had found last year's experience both emotionally intense and rewarding. Once again, I found that the process group afforded me an opportunity to learn about myself and how I interact with others. I had a powerful experience as I found myself able to process my experience with others in the group and felt quickly bonded to my colleagues there. I felt that the group impacted me in a lasting way, and helped me to become more aware of who I am as a therapist. Just as the year previous, as the group ended I felt a sense of sadness that the experience was over, but also felt a renewed optimism in my belief in the power of groups.

I enjoyed attending several training seminars and felt enriched as a clinician in learning about a diverse range of topics, from the changing nature of privacy and confidentiality in the era of Facebook and Myspace, to experiential techniques in guiding groups to the here and now, and to employing psychodrama in groups. I had a wonderful experience interacting with other clinicians and learning new points of view.

As mentioned before, I had the opportunity to present research at this year's meeting with a fellow student. While I was apprehensive and intimidated to present alongside a number of respected researchers whose work I had often cited in my own reviews of the literature, I found a great deal of support and warmth from these individuals and had a great experience presenting. My experience reinforced my desire to be a part of AGPA as a future professional and to stay involved in the organization. I appreciate the contributions of AGPA towards my scholarship, as without it I would not have been able to attend. Attending AGPA has been a highlight of my clinical training.

I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to attend AGPA. It was literally a life altering experience. I chose to attend a men's group for my institute. This experience afforded me the opportunity to value and expresses my true emotions. As I worked on issues I have not uncovered before, I was held by the group and supported in a way I had not allowed to happen before. I also received excellent training which I have brought back to my counseling center and taught to my colleagues there. The training and support I receive from AGPA has helped me form my professional identity as a group therapist and psychologist. Even though I am in my first year as a professional, I am group coordinator of our counseling center and we currently have seven full groups running. One year ago there were only two.

Thank you so much for investing in me and those around me

I am writing my summary of experiences as a scholarship recipient this year.

I am a newly licensed therapist and also new to private practice. I have led groups in the past, with limited success and not much excitement. I was urged by my colleague, Katie Steele, to attend the AGPA conference. I could not have attended without the scholarship funds as I am still building my business as a therapist and I have young children and am the primary breadwinner for my family.

The conference was amazing. I would have to say that it was the best conference I have attended since graduating with my MSW in 2002. The mixture of didactic, experiential and communal learning was perfect. My first day in Chicago, I attended Dr. Zeisel's special institute and was thrilled to hear his expertise and to actually watch him lead a working group. I learned so many new things that day that I could barely take it all in! It helped me to understand the multiple layers of group dynamics in a way I had not understood before. I especially appreciated his ability to honestly answer questions from the audience about why he had utilized certain techniques or directions in the demo group.

Next, I attended the Institute. My group was the Women's Group led by Barbara Cohn. It was quite the experience. I have never been a group member before and was very nervous, especially when I walked in to a group of women that were all older and more experienced than myself. Barbara led some meditations that were useful and was able to elicit feedback from group members about those exercises that I had not seen accomplished before. I also got first-hand experience in handling a resistant group member. I loved the opportunity to see how a skilled group leader like Barbara handles that tension with the resistant members, the other group members and the group as a whole. In the last part of our Institute, Barbara discussed with us how and why she chose to lead the group in the way she did and one thing I particularly learned is how to gently lead a women's group to deal with anger. I was also able to open up in a very real way in this group that has helped me immensely as a person and as a therapist. This experience was like none I've had before and if I wasn't sold on group by Katie and Dr. Zeisel, I sure was after those two days.

It just so happened that my group was full of wonderful female therapists that nurtured me throughout the rest of my experience. I had lunches and dinners with some of my group members and bonded with women that I will remember forever and will look forward to seeing each year at AGPA. Finally, I attended one day of workshops before I had to return to South Bend. I went to one workshop on the Neurobiology of Trauma and another on Emotionally-Focused Therapy with Couples. They were both great workshops. I felt that I knew most of the information in the Neurobiology of Trauma workshop, but learned great new skills in the EFT workshop that I have utilized with my clients since. I should also mention that I attended the plenary sessions and the speaker on Motivation of Suicide Terrorists. I enjoyed all of those, especially the speaker on Suicide Terrorists, which changed my worldview on terrorism. I thoroughly enjoyed the hotel and took advantage of the massages and booths available as well in the evenings. I felt quite overwhelmed by the amount of choice in workshops to attend and found myself pulled in many directions through the week, which is not much to complain about in the scheme of things! Since returning from the conference, I have begun planning a Women's Group and look forward to moving my practice forward with the help and support of AGPA. I do plan to attend the San Diego conference next year and am looking forward to it. I cannot thank AGPA and the scholarship foundation enough for the opportunity that was awarded to me to attend this incredible conference. It has certainly been practice-changing, but I would have to say life changing as well. Thanks so much,

Thank you for giving me the scholarship that allowed me to attend the American Group Psychotherapy 2009 conference, *Strong Group Foundations: Building Lasting Communities*. As I think back on the six days I spent in Chicago, the words intense, relational, educational, awakened, and integrative, come to mind – words that best capture the essence of my conference experience. Although I had attended the two previous AGPA conferences, the 2009 Chicago conference was unique. It was the first time I attended the One Day Institute, the first time I selected a Specific Interest group based on the topic and not on the presenters, the first time I was invited to participate in an Open Session AGPA panel, the first time that I presented an all-day workshop at AGPA, and the first time someone asked me, immediately after Jeffrey Mehr's and my *LivingDance~LivingMusic* workshop, to write a chapter for the new edition of her book on group therapy. It was also the first time that I had to ask for a scholarship and the first time that I put closure on unfinished business from a previous conference.

BACKGROUND & GOALS FOR CHICAGO 2009

Last year I left Washington, D.C. feeling that the majority of AGPA members lived in a rarefied environment where they, the locals, spoke a language of their own. I know the tenets of psychoanalysis. I also value authentic expression, but my experience at the 2008 Institute was so disquieting that I sought out interpreters after the first day. Members of the Women's Special Interest Group provided the support. Thanks to them, I enjoyed the rest of the conference; however, I never found the "linguistic specialists" I was seeking. During my seven-hour drive home, I wondered how AGPA members who appeared so comfortable with the language, syntax and interactive norms of the Special Interest Institute and Large Group actually communicated in the real world. Although I still

felt out of the linguistic loop, I recognized that AGPA, like earth, housed many languages. Therefore, one of my goals for the Chicago conference was to understand AGPA's dominant language and norms for communication. Other goals included (a) learning methods for actualizing theory, not just in groups, but in our rapidly changing world, (b) examining the group rule that prohibits action, and (c) introducing *LivingDance~LivingMusic*, an approach to group therapy that engages basic elements of dance movement to which most of us, however unconsciously, were once connected. I developed *LivingDance~LivingMusic* because the methods I had been trained in did not generate the kinds of changes that people with eating disorders need to reclaim their physical and emotional well-being. Since then I have successfully applied *LivingDance~LivingMusic* to groups ranging from people with chronic mental illness to adults eager to grow personally and professionally.

The following is a brief summary of my experience at this year's AGPA meeting in Chicago...

First of all, how anyone could write anything brief about their experience at the annual meeting is a challenge. My experiences therefore, are anything but brief. They are rich, deep, cherished and unsurpassed. This year especially I found to be more rich and rewarding. Whether it be the people or a little experience under my belt, I am finally finding my niche within AGPA and I couldn't feel more at home.

This year I challenged myself to step outside my comfort zone and really get to know people. Instead of showing up at the conference and recognizing old faces, saying hello, and then goodbye, I connected and I plugged in. I am still in contact with many people I met this year and feel a greater bond with AGPA as an organization and my emerging professional self.

Without a doubt, I would never have been able to attend this year's meeting without the selfless contributions of the Group Psychotherapy Foundation. Throughout the meeting I became aware of the lengthy flags hanging from conference name tags. When I saw an individual with a "GPF Founders Club" flag I took the opportunity to thank them for paving the way for new professionals like myself to be able to attend the annual meeting. "Thank you" will never suffice for the breadth of my experiences at the annual meeting.

I thank you all so greatly for welcoming new generations of group therapists that, with some mentoring, will be eager to carry the torch of AGPA to future generations.

Sincerely,

Once again, the AGPA Annual Conference was an incredibly powerful, even transformative experience for me. I cannot thank AGPA enough for the opportunity to attend this tremendously special event.

The Two-Day Institute was once again for me the highlight experience of the conference. This year I attended the Men's Group, and as usual I learned more about the process and conduct of process groups in those two days than I have in any other endeavor this year. The experience touched me greatly on both a personal and a professional level.

Unfortunately, due to emergency circumstances I had to leave the conference on Friday morning, so I only had Thursday to attend various talks and workshops. Two events from my Thursday experience stand out: the "Fear and Loathing in Groups" talk by Drs. Motherwell, Gans, and Shay was entertaining, provocative, and extremely informative; and the play put on by the Red Well Theater Group - "Someone

"Will Watch Over Me" - was quite powerful and also offered a much-needed rest from the intellectually/emotionally demanding rigors of the previous days' events.

My time at the conference also allowed me to reconnect with professionals I'd met in earlier years as well as forge new relationships in the field. I have remained in contact with several of the people I met in Chicago, and I do not doubt that these relationships will continue as a foundational aspect of my professional identity.

In summary, my 2009 Conference experience cemented by standing as a passionate devotee of group therapy and the AGPA as my professional home. I so deeply thank the AGPA for this truly wonderful opportunity.

With sincere thanks,

Trish Cleary, Phyllis Cohen, and the GPF scholarship committee,

I would like to take this opportunity in thanking the members of the committee in granting me one of the educational scholarships to cover the tuition costs of the 2009 AGPA Conference. My name is Gregory Greer, MSW, GSW, from Baton Rouge Louisiana currently working with adolescent groups. I am a recent graduate (2008), new member, and new professional that because of the scholarship, I was able to attend the conference due to the generosity of others' contributions. I feel fortunate and grateful that the committee found my needs adequate in receiving such a gift. I consider the scholarship a rewarding gift because of the incredible experience I encountered and warm welcomes I received as a first time attendee in networking with those of similar interests. Without the scholarship, I would not have been able to attend.

I would also like to share that I attended the Evaluation Meeting Saturday, February 21, 4:15 – 5:00 P.M. As the only first time attendee present, I felt compelled to speak to the Annual Meeting Committee regarding my experience due to some comments made. While I do not represent all "first timers", those I participated with in the Two-Day Institute and three-day workshops shared a profound experience from the welcome reception of AGPA members and the interpersonal inspiration they provided. The workshops provided clinical engagement that I do not regularly receive as a recent graduate. A greeting phone call was made by Katie Steele inviting me to the opening conference reception. And, I would also like to acknowledge Karen Travis's support in my journey with AGPA and thank her for all she has done for me.

On a personal note, the day of leaving the hotel for Louisiana, there was an issue with an overcrowded shuttle to O'Hare which I had a reservation. I gave my seat up to an AGPA member (LCSW from Washington D.C.) because his flight left thirty minutes before mine and time was a factor. After discussing the conference and learning of my "first time" status, he decided to take a cab and give the seat to me because he said "the first conference experience should not be a negative one with difficulty getting to the airport." The shuttle driver gave up my seat during our conversation and the gentlemen from D.C. promptly corrected the driver as the van was beginning to leave. I only regret not having the gentleman's name to share with you. I do not believe there was anything negative about my experience with the conference.

Having served on the NASW-LA board as MSW Student State Representative 2007-08, I can say unequivocally that AGPA and GPF can count on my support to my new colleagues, continued pursuit with group psychotherapy as a member, and attendance to the 2010 AGPA Conference.

Sincerest Regards,

I must first say, WOW. My experience at AGPA was nothing short of incredible. I started my week with the two day institute. It was a 17 hour journey filled with laughter, tears and new insights. My leader, Greg Macoll was a

master of his craft. The remainder of the week I continued to experience great workshops on topics such as Redecision therapy and using metaphor in groups. I was able to come back to the University counseling center where I work and report on the richness of these workshops. Based on my initial experience with Van Joines and rededecision therapy in groups I hope to find the opportunity to gain more experience in this area.

I was impressed with the services that AGPA provided and how smoothly everything ran. Several times throughout my stay I felt lucky to be involved with such a top notch and intimate group of professionals. Over the week I developed new relationships that will serve me both personally and professionally. I was also able to nurture a few existing relationships.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the scholarship opportunity. My experience was refreshing and rejuvenating. I will be looking forward to San Diego in 2010.

Sincerely,

Please extend my appreciation to all those who made it possible for me to receive the AGPA scholarship to attend the annual meeting in Chicago. This was my first time to attend an AGPA meeting and I can honestly say it was one of the most wonderful experiences in my professional life.

I loved being in a vibrant city like Chicago even in February. The hotel was very convenient and all rooms and facilities were first class. The conference itself could not have been better.

The first two days I participated in the Intergenerational Perspectives in Group Psychotherapy process group. I cannot imagine having a better first experience. Most of the other group members were more experienced in group process, and because of their willingness to do the hard work, I felt I had an especially rich experience. The group leaders were experienced and compassionate, and helped me to feel safe in this new environment. All sessions I attended were excellent including the plenary sessions. However, the one session that really stood out for me was called Positive Psychodrama Revisited. Merry, the leader for this session kept us busy from the first minute until the last with a variety of activities and exercises that we could take home and use with our groups. The activities varied from more simple icebreakers to opportunities to go deep. Not only were all activities and suggestions excellent, but her enthusiasm was absolutely contagious.

I had actually met Merry before the session when I joined the Women's SIG for dinner. That in itself was fabulous. Many of the women who attended this dinner did not know anyone else, yet at the end of the evening many of us felt deeply connected. I also attended the Friday evening party, and while I am usually a bit shy, I felt I was with a group of people that I had known for a long time and had a wonderful time. Overall, I found the other attendees to be warm and friendly and consider it to have been both a pleasure and a privilege to have been present with this esteemed group of professionals.

I have always enjoyed doing groups, but have returned from this training in Chicago with renewed energy and enthusiasm for the work I do. I hope to attend this conference again in the future and want to thank you again for your generosity.

Sincerely,

Thank you so much for awarding me with a GPF scholarship for my attendance at this year's annual meeting. I cannot find enough words to fully elaborate upon my gratitude for the opportunity to attend the institute and conference. This was my first year attending both the conference and the institute, as last year I was only able to attend the institute.

The process group experience I took part in was truly amazing. I had a spiritual experience that has rejuvenated and positively impacted my outlook on life, both professionally and personally. I feel that I was given a gift at this year's meeting, and to be honest, I'm still struggling to figure out what to do with it. These words don't give the transformative powers of my process group experience justice.

The conference gave me fabulous opportunities to enhance my professional knowledge in ways very pertinent to my current jobs. The knowledge of adolescent group therapy that I gained in the conference has already impacted my ability to facilitate groups in my new part time job working with at-risk youth. Also, some of the early bird sessions boosted my confidence with regards to dealing with difficult clients, transference and counter-transference. I feel that I found out more about my own personal style and my roles with other facilitators and clients. Also, I was deeply inspired by Froma Walsh's lecture and have already begun reading some of her books and integrating some of her work into my practice.

These are just a few of the executive-functioning gifts I received during the conference, in conjunction with the existential/spiritual gift I received from the institute. What more could I possibly have received from a conference? I believe that this annual meeting has infinite potential for personal and professional growth. I am hooked, I cannot imagine my life without having had such an impressive experience, and I look forward to the opportunity to attend again. The GPF scholarship fund made it possible.

With heartfelt thanks and gratitude,

To the AGPA Scholarship Committee:

I am writing to express my immense gratitude for the scholarship I received for the 2009 annual meeting of the American Group Psychotherapy Association. I received a scholarship last year and had been looking forward to coming to Chicago ever since I got home from D.C. My excitement was completely justified as I had an even more inspiring time this year. I am completely hooked on the AGPA. I will be graduating in May and hope to do a lot of work with groups as I venture out into my psychotherapy career.

I hadn't known last year what the "Institute" entailed and so had only attended the conference. This year I was able to partake in all five days and learned a lot, both about myself and about leading groups. The other AGPA members were so welcoming to me that, as a student, I felt invited to participate fully. I had met a few people from the GLBT special interest group last year and felt incredibly included again this year. I was also thrilled to see a lot of offerings on mindfulness and self-care.

I have been fortunate to bring the AGPA energy back to my class in the Masters of Contemplative Psychotherapy program at Naropa University. Many of my classmates are hoping to come to the San Diego AGPA annual meeting in 2009. I so appreciate your financial support that puts this great conference within reach for students. At the final lunch, I delighted in seeing the contributors to the scholarship fund stand so I could put faces to the Group Psychotherapy Foundation's generosity. Thank you so very much.

Sincerely,

My first experience at an AGPA conference was great. It was also my first conference in the psychotherapy field in general, so I did not know quite what to expect. On the one hand, I was very appreciative of the diversity in material presented. It offered the opportunity to explore new areas of interest and supplement areas in which I already had some knowledge. On the other hand, I found it was challenging to get deep into any one area, for soon the workshop would be over and we would be transitioning. This was my choice of course, and I now realize I could have attended some all day workshops. Many other participants I met recommend I attend an institute next year to get a more experiential education.

The biggest challenge I had with the conference was feeling that the material offered was not directly related to my current work. I counsel at an agency specializing in domestic and sexual violence. I did look for workshops covering issues related to trauma and PTSD, but the material I found most was on trauma related to military personnel. I did not find anything directly addressing work with survivors of domestic/sexual abuse.

One of the workshops which stood out for me were "Foundations in Interpersonal Neurobiology Linking Group Psychotherapies," because the theory was clearly and energetically presented and their was a physical movement component. "The Marriage of Group and EMDR," also stood out for me. And even though I found the application to be questionable; it was an interesting experiment and a provocative area to explore. "Therapist Erotic Countertransference in Group Therapy" was my favorite workshop in that the structure allowed for an

exploration and processing of each member's experience. I would have liked more workshops to pull from the expertise of the members, and not focus so heavily on presenting theory. Next year I need more experiential workshops.

I found some of the title descriptions of the workshops to be misleading and inaccurate. For example, the workshop "Resilience to Trauma: Using Film to Help Trauma Survivors," simply entailed showing a film on WWII veterans talking about their stories. There was no mention of how to help trauma survivors at all.

What I most took from this experience was a great introduction to the professional psychotherapy community. I met therapists from around the country, and it was interesting to see who is out there, hear about their practices, and engage with them in a personal way. And honestly, the relationships I most appreciated forming and deepening were with therapists who live in Austin, my home city.

Thank you much for the scholarship award, it offered me great opportunity to see who is out there in the professional community, making connections with them, and inspiring my continuing evolution as a therapist.

Sincerely,

Regretfully I was not able to take advantage of the full scholarship awarded to me because of family responsibilities. I missed the special institutes this year and attended the conference from Wednesday until the conclusion.

I was really very impressed with my experience at AGPA and plan to attend 2009 in San Diego. I look forward to the full experience next year.

The experiential nature of the programs I attended on co-leadership and leadership style directly contributed to my knowledge and confidence in being able to begin a group. It fulfilled my intentions in applying for the scholarship. I found both of these programs to be exceptional. What was remarkable was how quickly I got to know people in the classes through the fishbowl exercises. These are people I continued to see throughout the conference and socialized with at dinner and other meals. I attended with a colleague from my home town and knew others attending, but I think I would have felt equally welcomed and comfortable even had I attended "cold."

I attended a class on SCT which I found to be a nice refresher on the theory and practice of SCT and the panel's thoughts from different theoretical orientations was informative. I can also say that this program was exceptional.

The class I attended on creative writing and working with couples in groups inspired me in some different ways I might do group in my private practice. I attended a class on money which was enlightening. Over all the programs were exceptional.

What actually impressed me the most and the reason I will attend future AGPA conferences was the caliber of the people who attend. I found the colleagues I met to be engaging, friendly, intelligent clinicians who are passionate about their work. The tone of the conference was full of energy and it was an engaging experience for me as a first time attendee. I have attended several other conferences with different organizations, but this

was a unique experience. I am not sure if I can even articulate the magic except to say it is was important and profound to me as my group experience as a member of group.

Sincerely, thank you!

As per your request, I am writing to provide you with a brief summary of my experience at the AGPA conference in Chicago last month.

My experience at the conference was truly wonderful in many respects, and without the association's funding, I might not have been able to participate. Thank you, first of all for that. I attended the conference primarily to present a paper on a panel with my post-grad colleagues on "How to Start Your First Group." The creative process, collaboration with my classmates and the experience of presenting my paper was both enjoyable and enriching, personally and professionally. Specifically, it increased the level of cohesion in my group training class which has enabled me to foster more cohesion in my own group that I lead. Also, having the opportunity to express my own personal thoughts, feelings and reactions as a group leader of my private practice group, helped me to develop more insight about my patients and how we affect each other, deepen my clinical work and gain valuable experience in the preparation and execution of presenting my own work.

In addition to the knowledge and experience I gained through presenting, I found that participating in the two day institute process group both challenging and rewarding. Having another forum in which to explore my own reactions to others and respond to others' reactions to me, both positive and negative, was a great learning=2 0experience and contributed to my self understanding and growth as a person and as a psychologist. The workshop on The Use of Metaphor stimulated my thoughts about the use and importance of symbolization in helping patients to feel understood, and to clarify their experience in a way that's sometimes more palatable and helpful in moving them forward in treatment. The last workshop I attended was on attachment in group therapy which was a helpful review of how one's early attachment affects us as adults and showcased some of the ways in might manifest in group.

I am inspired to continue writing and presenting on group therapy and consider my experience at the AGPA conference, and several others I attended over the last ten years, to be extremely positive and growth producing in many ways. The opportunity also, to meet and converse with other group therapists from around the country, expanded my perspective on how people work in a variety of settings and some of the challenges and relevant issues they face. Overall, I am so please I was able to participate at AGPA in a variety of capacities and hope to become more involved in the organization as I continue developing as a group therapist. Thank you again, for making my participation possible.

Regards,

I wanted to thank you for the tuition scholarship which made it possible for me to attend the 2009 Annual Meeting in Chicago. This was the first group psychotherapy conference I have attended and it was a great experience. In speaking with many of the attendees as well as my own classmates, I know it is quite rare for a medical student to have an opportunity like this.

This year I have had the opportunity to work in a group setting as part of my third year clerkship in psychiatry. At Harvard I am part of a unique new program called the Cambridge Integrated Clerkship. In this clerkship, 12 students do all of the core rotations throughout the year and follow patients longitudinally. Every Monday afternoon I spend time in clinic with my psychiatry preceptor and lead a therapy group for patients with

opiate dependence. I am also able to see these patients in other clinics such as primary care and neurology. Through the course of the year I have gone from being completely silent to leading about half of the session. My goal for the year was to run the entire session myself, and since coming back from the AGPA meeting, my preceptor and I have noticed a dramatic difference. We have had three sessions since I attended the meeting, and I have already had a chance to implement some of the new ideas and strategies I learned. The conference also helped me gain a lot of confidence about my abilities. Since returning, I have now led the entire group session on my own while my preceptor has just been observing!

I think the reason why this meeting was so helpful was largely because of the special institute. I had never been part of a process group in the past and it was a very useful experience. At the end of the first day I was quite confused and wasn't sure what the 'point' was. However, by the end of the second day I was learning, sharing, and enjoying myself. I found it to be quite therapeutic as well. I learned a lot about groups, and about myself through all of the group members and our wonderful leader. The other days of the conference I spent in large group sessions which were helpful in the sense that I learned about what other people were going through in their groups and about how they were able to adapt.

For a medical student, this was certainly a unique experience and I know how lucky I am. Thank you again, and I hope to continue attending the Annual Meeting.

Sincerely,

I attended the pre-conference, starting with the one-day institute led by Elliot Zeisel. This served to adequately re-familiarize me with Modern Analytic ideas and technique, and was moderately beneficial.

The 2-day process group led by David Hawkins was the highlight of the entire week for me. Last year, my first at AGPA, I struggled in the 2-day institute, partly from being unfamiliar with AGPA institutes and knowing how to pace myself and use the group effectively.

This year, I was able to work on several personal issues that increased my understanding of my relation to self, other, leader, and the group. I felt that I was able to take risks connecting to people more intimately. I also worked on sensitively negotiating defensive patterns in others that are off-putting or otherwise problematic.

One of my goals this year was to earn ethics CE credits for my Washington State licensure. I very much appreciated the opportunity to earn ethics hours specifically addressing scenarios and dilemmas unique to group psychotherapy. The other courses I took were interesting and generally helpful to my work, but the experiences noted above stand out.

I felt like I established friendships with new people, especially in my 2-day Institute, that will endure into future conferences. Another benefit of the conference was the opportunity to connect more deeply with folks from my own affiliate in Seattle, the Puget Sound Group Psychotherapy Network. Bopping around Chicago and eating meals together deepened my friendships with folks that I know, but with whom I often don't get to spend much time.

I am deeply appreciative to those who donate to the Foundation and those who administrate the Fund for the opportunity to attend the conference this year.

Thank you so much for the scholarship that financed my attendance at the 2009 AGPA Annual Meeting in Chicago. This year's conference was significant for me on many levels. Primarily, I was very excited to co-present a workshop for the first time. I had the opportunity to work with other veteran presenters who are very experienced therapists. I learned a lot from participants' positive feedback and was eager to hear their constructive feedback, as well. This mentoring experience has left me with an itch to present again at AGPA. Every institute is different, and every year I learn something new--something that I did not expect to learn. I always cherish these institute experiences, which are entirely unique to AGPA. I also attended several most interesting workshops during the three-day conference. In particular, I now have new ideas for psychodrama interventions and for semi-structured activities to help college-level clients jump-start the group therapy process. I also tried something very new this year: a workshop on working as a corporate group trainer. This new arena was most interesting for me to explore. It has been four weeks since the 2009 Meeting, and pieces of what I learned there have influenced my work--and my personal life--daily since then. I certainly plan to continue keeping this AGPA wisdom in mind!

I have already been working hard with several other AGPA members on two proposals for a workshop and an open panel for the 2010 AGPA Annual Meeting. My passion for group therapy and for learning more about group therapy is churning! Thank you again for making this possible for me. Without the scholarship opportunities, I would not be able to remain so active with AGPA. You do all of us in AGPA a great service!

Sincerely,

I am very appreciative of the opportunity to attend the 2009 AGPA in Chicago and the scholarship that made my attendance possible. The conference was truly like no other I have experienced - bringing together clinicians at multiple different levels, from a variety of backgrounds, with different training experiences, different theoretical backgrounds, different work environments and different leadership styles. The week brought new perspectives to my concept of group leadership and afforded glimpses of all the possibilities within group work.

I am particularly grateful that I was encouraged to begin my week early, with the 2-day process group. My beginners' level group, facilitated by Joan Medway, was superb. Having arrived at the conference knowing no one, I was amazed to be connecting with others so quickly. Several of the connections I made in that group carried me throughout the rest of the week and will likely continue into the future. Experiencing an interpersonal group from the perspective of a group member was a valuable experience that I've brought back to my own group. I noticed my own urges, thoughts, feelings and desires as a group member and have since utilized these memories in leading an interpersonal group at home. It was particularly fascinating to see how rapidly the group process can unfold and how clearly roles can be adopted and identified.

Throughout the rest of the week, I attended many workshops and seminars focusing on topics ranging from anger and hatred to semantics and metaphor to yoga and meditation. Didactic sessions and open discussions furthered my knowledge of group process, while fostering greater curiosity about what groups *other than those I lead* look or sound like. Demonstration groups satisfied some of this curiosity, while increasing my own range of skills for interventions in groups. The workshops and seminars improved my overall insight into the levels of interventions made by a group leader, choices for interventions and motivations behind the intervention.

The AGPA conference, although miles from home, ironically afforded the chance to make a closer connection with group therapists from New England, and even my home institution. I was kindly sponsored by Eleanor Counselman and Kathy Ulman to attend the NSGP dinner on Thursday night, where I had the pleasure and privilege of meeting several senior clinicians from the area, including the key note speaker for the following day, Scott Rutan. The dinner was a wonderful opportunity for networking, and I was welcomed with such kindness and enthusiasm. Such networking will likely result in future supervisory and mentorship relationships.

Since returning from the AGPA annual meeting, I have noticed an increased comfort in my own groups. I am more confident, more ready to jump in. I have a greater appreciation for the group process and improved insight into interventions made by both my co-leader as well as myself. I can process groups in supervision with increased thoughtfulness and participation. Also, since the conference, I have participated in a demonstration group and open house introducing younger residents to group psychotherapy. I have taken on an increased number of groups for next year. Additionally, the day-long workshop on laughter, poetry, yoga and mindfulness has inspired me to reflect on my own yoga and meditation practice and determine ways that I can incorporate these passions in to my work. Since that workshop, I have not only looked into becoming a certified yoga teacher, but I have also begun an IRB proposal to study group yoga and breathwork interventions at the Benson Henry Institute for Mind Body Medicine.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my gratitude for the scholarship enabling me to attend AGPA this year. I went with very high expectations this year, after attending just 3 days of last year's conference and being inspired to hope that AGPA could become my "professional home." I also brought ambivalence. The special presentation with Dr. Zeisel on Monday was a vivid reminder of the power of group, the culture of openness and courage that draws me to AGPA, and my uncomfortable ambivalence. I went on to participate in the Men's Group Institute, which was difficult for me, leaving me feeling more alone and struggling to learn from the experience rather than simply discouraged. I received wonderful support from various directions, including the welcome opportunity to reconnect with a former supervisor and AGPA faculty member, Dr. Steven Von Wagoner. I also had short but meaningful time to connect with a highly valued experiential group leader and supervisor from my internship last year, Dr. Donald Wexler.

I headed into the three days of workshops and sessions feeling a little battered but with renewed hope, and found several very rewarding sessions. I seem to particularly enjoy the somewhat more theoretical, psychoanalytically influenced sessions. I was surprised how much I enjoyed session 206: Vissitudes of Identification Processes, which had a very small audience and was primarily didactic, but felt I had discovered something special. I really enjoyed "41: Three Faces of Community" which did a nice job of helping clarify three relational concepts. The richest ideas from the conference for me came from "313: New Paradigms in Group Analytic Treatment," bringing new clarity for me to the relationship between trauma and enactments, and what relational work looks like. This is particularly relevant for me as I work with the current generation of military veterans. My last session of the conference "85: Keeping It Real" provided my best experiential part of the conference, instructive for my group work and leaving me with a taste of the interpersonal rich experiencing I had wished for.

So I left still with ambivalence about AGPA, but likely to attend the conference in 2010 as well. Ms. Concannon's address to the large group at last year's conference (Conference Opening Plenary, I believe) made an impression that stays with me, with her family and lifelong sense of community and vitality gained in AGPA. It helps sustain my hope that this is a place I will want to make my professional home.

Sincerely,

I attended the following educational programs of the 2009 AGPA conference: "The Development of the Interpersonal Ego in Group Treatment" by Elliot Zeisel, "Authority and Authenticity: Issues in Adolescent Group Treatment" by David Dumais, and "Using Focal Conflict Theory in a Counseling Skills Training Group" by Cecelia Winkelman. I was originally awarded one of the 5-day conference scholarships but was unable to attend all five days because my employer would not allow me to take time off work for the conference. However, I fully enjoyed my time at the conferences and the programs that I attended. The special institute with Dr. Zeisel was an effective way to begin my involvement with the conference and I was impressed by his knowledge and experience as well as the audience participation. At one point, Dr. Zeisel pointed out that he does not promise his clients that he will not disappoint them or break their trust because it is inevitable that he will disappoint them at some point. While this is such a simple concept, it resonated with me. During the workshop with Mr. Dumais,

he presented his style of group facilitation with adolescents. I believe there is merit to his style with the correct population and although I currently work with a very different population, I have taken portions of his style and implemented them into my groups. I also enjoyed Mrs. Winkelman's workshop because it reminded me of the different opportunities that I can use psychodrama with my clients. Overall, I was very satisfied with the educational programs that I was able to attend.

Unfortunately, I was not very effective at developing relationships and networking with other program participants. However, everyone seemed friendly and welcoming and I noticed that there was a different feel to the conference on Saturday. It was obvious that people had connected with one another people and were sad to see it come to an end. One thing that would have helped me to form more relationships was if I had been able to attend the lunch on Saturday. While this might have been an option, I did not have a lunch ticket and did not think of this until it was too late.

Please accept my sincere thank you for providing me with the opportunity to attend the 2009 AGPA conference. I can only imagine the time and effort that it takes to organize such a great event. I hope to be able to attend again in the future!

Sincerely,

The highlight of the year for me was unquestionably AGPA Annual Meeting in Chicago. I want to express special gratitude to AGPA for giving me the chance and opportunity to attend AGPA Annual Meeting for the fifth time and for helping on several critical occasions too. I would like to thank the Officers and Board of Directors of Group Psychotherapy Foundation for granting me International Scholarship. I also want to express my special gratitude to Dr. Sue Jensen, who helped me financially to come to the conference. The Program Committee put together an outstanding array of presentations which reflected both our similarities and our diversity as an international group. The wealth of presentations and workshops left me more than satiated, but also challenged both - personally and intellectually - and enlivened professionally. I enjoyed the conference and I gained a lot from it. I felt appreciation for the experience of my colleagues, for our diversity, for our mutual respect for group psychotherapy. The lectures on politics and workshops on neuroscience and resistance, on Transference and counter transference particularly impressed me. I am full of impressions and can say without exaggeration that during hours of listening I suffered not one minute of boredom. I am happy to receive the rich experiences, which I'll share with my colleagues in Georgia.

Dear Group Psychotherapy Foundation,

I received a scholarship from the Group Psychotherapy Foundation to attend the 2009 Annual Meeting. Without this generous financial support I would not have been able to attend the conference. I previously attended the 2007 Annual Meeting. Once again, the experience was invaluable. The educational materials were outstanding and I was able to begin to forge relationships with other professionals which will likely be long lasting.

I am currently finishing my doctoral degree in Clinical Psychology at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center. During my training at this institution I have received top-notch training. The opportunities for learning at the AGPA Annual Meetings have greatly enhanced my knowledge of group therapy. I do not believe that I would be at the level I am if it were not for these opportunities provided by AGPA.

There were two sessions in particular that I feel were the most useful to me in my professional development, the Special Institute with Dr. Elliot Zeisel and the two-day Institute with Barbara Keezell. During my training in group psychotherapy I have not been afforded the opportunity to observe an in-person experiential group. Dr. Zeisel's institute allowed for me to have this opportunity; my only regret is that I have not had this experience earlier in my training. To be able to observe a group as it unfolds and hear directly from the facilitator, as well as the group participants, was extraordinary. I learn best from example, so being able to observe a seasoned professional conduct a group and provide thoughtful comments and ideas about the process of group as it unfolded was a format that was very helpful. Upon returning to my clinical work, I was able to reflect on the experience and incorporate what I had seen into my own work with groups.

I chose Barbara Keezell's institute on countertransference and projective identification based on the current environment of the group that I am co-facilitating. Projective identification, while seemingly straightforward, can be confusing and difficult to sort out in the moment. Prior to registering for the conference I was finding myself struggling with untangling the multiple dynamics emerging in the group that I facilitate and understanding its full impact on the group environment. As I stated before, I learn best by observation and experience; the two-day institute allowed for me to do just that. I was able to observe and reflect on projective identification emerging within myself and the other members of the institute. This experience has allowed me to gain greater clarity in what is occurring in my clinical work and ultimately provided me with a sound base for which to address and work with projective identification as it occurs. I feel much more comfortable as I facilitate my group, which has allowed the group members to be more comfortable and open.

Beyond the educational opportunities, the overall climate of the meeting was inspiring and supportive. I heard many individuals from various backgrounds and with differing levels of experience state that their motivation for attending the annual meetings is often for the support they receive from AGPA and its members. Being immersed in an environment with other mental health professionals who are seeking to grow personally and professionally, I felt this support; more so than even at the 2007 conference. Leaving the conference I felt inspired and ready to return to my clinical work. I am looking forward to attending future meetings and continuing to forge the relationships that I have developed through attending the annual meeting.

I appreciate the generosity of the foundation. The scholarship afforded me the opportunity to have a wonderful experience.

Sincerely,

This year, I was granted a tuition scholarship. I want to send an immense token of appreciation to AGPA for making my 1st four years of attending the Annual Meetings possible. My first in San Francisco was during my 2nd year of graduate school. I will be transitioning from intern to ECP by the time I attend San Diego, which will be my fifth in five years. That said, the past four years have helped me make connections that have been warm, friendly, and very helpful in my job search and personal and professional development. I cannot imagine where I would be as a group therapist without those experience and the people I've met.

In Chicago, I tried to tailor my experiences towards both self-growth and clinical work in college counseling centers. These meetings have always been the perfect mid-academic year retreat to enhance my personal and

professional development. I always love the institutes. This year, I attended a Jungian Institute, which is an area of psychology I have never been offered in graduate school. This was an incredible introduction to Jungian analysis but an even more enlightening opportunity to learn about myself. I also attended workshops on co-leadership, starting group programs, using the CORE battery in groups, and the use of structured activities in college counseling center groups. Subsequently, I have brought back tons of information to my internship site, of which some has been applied immediately and some shelved for a later date. The director of my site has been very encouraged by my ideas and interest in group and I owe a large part of that for the passion I glean from AGPA each year. Having had a few years under my belt, I now plan on giving back by proposing a workshop on "The Art of the Sell".

Thanks AGPA and I look forward to San Diego.

Sincerely,

Here is my AGPA summary experience:

I was extremely appreciative to receive a scholarship to attend AGPA this year. It is my third time going and my third year in a row. So far, each year has corresponded with terrific growth for me as a group therapist and as a therapist in general. This year, I had a deeply personal and valuable experience within my two day institute. I did the beginner institute for the third time. I learned a lot from the direct and transparent approach taken by my institute leader and have become less of an opaque leader myself through this experience.

For my sessions following the institute, I began with an all day session that focused on the emergence of power in groups and the interaction of the power of members and the power of leaders. I participated in a lengthy role play of a group of people trying to solve a real world problem in the lack of an identified leader. Here I learned not only about how different types of leadership emerged, but what type of leadership tends to emerge in me. I am quite task oriented and I think at times lose sight of the emotional side of a situation where it seems something needs to be done. Since the class, I have been working harder as a therapist to stop and check the affect in the room even when there is a very intellectualized "task" on the table. I particularly enjoyed a group session that talked about Homer's Odyssey in understanding group dynamics and in understanding the role of the therapist. Also, I have been taken by the large group and was glad to attend all three sessions this year. Though it is a somewhat psychotic display of the real world, I find participation in it both exhilarating and refreshing. I actually feel like I am developing a special sort of relationship with the other loyal attendees of large group that I hope to foster in the years to come.

I thank the AGPA for awarding me a scholarship and for their general support of students. This has allowed me to attend AGPA this year. As I said before, I have attended for the past three years. Each year, I have gone with a fellow classmate of mine from Rutgers. This year, we recruited four more classmates to go as well. So six students from Rutgers. That is what AGPA means to us. Next year I will be on my internship year. I will be living in Los Angeles. I am hoping that makes it easy to attend AGPA in San Diego.

Until then,

The extraordinary quality of the AGPA annual conference was unmatched by any other conference experience I've ever had. The time I spent in Chicago was filled with exceptional opportunities for connection and renewal. The two day institute I attended was, each of us participating acknowledged, unlike anything we could have imagined. All of us senior therapists, we were apparently hungering for something much greater than ourselves

as individuals, and we quickly explored in an almost perfunctory way, some of the to be expected aggressive and amorous connections, as we raced to our collaborative work, and to the embracing of that into which we ultimately had to delve. We have already continued our connection, despite the group's having ended almost a month ago, and the affection felt for one another and the respect, as well, has left us each with a gift that is incomparable to anything I've ever known. We were at our best, and were well served by a leader who didn't need to be deified and thus, didn't need to be knocked from the role as guide to the doing of the work at hand. We all, (he too, I'm sure), felt that this group experience will remain legend. All of the participants learned much about our own capacity for leadership which has to be tapped.

(Suffice to say that the institute met and exceeded expectations! Lots of love, lots of learning, on very deep levels).

The courses; each that I had the opportunity to attend was fine. I'd have to review the specifics in order to describe what individual components meant to me, but I recall feeling that the over-riding sense was that this was the best AGPA meeting ever. I appreciated the "satellite" portions of the conference more than I ever had before, in part, I believe, because I didn't push myself to do more than was possible. I kept myself to a more limited schedule and recognized that a bit of moderation makes a tremendous difference.

I was also thrilled, delighted, overjoyed, (what do I use to describe?), to see that there was finally the provision of twelve-step based spiritual groups into the curriculum - (schedule). WOW! How mature the AGPA is finally becoming! Moving from the "leader is all", "leader is to be toppled", paradigm to the leader is but trusted servant paradigm is phenomenal when considered conceptually! Dr. Alexander Wolf and his cohort group would be raising their hands in figurative high-fives, and he personally would be shaking with his delighted laughter! Putting this "shimmer" on the conference made it something that really couldn't be compared!

Other than that, the flow of the conference really felt organically right - different from forced, and very much appreciated.

From the bottom of my heart, and the depths of my soul, as these times are tougher, and tougher, I applaud your foresight and generosity, and thank you for your vision. SO greatly appreciated was the opportunity to participate. More and more of the work I've been doing has not been compensated. I am so grateful to you for making this scholarship available. The work I did following 9/11 made me increasingly aware of the disenfranchised, and I know that I've a responsibility to help out in significant ways, whether there is or is not adequate provision of funds.

THANK YOU all, again!

I was lucky to be given the opportunity to attend the AGPA conference this year in Chicago through the scholarship fund. I am newly in private practice, and wouldn't have been able to afford the conference without help from the scholarship, and it was an invaluable experience.

I have to admit, I was nervous about attending the conference, as I suffer from some social anxiety and was worried about the possibility of wandering around alone at the conference. Delightfully, in the institute I attended focused on competition, envy and intimacy, I was able to voice some of these concerns, and gained a better appreciation for the dynamics of in-groups and out-groups that contributed to the development of my social anxiety in the first place. Before the last group session was over, other members of the institute had set up times to meet with me for lunch, and I found that as I moved through the rest of the conference, the members of my institute felt like a secure base to return to. I made some deep connections with members of my institute, and have kept in touch with a number of people since the meeting. I will be much less nervous before attending the conference next year!

During the rest of the conference, I was stimulated by the sessions I attended, and appreciated the variety of perspectives on groupwork I gained. I was amazed to

find as a participant in a groupwork through movement session that our group moved through the important stages of group formation through dance alone. I also really appreciated both the didactic component and the small and large group components of a session on a variety of object relations theories on working with a group. I found the group leaders very skilled at creating the safety within the room necessary to enable brave disclosures and connections in a short period of time. I also really enjoyed a group session within the Metaphor and Narrative session, as the group connected while aware of how we were each becoming parts of each other's stories of the conference.

I am very happy to say that at the dance the last night, I was able to freely move and enjoy dancing with a variety of people I had made connections with throughout the week. I had a wonderful time dancing with some very secure women, while noting that rather than competing for male attention, we were enjoying the attention of each other. It was a wonderful ending to a very fulfilling week.

AGPA was a life-altering experience for me. This was my first time attending and I didn't know what to expect. The general process group experience was amazing. I have never related to strangers on such an intimate level. I felt genuine connections with a diverse set of individuals and it energized me about the therapeutic possibilities of group work (I have yet to run my own group). The workshops were equally powerful. I loved learning about psychodrama and the challenges of group work with adolescents in this new technological world. I really experienced the power of the here-and-now as workshop leaders taught us by facilitating experiences. Everyone I met at AGPA seemed so genuine, too. I returned home seriously considering making group work a primary research and practice focus for my professional career. As a 2nd year doctoral student I look forward to future AGPA annual meetings where I can nurture the relationships I forged this year and continue to plumb the power of groups.

I thoroughly enjoyed my first AGPA meeting. The institute took a little while to get used to, but it was a profound experience. It seems I have walked a little lighter and have been a little less stressed ever since. The other sessions I found most beneficial were those concerning adolescent groups. I went to 3 sessions on this topic and they were all excellent. It was very validating to hear that leaders in the field are wrangling with some of the same issues I am facing. I really appreciated the scholarship and feel that my experience at the AGPA meeting will not only improve my own practice, but will help me recruit future members into the AGPA. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

I wish to extend my sincere gratitude for the opportunities afforded me again this past year through an extremely generous GPF scholarship. As an eternal trainee, there is no other way I could have afforded to attend. You made possible not only another year of mentorship, community, and learning, but also this past year I was able to begin giving back by leading an early morning open session on palliative care which was very well-received. I have begun to make AGPA connections that I hope will last for decades to come, and I appreciate the generosity and sacrifice of those who have made my attendance possible. My classmates now know me as the group guru, and many have applied also for scholarships based on my enthusiastic reports of the conference in years past. Thank you, and I hope to see you in San Diego.

Warmly,

I had the good fortune to attend the 2009 AGPA Conference in Chicago with financial assistance from a Group Psychotherapy Foundation scholarship. While at the conference, I attended the two-day Institute led by Walt Stone, which was an amazing experience! I so appreciate the opportunity to engage in learning and personal group work that the AGPA Institutes provide to developing and experienced group psychotherapists. I had the opportunity to learn about Self-Psychology from a leading theorist and to experience being a member of a group led by an distinguished and outstanding group leader!

The open session on *Fear and Loathing in Group Therapy*, led by Joseph Shay, Jerome Gans, and Lise Motherwell was engaging and educational. The leaders used clips from a variety of movies to illustrate the constructs, and there was lots of audience participation that enhanced the clips and the presented material. The demo group, led by Jerome Gans, demonstrated empathic and respectful work with the identified "difficult client" and other group members. All of the material in this session led those of us in attendance to deeply consider what it is that constitutes a "difficult client" and how we, as group therapists, along with group members co-construct "difficult clients."

I also attended a workshop on Co-Therapy led by Eugene and Barbara Kidder. This was a more intimate group than the open session I attended, and provided the opportunity to more deeply connect with the other participants and the co-leaders. Eugene and Barbara provided a model of co-therapy at its best! I am currently completing my internship in Clinical Psychology and have discussed a number of co-therapy issues with my current supervisor and co-therapist. A number of these were also discussed in the workshop making it a perfect complement to the thinking about co-therapy I've been doing in my internship year. There were also a couple of other pairs of co-therapists who participated in the workshop and brought their own co-therapy relationships to the table. Because of the warmth and safety provided in this workshop, I participated in my first demo group at AGPA. It was a special experience that I am sure I will remember and draw on many times in the years to come. The workshop also reinforced my own enjoyment of the co-therapy relationship; I also realize that it is not a relationship to be entered into lightly!

I was curious about the concept of "mentalizing" and so armed with a little knowledge and a lot of curiosity, attended the workshop, *Group Therapy with the Dissociative Mind: Mentalizing, Self States, and the Building of Community*, led by Karis Klassen and Bernie Lyon. Karis and Bernie set the stage for an examination of mentalization in the context of dissociation as a reaction to trauma and attachment injuries. Bernie and Karis defined mentalization, diagrammed the normative development of mentalization, and explained how mentalization is the antidote to re-enactment. These concepts were linked to the work of therapy, and group therapy in particular. The opening exercise was challenging – participants were asked to discuss a time when they had experienced some "dissociation" themselves in their work with clients. Again, I was struck by the generosity of other AGPA members toward each other. I chose to participate in my second demo group in this workshop, and it was a very good experience. I came away from the workshop keen on learning more about how mentalization can be used in group therapy.

As for the relationships that I've developed at AGPA – they are amazing! After my first conference, I began to develop a network and that network has continued to build with each

conference attended. And I've learned so much from the room-mates that AGPA has arranged for me – and made some amazing friends. When I first attended AGPA, I felt that I had finally found my “psychotherapeutic home.” With each conference I attend, my initial impression is strengthened. And each time I return from an AGPA conference I find myself invigorated and eager to put what I've learned to work. What a gift!

Though 2009 AGPA annal meeting finished, the wonderful and deep memory is still pretty clear. I should say we got a lot from this meeting, not only in professional skills but also in establishing the relationships with the experts in this fields.

For us, the relationships with experts are very important, because in China our psychodynamic group therapy is just a infant and we hope more American group therapy experts can help us. I am very thankful that this time Dr. Kauff kindly agreed to supervise my inpatient groups in my psychosomatic department every week besides our two self-experience colleague groups in Shanghai Mental Health Center, and we started as soon as I came back from Chicago. Besides, we took part in the Boston group's activity in Chicago, which made us feel warm and home-like, and we also knew a lot of group therapists in Boston, such as Dr. Rutan, who is very welcom us to keep in touch with him. I believe we will develop group therapy in our hospital under the support and help of these kind experts.

In this meeting, We took part in one of the Special Institute Presentations, "The Development of the Interpersonal Ego in Group Treatment" by Dr. Elliot Zeisel. Through his presentation, firstly, we learned the modern group theory, such as Foundation Concepts of Modern Group Analysis and Seven Questions/ a Schema for Interpresonal Understanding, and so on. Secondly, we observed the demonstration group; and lastly joined in large group interaction. Both of us like such kind of formation of learning group therapy, through which we learned how the expert deal with some specific group situations and what's the behind thinking and theory. Also, this will be a good model of teaching group therapy; we will try it later.

The two days' self experience group gave me deep experience of being a group member and observing the therapist's doing, also I learned a lot from other group member and reflected by myself to understand myself more.

The last two days we attended some panels and workshops, including a peer group supervision "I know you, I love you: Emotional/Cognitive Resonance in Group Psychotherapy", "using a stage play to illustrate Principles of Psychodynamic Group Therapy", "Levels of Intervention in Psychodynamic Group Psychotherapy ", and so on. These different form of demonstration expand my visual field to learn and supervise the group therapy, and the peer group supervision aroused us to try among group therapists in our hospital after we went back.

In a word, 2009 AGPA annal meeting gave us a lot of practical guide and resource, which will lead us to develop the group therapy in Shanhai. So here we sincerely thank AGPA once again providing us scholarship and giving us so good a chance to attend this wonderful meeting! We also sincerely thank Diane helped us deal with a lot of affairs!

With Best Wishes,

March 26, 2009

Dear Ms. Feirman,

I wanted to thank you for the opportunity to attend the AGPA annual meeting. I found it to be a transformative experience in my development as a physician and psychotherapist. I appreciated the experiential component of the first two days of the meeting. I was able to receive valuable feedback from other participants that has helped to improve my emotional intelligence and become more empathic with my clients' experiences.

I also participated in the workshop on early parental loss and it has significantly improved the individual work that I have been doing with a patient who recently lost his mother to an unexpected illness. In addition, I came to appreciate the importance of containing anger being directed at group leader and being able to tolerate this feeling or work with it skillfully. I look forward to attending the course next year and continuing my involvement with your organization.

Sincerely,

Dear Ms. Feirman,

I wanted to thank you for the opportunity to attend the AGPA annual meeting. I found it to be a transformative experience in my development as a physician and psychotherapist. I appreciated the experiential component of the first two days of the meeting. I was able to receive valuable feedback from other participants that has since helped to improve my emotional intelligence and become more empathic with my clients' experiences.

I also participated in the workshop on early parental loss and it has significantly improved the individual work that I have been doing with a patient who recently had lost his mother. In addition, I attended the workshop on sexual transference which addressed a topic that has been under represented in my psychiatric education.

This experience attending the AGPA annual meeting has opened my eyes to the power of groups and has helped me to realize that it has been an underutilized form of treatment in my current training environment. Attending the APGA has impacted my clinical practice. Since I have returned back from this meeting, I have referred three times the number of patients to groups as I had before the meeting.

Sincerely,

My attendance at the 2009 AGPA conference in Chicago was not only my first experience with AGPA but it was also my first participation in a professional conference. As I near the end of my graduate education, I am looking forward and beginning to define my professional identity. Although I have a long-standing interest in clinical work with an adolescent population, my interests in the type of clinical work that I expect to do is still somewhat amorphous. Group therapy is one treatment modality that has peaked my interest and I entered the AGPA conference eager to learn more about it as well as its application. I went to the conference expecting didactic training that would enrich my ability to define and begin a group, but what I found was a community of professionals whose passion for others extended beyond their clients and to their fellow colleagues. I was worried that I would feel like a fish out of water, but the other conference attendees made me feel right at home. With my "first time attendee" ribbon, I was never short of a friendly smile or warm welcome. In a short amount of time, I felt as if I too was a part of this community. The highlight of the experience for me was the two-day process group. In those two days, the power of group was made abundantly clear to me on a personal and professional level. It's place in the therapeutic world was unquestionable. After that brilliant two-day introduction, I was excited to learn more about the clinical application of group therapy through the seminars. After getting lost in the multitude of options for seminars, a sigh of relief came when I realized the many years I had before me to attend

the conference and to take these different seminars. The seminars I did take were largely focused on group therapy for adolescents. I found the seminars both thought-provoking and extremely useful. I walked away from the experience confident in my understanding of adolescent group work and eager to employ this understanding.

I now have regular contact with other professionals across the United States, with whom we are eagerly awaiting the 2010 conference. As important, I left the conference with a confidence that my professional identity was being formed. I am extremely thankful for this experience and without the scholarship, I know it would not have been possible.

February 22, 2009

Dear Scholarship Committee,

I am writing to express my sincerest thanks for the full paid tuition scholarship I was awarded to attend AGPA's Annual Meeting in Chicago this year. If it were not for the scholarship that you so graciously granted me, I would not have been able to attend the meeting. As the date above indicates, I am composing this letter on the day I return home from the meeting. It is one way of holding on to the exhilaration I feel after the week of personal and professional nurturing I have just experienced with AGPA in Chicago.

I started the week off with a gift from AGPA to myself: participation in a two-day general process group for novice group leaders. My institute experience this year is difficult to articulate with words alone. I feel privileged to have had as my group leader the exceptional Esther Stone to model how an expert group leader works her magic. The knowledge I gained through "processing the process" with Esther and my fellow group members is intricately intertwined with the emotions I experienced as a member of the group. Having the opportunity to learn on both an emotional and intellectual level, simultaneously, has provided me with a unique understanding of the dynamics and power of the group. My participation in the process group also gave me a more thorough understanding of myself as a person, which is undoubtedly an invaluable tool for me in both my personal and professional lives.

The workshops I participated in were as fascinating as they were informative. Participation in the workshops presented me with additional experiential and didactic opportunities to further expand my growing repertoire of leadership skills. I had the opportunity to learn from, and many times along with, the most highly skilled and talented professionals in the field of group psychotherapy. I had the privilege to sit next to authors, master therapists and pioneers, as well as new professionals like myself. I learned from experts in the field and was encouraged numerous times to speak up, ask questions and share my own experiences. I was told that I did have skills, that I was capable of growing into a master clinician and that I had the ability to accomplish my lofty goals. Needless to say, when I walked out of the closing reception last night, I felt immense passion and motivation about both my involvement in AGPA and my growth as a professional. I can hardly wait to return to my groups at work to put the vast amount of knowledge I gained over the past week into action.

As my cherished group supervisor/ mentor Karen Travis so aptly noted in her scholarship recommendation letter for me: there is no doubt I am hooked on AGPA. I must give Karen credit for her relentless encouragement to grow as a professional and generous sharing of her knowledge and expertise. Karen's introduction to and guidance through AGPA has changed the focus and path of my career and therefore, changed my life. I am forever indebted to her for those gifts that continue to give.

I want to express my most sincere appreciation for the scholarship you granted to me to attend AGPA's 2009 Annual Meeting. You have provided me with a memorable experience that I will benefit from in a plethora of personal and professional ways. I am committed to being actively involved in AGPA throughout my career and beyond. I look forward to the experiences of participating in the annual meetings over the next many, many years.

Many thanks,

Dear AGPA Scholarship Committee,

I would like to take this opportunity to express my immense appreciation to all of those involved in supporting my attendance to the 2009 Annual Meeting in Chicago, IL. I am moving into my third year in the MA Contemplative Psychotherapy program at Naropa University. I have a strong passion in group work and feel fortunate for having had the opportunity to be surrounded by all of the wisdom and experience at the meeting this past February. I am fully aware that this would not have been possible if it were not for the generosity of those that contribute to the scholarship committee. I am deeply grateful to AGPA and all of those individuals that graciously offered to support my attendance.

I would also like to specifically acknowledge individuals and courses I attended. I attended the special institute: The Development of the Interpersonal Ego in Group Treatment with Elliot Zeisel. I absolutely loved this experience. I experienced Elliot Zeisel as being very skillful and appreciated his demonstration of working with a group. I also participated in the general process group experience with Joan Medway as my leader. The process group experience is something I believe to be a very effective learning opportunity. I appreciated Joan's approach and presence in our group. She had the ability to create space for that which needed to emerge. I also experienced the large group process to be effective and engaging. I attended several other sections that were informative and engaging, however, those three mentioned were the most impressionable to me.

I offer tremendous gratitude to the American Group Psychotherapy Association for putting together this gathering each year. I hold great honor in having this opportunity and feel so grateful to those that helped make it possible. I hope to be able to attend the AGPA meetings each year.

Sincerely,
