

THANK YOU LETTERS RECEIVED FROM
RECIPIENTS OF SCHOLARSHIPS TO ATTEND
THE 2010 ANNUAL MEETING OF THE
AMERICAN GROUP PSYCHOTHERAPY ASSOCIATION

My experience at this year's AGPA conference was everything I could have hoped for and then some! As it was my first time attending, I felt somewhat overwhelmed with what programs and workshops to attend because so many interested me! When I got to the hotel, I was amazed by how many people were there for this conference. Miraculously, I found my advisors from my internship. They welcomed and updated me on their wonderful experiences from the Institutes. I vowed that the next AGPA conference I attend, I will make the Institutes a priority. I saw some former supervisors who also introduced me to people they knew there. Very quickly, I started to feel at home.

I had the opportunity to attend Esther Perel's talk which was very provocative. I had heard her speak at a different event last year, but this was the first time I heard about her couples groups. Learning about her experiences with these types of groups encouraged me to potentially pursue such a format in the future. After attending this talk, I went to the SIG dinner with therapists from college counseling centers. I was delighted to hear how other CAPS were addressing issues such as providing services to the increasing number of students seeking services, becoming more visible on campus and promoting self-care amongst clinicians. In conversations around the table, I was surprised at how connected this community is! People knew students who had graduated from my program and were able to provide me with updates on their progress. It was definitely an invigorating and inspiring evening!

The following day I attended Positive Psychology Perspective in Group Psychotherapy, Developing Group Interventions in College Counseling Centers and Love, Loathing, and Countertransference: Working with LGBTQ Group Members. I enjoyed learning in the first seminar how groups can apply a strengths-based approach to group therapy and utilize various measures to assist in group exploration. The panel of therapists from college counseling centers allowed me to spend additional time with those I met the previous evening and learn about specific topics such as reaching multicultural groups on campus, challenges of DBT groups on campus and groups that meet outside of their centers. The last workshop I attended spoke to my current work with the Queer community. The examples provided by the panel really helped to make the topics addressed come to life. I had not yet heard how countertransference can affect clinicians in groups and it was very humbling to hear about their experiences.

On Friday, I attended the workshops: Mirroring in Groups: Providing a Sustaining and Nurturing Environment for Conflict Resolution and Men with Out of Control Sexual Behavior: Elements of a Sexual Health Model for Group Treatment. The first workshop was an ingenious way of looking at conflict in groups. In work I did with a partner in that workshop, I forged a potentially long-lasting friendship with an amazing clinician. I now understand why my advisor recommended that workshop to me. It was quite powerful! The second workshop spoke to my research interests and demonstrated ways to address sexual issues in a group and what emotions tend to be elicited.

On the last day of the conference, I attended the day-long workshop on the Mindful Therapist. I highly recommend this as a soothing closure to the entire conference. The basics of mindfulness were reviewed and then applied in a group therapy format. I learned various exercises to incorporate in such groups and look forward to implementing them!

Overall, the conference was an amazing experience for me especially at this point in my clinical development. What I gleaned could fill a year of instruction and still not touch on what I gained from the experience. I feel I have been introduced into a family of clinicians devoted to group work and who are as excited as I am about learning, improving and promoting group work. I feel honored to have had the opportunity to attend and I cannot wait for next year's conference!

I was one of the fortunate recipients of a tuition scholarship for the AGPA 2010 Annual Meeting in San Diego. With the aid of this scholarship, I was able to attend workshops that enhanced my professional competencies. For example, I learned new tools for conducting group psychotherapy, and a new dialogue for exploring intimacy issues, transference and counter transference, with clients. Additionally, I learned a new meditative exercise to integrate into my work with clients and also for my personal repertoire of relaxation techniques.

The AGPA 2010 conference was very well organized and its content was germane to numerous theoretical principles and practical techniques that I can utilize in individual as well as group practices. These professional assets gained juxtaposed with the new relationships I formed with professional colleagues provided me a total experience for which I am most grateful. It was amazing to experience such a global sense of camaraderie and acceptance amongst strangers I had never before met. For all of these reasons, I truly treasure my experience and thank all who contributed in any way to make the scholarship opportunities possible.

Words really can't express the appreciation I feel for the support provided to me by the membership of AGPA in awarding me funding to cover the cost of registration! The AGPA conference always provides me with rich learning experiences that I take home with me. The 2010 AGPA conference was no exception.

I selected my institute with care and with the advice of someone I greatly respect. My chosen institute was "Managing Love and Hate in Groups," which was led by Ronnie Levine. I arrived at the institute with only a little knowledge about Louis Ormont or his orientation to group psychotherapy. Ronnie set the tone for the two days with her direct and playful manner of interacting in the group. From my experiences in the group, I came to see love and hate lying on a continuum rather than as separate constructs. Ronnie, the group, and its members, were quite successful in meeting the goals she had set out for us: a) helping group and members tolerate and contain feelings; b) helping members identify their feelings toward other members and express those constructively; and c) helping members evolve from narcissistic goals of relating to cooperative relationships. In this group I had my first real exposure to the potential for play in groups. I also experienced first-hand how our projections fall apart when we come to learn something real about others. And I learned that "relating" to others is sometimes a substitute for real connection and caring about another person without reducing them to our own identifications and projections. These are experiences that I have carried with me into my life outside the institute – both professionally and personally.

As I am on the cusp of becoming a professional rather than a student, I attended Neal Spivack's workshop, "Creating Your Own Leadership Style." This workshop helped me realize that I do have a pretty clear sense the values I hold as a therapist. However, I learned more than I could have imagined from Neal's skill and courage as a facilitator. The members of this workshop came from different backgrounds and these differences led to a bit of a rebellion. Neal correctly read the group dynamics and adjusted his plan for the workshop so that it functioned in a more egalitarian way. The workshop ended up more like a process group than a didactic group and this resulted in deeper exchanges and learning. Neal not only provided the content for the workshop, he modelled outstanding leadership for those of us who attended this workshop.

In a session on the AGPA's practice guidelines led by Melyn Leszcz and Joseph Kobos, we reviewed the guidelines and then explored issues of concern to group members. This was a valuable experience for me as a relatively new group therapist. I was particularly impressed when Drs. Leszcz and Kobos offered to set up a discussion forum for session members to continue the discussion once AGPA had ended. This forum is being implemented; I feel fortunate to have more extended access to the leaders and to the other group members. What an excellent demonstration of how AGPA members provide and care for each other!

I am currently working as a Group Therapist leading Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy groups at a local hospital. Because much of my group psychotherapy training has been in interpersonal and psychodynamic approaches, I looked forward to Greg Crosby's course on integrating those approaches as well as interpersonal neurobiological perspectives into Group CBT. I have already integrated material learned in that course into some of the groups I am currently leading and it has been well-received by clients!

With each AGPA conference I attend, my connections with friends from previous AGPA conferences are renewed and deepened, and as I make new connections, my network broadens. This year it's also been exciting and rewarding for me to return home with new experiences, information, and ideas to share with my team. I think this is another important aspect of AGPA – those of us who attend take our new knowledge, excitement and experiences home to share with our colleagues contributing to an enriched working environment and to improved groups. And, should our work colleagues choose to attend in a future year, encourage the growth of AGPA!

I wanted to write and thank those who donated to your scholarship funds as I had an absolutely wonderful and enriching experience at the 2010 American Group Psychotherapy Association Conference. I am an early career psychologist who would not have been able to afford to attend without your generous scholarship fund. I work with veterans and was so pleased to attend several programs and classes at the conference that helped me with this work. The most enriching and rewarding experience was the two –day process oriented group institute that I attended. I facilitate a daily interpersonal process group at the Minneapolis V.A. Medical Center and I believe that engaging in the institute helped me become more aware of my own internal responses, relational patterns, and also the amount of courage it takes for the veterans I work with to open up in such groups. I attended multiple classes, including several which focused on working with combat veterans' families, helping clients to decrease their risk for suicide, dealing with cultural microaggressions, and teaching supervisees to deal with their own emotions while providing therapy services.

I very much appreciated the warm and open welcome that I received from the more established members of the organization. It was abundantly clear that they wanted to welcome the younger early career members and that was a great feeling. I had the experience of having multiple members approach me and reach out to me. I had more than a few deep, meaningful and growth-producing conversations during the week and will not soon forget them. I felt inspired and proud to be a psychologist when I returned from the conference and look forward to attending this conference again in the future. I also believe that the meetings helped me to refocus on some of my passions in the field, including psychodynamic work, psychological first-aid, and cultural awareness. I would 100% recommend this conference and organization to any of my colleagues! Thanks again so much for allowing me the chance to receive this scholarship, attend this conference, and remind myself of why I love being a mental health professional.

Sincerely,

To All Who Made This Possible:

A funny thing happened at the AGPA conference in San Diego; I found something I didn't know I'd lost—me! Perhaps it would be more accurate if I said I uncovered more of my authentic self. A change took place there that caused a fundamental shift in the way I think, feel and

behave—and the way I practice social work. Although I have walked away from other seminars or conferences with a lot of knowledge, I walked away from this one with more of myself. I cannot begin to explain how grateful I am, for the scholarship you provided that gave me the opportunity to experience such a profound, life-changing event. I apologize for the lateness of this thank you letter, but I waited to see if this change would recede or go away--it has not.

You may be surprised to know that when I arrived in San Diego, I still did not realize that the first two-days we spent in group, was not as a passive student, but as an active participant. It was eye-opening; not only for my personal awareness, but as a therapist. I don't believe I have participated or observed such masterful group processing as I did under Jeff Hudson's leadership. Although it was uncomfortable and scary the first day, there was a warm, cohesiveness that formed between our members that's continues to this day. I miss being around the people at the annual meeting that have such enlightened self-awareness. We communicate as a group through email weekly, and have already planned a reunion in next year's New York venue. I'm sure that even with the same group of people, those two days of growth and relationship building could never be replicated. It was simply amazing.

I think the seminar that had the biggest impact on me was the all-day Addiction as Attachment Disorder. I feel I learned more about relationships than in any other setting. Honestly, I had "settled" for this seminar, believing that it wouldn't have much application in my practice since I didn't deal specifically with drug or alcohol addiction. I couldn't have been more wrong. It applies to every facet of my practice with relationships and gave me much more clarity in how early attachments effect the development of needs, addictions, and coping skills.

My next favorite seminar was on my preferred topic, The Neurobiology of Mindfulness. Even before I was out of high school, I had developed an interest in the mind-body link. If I ever have the opportunity to obtain a Ph.D as I hope to, it will be in neurobiology to understand more about this phenomena. I hope there will be more on this topic next year. Speaking of which, I'm also hoping there will be a full day seminar next year on "So You Want to Give A Workshop". There just wasn't enough time to get through all the useful material that was offered there.

There are no words to convey the depth of my gratitude for the Saul Scheidlinger Scholarship and stipend. I would never have been able to attend without it. This is a gift that I will never forget and will keep on coming through what I have learned. As I stated above, I would have missed a life-changing event that continues to make an impact in my life, my relationships and my practice. I hope that someday, I will be able to help provide such a magnificent experience to other new members to AGPA. I made more discoveries about myself and group work than there is room to go into here. Suffice it to say, it has been the most rewarding experience of my career! Continuing as a member of AGPA and obtaining my group certification will certainly be a part of my future endeavors. I'm setting my sights on New York in 2011!

The San Diego conference was fabulous. The 2 day institute helped me to know and grow in acceptance of myself, as I am, in this moment.

Dear AGPA and the Scholarship committee-- Having the chance to attend the 2010 AGPA annual meeting in February was an absolutely amazing experience. As a new professional, I have had limited opportunities to see my theories and beliefs about the extraordinary nature of group work come to life, but in attending the institute and conference sessions my expectations were more than exceeded. I now have personal experience of group participation and the power of the growth that occurs there to back me up when I am "selling" group to clients. Not to mention all of the growing that I did myself! Also, the open sessions and demo groups were an amazing way to learn more about perspectives on group work. I was able to attend several sessions on mindfulness groups and am incorporating what I learned in my own life and with my clients and it is amazing. I fell in love with the conference and the people and the energy that ran through the entire week. I am so thankful that I was able to attend and make connections with other people in counseling centers and who love group work that will help keep my fire alive!

Thanks

It was my fourth year in attendance and I have been finding that my appreciation of the quality of the conference grows as I become a more skilled novice clinician. Since last year's conference, I have continued to be actively involved in running groups, now at the counseling center at UCLA. I brought goals of both clinical and personal growth into the 2-day institute for this year and felt that I grew in both areas. I sought and achieved close connection to my fellow members, as I simultaneously learned about the skillful execution of the process group experience. I learned how to use myself as therapist and the group as a whole to seek out the needs of individual members in ways that had not occurred to me. I bring these skills back into my life as a group leader. As an individual member, I felt that I learned how to ask and to receive from others in a meaningful and balanced way.

The conference following the group continued along the trajectory of profound emotional and intellectual experiences. As a recent student of Lacanian theory, I was thrilled to see Macario as the leader of the large group. I felt I was able to better understand the purpose of the large group, and this was further amplified by the discussion following the large group. I enjoyed being identified within the college counseling community and was happy to attend their meetings and events. This year, I most enjoyed a session that pondered the question of how to incorporate mindfulness meditation into the work of the interpersonal process group. This year, in addition to enjoying the new connections I made, I especially enjoyed being reunited with old connections. I really began to feel a part of this vibrant community of AGPA.

So in conclusion, I am a huge fan of group and a huge fan of AGPA. The world that is created at the conference is a world of hope and of possibilities. By attending, I feel the call to bring pieces of that world of openness and closeness into my clinical, educational and personal life. I have a deep felt appreciation that I received a scholarship and will be looking forward to round five in New York City.

It is a daunting task for me to describe the full extent of my experiences at my first AGPA annual meeting this year. The first that comes to mind is how pleasantly surprised I was at its welcoming atmosphere. The attendees seemed respectful of and genuinely interested in each other, which I eagerly reciprocated. I suppose I should have known that a gathering of group therapists will be filled with such positive interpersonal interactions. That warm atmosphere, by itself, made the AGPA meeting the most

enjoyable conference I have ever attended, and its contents made me feel committed to continue participating in the future meetings.

The most memorable and valuable experience at the AGPA meeting was also the most difficult and challenging for me. It was the 2-Day Institute by Fred and Barbara Ilfeld. This was the very first time I participated in group therapy as a client. Before this experience, I thought I knew how hard it was for clients to be in group. Being in the institute, however, made me realize I had no idea how really difficult it is, and the experience gave me a whole new level of appreciation for my clients in group. In addition, being in the group led by highly experienced therapists taught me greatly and influenced how I run my groups. Since I returned from the AGPA meeting, I have greater trust in the power of the group. With no exaggeration, I no longer feel the anxiety I used to feel when running groups because I trust the group and myself enough not to take the unnecessary responsibility for the group. I have liked running groups, but now I am truly enjoying it.

The workshops and sessions were educational and stimulating. I have learned a lot of specific strategies and concepts for groups, particularly in relation to diversity and training. Based on the information I gained, I will be making modifications and additions to our existing group program; for example, I will add process component to the DBT Skills Training Group (310: "Developing Group Interventions in College Counseling Centers"), and put more energy in starting multicultural groups (205; "Infusing group Therapy Program in University Counseling Centers with Multiculturalism"). I also gained valuable training materials and ideas from the workshop, "Sustainable Programs: Using Structured Exercises to Teach Group Psychotherapy (79)", which I will not only incorporate in our training seminars for group therapy but also apply in running a practicum for individual therapy. Further, as a result of my experiences in diversity related workshops and SIG meeting, I have started working to create a campus wide community for faculty/staff of color, in hopes that it will increase retention of minority staff, and in turn, helps minority students.

The AGPA meeting was also my first real exposure to psychodynamic orientation. Seeing psychodynamic therapy in action has motivated me to learn more about the approach. I have since started reading a book by Rutan, Stone, and Shay, which was recommended by some people I met at the meeting. I am now seriously considering seeking additional training in psychodynamic therapy.

Even after leaving San Diego, I continue to benefit from the relationships I built at the meeting. The very active listserv for the Counseling Center SIG has been a place for me to seek guidance and exchange interesting ideas. Continuing relationships with my roommate at the hotel, fellow group members at the institute, and others I have met randomly at various settings have all been a valuable part of my professional and personal life.

I have gained so much from this AGPA meeting; I am already looking forward to the one next year. Without the foundation's support, I have missed out on this wonderful opportunity, and I am very grateful to the GPF. I am also grateful to everyone in the AGPA for everything I mentioned above and more.

Respectfully,

The AGPA 2010 Annual Meeting was an incredibly memorable and educational experience. Even as a current graduate student, I learned more than I ever had in two days by participating in a process group. It was exciting and insightful to be in the position of a group participant. It made me realize that group work is not easy for anyone involved, but the outcomes are life changing. I am still in contact with nearly half of my fellow process

group members because we became so close over the course of the conference. I have already used these new friends for resources, references, and support. I have the conference to thank for this door being opened.

I also took the two day introduction to the "Principles of Group Psychotherapy." This class combined with my process group experience has increased my knowledge and confidence in regards to group leading by 10-fold. The other day at my internship a group leader was unable to make it to his group. I was asked to lead the group and because of my experience at AGPA I willingly accepted the challenge. Leading the group went very well and I incorporated several of the techniques I learned at AGPA. Overall, AGPA sparked my interest and made me a believer in the group process. Thank you for this wonderful opportunity and I will definitely be pursuing a way to get to New York for next year's conference!

I cannot say enough about my experience at the Annual Meeting in San Diego. I learned a tremendous amount, both about myself and the practice of group psychotherapy.

I attended Stewart Aledort's special institute and have already put several ideas I learned to use in my own group. I found his ideas on the omnipotent child and taking group members into his metaphorical "lap" tremendously insightful and helpful in working with my own clients.

I also attended Ronnie Levine's special interest group "Managing Love and Hate". At first, I was intimidated by how large the group was, but the size only added to my experience. I can still hear Ronnie's voice in my head as she encouraged me to share my experience in the group, a technique (along with several others) I now use in my own group to amplify the participant's emotion.

My final day at the Annual Meeting I attended the workshop on Dissociation and Mentalization. Several of my clients experience dissociation and I found the information shared and practiced in the workshop to be very helpful and informative in working with these types of clients.

What added to my overall experience was getting to know more AGPA members, both new and existing relationships that are developing as I continue to attend year after year. I find such warmth in the fellow professionals who attend the conference, it truly feels like a family that is with me as I continue to grow both personally and professionally.

Thank you for the opportunity to attend through scholarship - I cannot say enough about what the experience in San Diego meant to me.

I wanted to thank the committee for your generosity that allowed me to attend the institute in San Diego this year. I was deeply touched by my experience and felt very safe and contained by our group facilitator, Hank Fallon. This was my 2nd year attending AGPA. 3 years ago, I attended the conference in Austin, TX. Although it was also a wonderful experience, since then, I become increasingly active in my local Los Angeles chapter. In fact, after the conference, I was asked to serve on the board of the Los Angeles Group Psychotherapy Society by the then president, Keith Rand. Partially as a result of this, I began to meet other group therapists in my area and these relationships were strengthened during the week spent in San Diego.

In fact, I feel as though I have found my professional home at AGPA. It is an amazing and warm community of professionals who seem to have a unique lack of ego or hierarchy; truly a rare thing. I particularly valued the workshop on termination co-facilitated by Dr. Marsha Vannicelli.

I am committed to group work and feel re-energized by my experience. I can't wait for next year in NYC!

I had an amazing experience in San Diego at my first AGPA conference. First of all, I got to stay in a house with my father, Dr. Larry Viers, and several of his colleagues from Chicago, IL and the surrounding area. These individuals were very welcoming which helped to enhance my experience. As for the conference itself, I first attended a 2-day institute for individuals who have little to no experience leading groups. First, I

should mention that I had no experience being in or leading groups before this. I attended a group lead by Jeffrey Hudson. I can only seem to find two ways to sum up that particular experience. The first is amazing! The other way to sum it up is to let you know that I felt so connected to and supported in my institute that I think I will always feel connected to those people even if I don't always stay in touch with them (although within a month of the conference I think we sent around 50 e-mails between the 11 or so of us that were in that institute together). There was one other young woman in my institute that I found I had more in common with than I could have ever imagined. I have already stayed with her when I needed a place to stay the night before I had two interviews a half-day trip away from where I live. The day after my institute experience ended, I attended two workshops about leading groups with adolescents. Both were very informative and useful. Unfortunately, I was only able to attend one more workshop over the next two days. The last workshop I attended was one on working with fathers and daughters. This workshop was a great combination of educational and experiential (I participated in a short process group during that workshop).

Possibly the biggest thing I will take away from the experience of AGPA in San Diego is the feeling of camaraderie and support I felt there. The best way for me to explain just how important this was to me is to mention what I was going through at the time. The Friday before the conference began I found out I had not 'matched' to any internship through the APPIC match process. I was very distraught over this turn of events. The Monday the conference began was 'Clearinghouse' when I could apply to any internship that was left with openings. One of the group therapists staying in the same house with me and my father was generous enough to get up early the day after she flew into San Diego to help me send out applications by e-mail. All of my housemates from AGPA asked me every chance they got what the latest was in my application process. Although this was a stressful process and I might have missed one or two opportunities while attending particularly the institute, there is no where else I would've wanted to be. Even people I met in workshops who heard I was applying were empathic and supportive. Being at the conference also gave me a chance to meet people who were working in settings and with populations that I was interested in. For example, I attended a Special Interest Group lunch and got to meet and talk with individuals I probably wouldn't have talked to had I not been looking for an internship at the time. Thank you for the opportunity and life changing experience of attending AGPA. I hope to come back for years to come!

I was extremely blessed to receive the AGPA scholarship for a second year in a row. Being in graduate school I am given the opportunity to attend several scholarly conferences each year, but the one I have looked forward to the most is AGPA. Being a second year attendee, I felt better prepared to take in more of the conference as I had some ideas about what to expect. This year proved to be even better than last, and my love for this organization and conference continues to grow. I have told many colleagues and students about this conference in hopes that others will become members and attendees in the future.

A unique aspect of the AGPA conference is the experiential nature of the classes I attended. What I found to be most helpful was the experiential focus that many of the workshops and colloquies had. One class I attended was about secrets group members withhold from the group, and how that negatively impacts the group process. I participated in a small group we held in this workshop (fishbowl style) and saw first hand that our "secrets" really did cause the group progress to stop. What a beautiful way for the class members (including myself) to understand the illustrated material and apply it to my own groups. I also found the personal experiences shared in the open sessions quite engaging and genuine.

A large part of the conference (particularly the institute groups) seemed to focus on self exploration or self awareness as a way to understand group concepts and in turn, improve as a group leader. I was able to explore meaningful aspects of myself and receive feedback which I have noticed positively affect my work as a therapist.

Being a "group member" helped me to empathize with clients I often refer to groups, and remember how difficult it can be to sit in their shoes and be willing to share genuine reactions.

I have also enjoyed how collegial AGPA members are. It was incredible to talk to people who have been members, and have attended this conference for decades! Other conferences I have attended do not have this personalized feeling where members try to build bonds that they expect will carry on year after year. I find myself already looking forward to seeing my institute group, or fellow workshop members, in years to come.

Thank you again for this incredible opportunity. I plan to donate to the scholarship fund in the future after I graduate in an effort to help others experience the amazing growth opportunities available at AGPA.

Warmly,

I would like to start by thanking you and the committee for the chance to attend the AGPA conference. It was a rich and intellectually challenging experience, and as a first-year MSW student, helped reinforce my professional decision. I attended workshops that were specifically geared for those with less than five years of group psychotherapy experience and I felt I was able to get a lot out of the sessions. I really enjoyed "Developing Your Own Leadership Style" and "Group Process in the Now." I thought that the combination between the didactic and the experiential sessions worked really well for me and I learned a lot about group process and manifest and latent content. The leadership style workshop aided in my feeling more confident in my abilities as a group therapist. I also attended a workshop about boundaries and disclosure with LGBT clients which was very helpful and informative. I ended the conference with a Qi Gong workshop which was a wonderful integration between body and mind.

I feel that I was able to make meaningful connections with other students and scholarship recipients. I also felt supported by the SIGLBT (special interest group for LGBT group therapy) and am grateful that there were several workshops to choose from about LGBT issues. There is much that I will take away from this experience, including enthusiasm for leading groups, developing my own group therapy practice, and learning how to theorize group therapy.

Thank you again for this opportunity. I hope to apply again next year and attend the conference in New York.

The Annual AGPA Meeting in San Diego was fantastic! Firstly, the location made it difficult to not walk around with a smile on my face. But more importantly I was blown away by the atmosphere of professionals which surrounded me at every workshop, open session, and meal. I'd return to my room each night with my brain aching from soaking up so much new information. Attending the meeting as a student and feeling the community that is the AGPA gives me every reason to pursue a lengthy membership and career with it. Additionally, as a student there is no way I could have afforded a membership fee or admittance to the meeting and Institute. This scholarship provided my means and I was determined to use up all that it could offer me. I joined the two year institute group in order to pack in as many valuable group hours as possible and I went to lots of unique workshops. Each lent its own views and information, all helping to form who I will be as a therapist. I am going to be moving to Austin soon and I therefore made an effort to meet some of the large community that comes from there. I hope to maintain relationships with them as I will be seeking mentors and advice in the near future! I definitely look forward to New York next year.

I want to thank you and the rest of the AGPA Scholarship Foundation for awarding me a scholarship to attend the AGPA annual meeting this year in San Diego.

I was surprised not to be at another conference with long days of seminars and didactics, but to rather gain firsthand experiences by sitting in circles and actually being part of a group in every workshop I attended. By learning to be in a group, I was able to better understand its utility and feel that I can now be a more effective leader. I had many great experiences while at AGPA, but the two day process group really stands out in my mind. This was an extremely intense and powerful experience and I came away understanding so much more about myself by tolerating this somewhat uncomfortable, though extremely insightful two days. It was such a unique opportunity to have two full days to devote just to process group. I also found the "Hall of Mirrors" workshop really interesting and useful in conceptualizing how we relate to others. I ended the program by attending the group on Death/Dying/Termination and it touched me so much that I was brought to tears, especially when we found out that a woman in the group was actually dying. This group was so meaningful; I truly discovered the power of a group in helping each other heal around such a vulnerable discussion.

I came back from the conference even more enthusiastic about group work and I know that leading groups will always be part of my career. I hope to attend many more AGPA conferences in the future.

Thank you again for the opportunity,

I would summarize my experience as the consummate combination of comraderie, enrichment, and inspiration. As far as enrichment goes, I was continually impressed by the quality and variety of programming that was available at this conference. It seems that no matter what topic I was interested in, there were plenty of opportunities for learning. I was also particularly inspired by the mentors and colleagues that I connected with at this conference. As an Early Career Psychologist, I recently decided to transition from the public sector (College Counseling) into private practice. Before I started sharing this news with others, I anticipated them to be as fearful and as petrified as I was feeling at that time. Their responses were not what I expected them to be.

The responses that I received (from new colleagues and old) were overwhelmingly supportive and encouraging. Astonishingly, another Early Career Psychologist was *inspired* by my decision. All of these responses helped me to realize that my outlook was not as terrifying as I anticipated. They also helped me to remember how prepared I was to move forward with my new career path. I cannot overstate how much this support has helped me in my transition. Notably, my private practice has thrived since the annual meeting. Moreover, I am even running an interpersonal process group now--the only one of its kind that I am aware of in Las Vegas.

This support and comraderie has been inspiring to say the least. As part of this conference, I was also able to re-connect with my former mentors and bring along my current/former trainee (also a scholarship recipient). This made my conference experience particularly memorable.

Overall, I am extremely appreciative of this opportunity to attend this conference as a scholarship recipient. My attendance would not have been possible otherwise. Thank you for this wonderful opportunity and let me know if you need anything else from me.

I would like to send my personal thanks to all of the members who contributed to the scholarship funds for the annual conference in San Diego, "A New Decade: Sustaining our World Through Groups." I

am a graduate student at Boise State University, and will receive my Masters degree in Social Work in May of 2010. I am currently an MSW Intern at the Veterans Administration in Boise, under the direct supervision of Charles S. Pohl.

I received a scholarship that paid for my entrance to the full six day special institute and conference, without which I would not have been able to attend. The special institute was truly a life changing experience for me personally and professionally, and the conference extended and built upon my current professional knowledge base. My group facilitator for the two day institute, Robert Schulte, was very professional and knowledgeable about group therapy and he assisted our group in reaching heights that were un-expected. Overall, the conference was phenomenal and I would encourage all professionals in the field to attend this conference annually. The knowledge I gained in the sessions through didactic and experiential training as well as the instruction from renowned professionals in the field made this an instrumental step in my personal and professional growth.

This is my second time to attend the AGPA Annual Meeting, and the last time is in 2008. I should say the meeting is like a big banquet and therefore I had a plenty of food and have been nurtured.

In the first two days, I was in an experience group of intermediate level led by Ginger Sullivan. I have learned a lot by engaging in the group. I obtained and expanded the skills of conducting group therapy by observing the process of leadership. In particular, I have experienced the power of "here and now" skill. In addition, as the member in group, I took this opportunity to explore my inner world, my vulnerability and strengths. The group provided a safe enough environment to process my deep affect and yield new reflection on it.

During the following three days in the conference, I attended quite a lot of seminars and workshops. The most impressive ones are the open session "Therapeutic impact of therapist self-disclosure in groups" and the workshop "Fathers and daughters: the promise of intimacy". They attracted me not only by the content, but also by the way of teaching. More importantly, I took part in the demonstration group. In the past, I always worried about my language and thought it as the biggest hurdle for me to communicate sufficiently. Since the whole meeting is like a big family and thus gave me the courage to participate in the demonstration group. The experience was so compelling, which broke through my limitation of experience. Now I completely believe that in the deep level, human beings use the same language to communicate.

My mind was refreshed in the meeting and I felt empowered when I came back to China. My institute, Shanghai Mental Health Center, is one of the biggest specialized mental health

hospitals in China. Dr Anne Alonso and Dr Priscilla Kauff introduced group therapy to our center. Now the group therapy has been practiced both for inpatients and outpatients. From this year, with the great efforts from the Anne's students here, group therapy has been set up a service covered by insurance, which means more people can benefit from it. Now we plan to carry out the training of group therapy in Chinese mental health system. We will use the leading position of our center to influence more psychiatrists and psychologists to use group therapy and serve the patients.

"We can make something happen!" Dr Anne Alonso said in enthusiasm when she first visited our center in May of 2007. Now her ambition and our dreams have come true. Group therapy has become our routine practice of psychotherapy. I will always remember what Anne said, and back on AGPA to continue my teaching and practice of group therapy in China. My next dream is to present what we have done with Chinese patients here in the AGPA meeting someday.

At last, I will appreciate the AGPA for providing me the scholarship for the conference again. I enjoyed the meeting so much. I will come back to the meeting and see my dear friends there again.

I just wanted to say thank you for providing me the opportunity to attend the AGPA conference this past February 2010 in San Diego. I found the conference to be a very unique and wonderful experience. Unfortunately, I have misplaced the conference schedule that I had had, however, I do remember that I attended the lecture on addiction in relation to attachment disorders, the institute on the social unconscious, the use of drama in group therapy, and soul drama. I unfortunately was unable to make the couples therapy lecture on Saturday as I had already planned to leave on that day prior to knowing that was the day of the lecture.

I believe that although the lectures and the concepts that I learned in the lectures was interesting, the most unique experience I had was probably as a participant in the institute. I felt very inexperienced compared to others in my group, however, I felt that I learned a lot from participating and observing, and probably would have been able to learn a lot more had the group continued. The other techniques I saw such as in the soul drama group where unique as well-- in that I had never been exposed to or seen such concepts before. Overall I wished I had had more time to spend in the groups, and I believe that this would be an extremely valuable experience for all residents, as we so rarely get the opportunity to experience group processes in this way. Thank you again.

Sincerely,

I wanted to whole heartedly thank you for making the opportunity possible for me to attend the conference this year and for providing me with such an enriching, educational, inspirational, exciting and enjoyable experience. I gained so much from the experience and I am only sad that I will not be able to capture in words how much I gained from the experience.

The process group was an opportunity for me to learn a tremendous amount about myself and group process and with that experience I am now a much better leader and person. I was challenged in the group to try out new behaviors and forge relationships that broke through barriers I often put up in intimate settings to protect myself despite what I was missing as a result. I also learnt from the group leader, Carol Vaughn, how to facilitate a group process and reach all the members of the group and help them in different ways.

Then I received much guidance and support in the workshops that I attended. I help coordinate group psychotherapy services at Rutgers Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology (GSAPP) and in that position I co-facilitate two groups and provide guidance and support to those running 4 other groups and educate the student body of GSAPP about group. After attending a workshop on selling group to clients I am now replicating that presentation at GSAPP to the clinical psychology students so that they can be educated on how

to recommend group to their clients. After attending a workshop on co-facilitation I was able to work more effectively with my co-facilitator. I felt a sense of connection and warmth from everyone at the conference and was extraordinarily honored and touched to be a part of it.

Where to begin to encapsulate my first AGPA experience? The natural place is the beginning with the news of my receiving the Durkin-Glatzer Scholarship. I was on *cloud 9* with the anticipation of living out one of my dreams! The scholarship felt like I had been royally crowned and it was a complete dream come true experience! From the moment of being welcomed at the registration desk until the final reception, I was received like a valued family member, a Canadian cousin. There were many details of the experience, which I thankfully kept notes about along the way. However I trust that you can sense the excitement still persistent in my description and know that it was a professional pinnacle of which I will only be able to give you highlights.

Hearing Walter Stone invite us to begin our AGPA experience by turning off our inner dialogue, and awaken a sense of going to a first day of class or time away at a summer camp, helped to begin the process of learning. His suggestion to be present emotionally set the tone for the week. Those humble comments resonated in my body and mind as I prepared to *own* my place in the massive membership moving through the hallways of learning. I also heard him wish us the strength to take risks, be present with emotions and to be curious and not furious with the inner responses of learning. With his words ringing in my ears I embarked on my AGPA journey.

Sitting in the room with 12 people gathering to work together intimately for the next two days, the tension was rising inside my body as I waited for Justin Hecht to begin our institute time together. It was my third formal conference-based experience and I knew that everyone signed up for an opportunity to learn from a personal experience of group therapy. The turbulent experience fit in with the metaphor Justin used that he was our *flight attendant*. I was entranced by the Jungian methods used to calm and connect the group during the initial storm of disturbances – people arriving late, intentions revealed to leave early, incapacity to participate, departures – which were managed with a blend of rules being affirmed, consensus being reached and commitments negotiated. I was so relieved not to be the institute leader! The rest of the experience continued to evoke personal insights and professional inspiration. However, the experience raised a few questions regarding how institute participants are reviewed or the leader prepared for the members. One person had a “reputation” for being contrary and aggressive in past AGPA events and then proceeded to disrupt this institute. Sure it gave us all an amazing learning experience, members and leader alike, and, it could have been avoided especially as it almost destroyed the group. I wondered if individual patterns can be used to discern suitability for an institute experience – is anyone ever denied entrance? Another question came to my mind in the group when someone mentioned that she was *looking forward* to being a counsellor. Did I misunderstand her comment? Was she a therapist? Although she was a lovely woman, it seemed as though she was not professionally trained and had difficulty coping with the intensity of the institute experience. Of course she was well supported by Justin and all of us in the group during the experience. I wonder about follow-up support for institute members on the days following it. Given my intense experience in the institute, it was a challenge for me to engage with the next day’s events beginning with Nancy McWilliams’ plenary. The gist of her presentation is consistent with my understanding of the challenges facing therapists in a HMO environment in the USA and similarly in the Canadian system as it promotes one style of intervention (Cognitive Behavioural Treatment). The affirmation of a psychotherapist’s stance of accepting what is and the promotion of clients developing wisdom through their life lessons was fertile food for my mind. It gave me inspiration to attempt to capture what occurs within my groups even though it not easily quantifiable. The suggestion that writing my observations of interactions between members would be significant to inspire others to assist older adults in group therapy is something that I am considering.

Then my next amazing experience was with Merle Cantor Goldberg who arrived without her luggage and presentation notes and into a venue which was not compatible with the group next door. Her expertise was evident as she led us to another setting, incorporating it all into our workshop on psychodrama. I truly appreciated her clarity about the boundaries of her presentation and was not swayed by group members who wanted her to deviate from the learning objectives.

Another encounter with creative group leadership was found with Sima Ariam. Her energetic presentation and use of actual mirrors within the group exercised my academic muscle as well as offered an experiential opportunity. By the end of the week I needed to learn about self-care and re-energizing myself. I was fortunate to find a last minute spot still available in Linda Eisenberg’s workshop about Qigong. Her personal story blended with the ancient Chinese method of healing and energizing body/mind worked to capture my attention.

Since the AGPA meeting I have a sense of validation for the method of therapy I choose to practise. The ideas and new approaches to enhance my interventions with older adults are growing in my mind and I have been looking for a place to learn more about Qigong in Winnipeg to care for my body. I don’t know when I will be able to

meet again at an AGPA. However I **do** know that I have been thoroughly inspired and professionally nourished by AGPA and that it will last me a long time until we meet again. Until then, from the bottom of my heart I thank you again for this fabulous opportunity!

I walked away from the meeting and boarded an aircraft to go home, and as I sat down in my seat, I noticed a sense of calm that had not been with me on my departing flight. The sense of feeling centered, of feeling aware, of feeling eager to restart my work in psychiatry. That feeling carried through to the following workweek. I listened to patients with different ears, with calm confidence, with a new facility for reading between the lines. What was that feeling? Where did it come from?

The conference started with a bang! I sat for Phil Flores' lecture about addiction as an attachment disorder. I am interested in substance abuse, so it called to me. I didn't know anybody there, but as I saw several others around me sitting alone, I introduced myself to my nearest colleague and made friends. It's funny how the first thing I did was form an attachment. The material presented by Dr. Flores was great, on point, and captivating. I also identified with Dr. Flores as he told some of his own personal story relating to drugs and addiction/addicts. The important theme in his talk was about relationships and attachment. He said that if someone has significant relationship with drugs, then it is hard to form a meaningful relationship with others. He finished the day with a demo group for an hour. This part was fascinating. I saw a group of 8 strangers get to know each other very personally, and I saw them disclose on an intimate level. This was clearly not their first group! But I listened to how they started, to what sorts of things they found important and to how they related to each other. With that, I looked forward to participating in my own group the following morning.

Tuesday morning arrived, and as I sat in the room that would house our 2-day group, I felt the room buzzing with anxiety. Wow, this group of my peers was really anxious! I could see early on that there were people with experience in group therapy (by the way their statements resembled those of the demo group from Phil Flores' group,) and those that were novice and skeptical. Throughout that day, I saw nearly every possible way of reacting to the group process happen before my eyes. As people engaged me, I felt my own level of anxiety and arousal wax and wane. I listened to what my body was doing, my heart, my abdomen, my brain. Over the 2 day institute, I felt vibrant, alive and connected. I'm pretty sure that this is where I got the feeling I walked home with. I became very connected to the people in the room. I felt that I fostered a lot of their development just like they helped me feel comfortable showing more of myself than I am used to showing. Revealing of myself felt good, and it felt liberating. I also learned a lot by watching others. Some were very tactful at making those tough statements that pry at a person but with benevolent intent. I also heard our group leader make wonderful statements that helped the group feel safe and move forward. I paid close attention to what he did and did not do.

The remaining days of the conference allowed me to digest all I had witnessed and experienced in the group process. I attended a small group that focused on noticing how people bid for and against attachment in the group setting. I attended a group focused on the idea of groups that are "too nice." In this group I saw veterans of group process so function on a level that was fascinating to me. They seemed to be able to bypass all their insecurities and yet show them off and address them all in the same breath. I saw what issues they were struggling with themselves, and I saw what I had in common with them. I remember looking around the large banquet hall during the closing ceremony. I looked around for people to whom I could say goodbye. I found many! It struck me how many relationships I had formed in only 5 days. I remember thanking the AGPA leaders with so much enthusiasm and heartfelt joy.

Since I've been back, I have found my skills as a therapist to have sharpened dramatically. First, the experience of being a part of a group was therapeutic in itself, making me much more comfortable with a wider range of experience. Second, observing how my group leader's interventions impacted me, I am now more aware of the effect my words have when I am leader. Lastly, the didactic material presented at the meeting was specifically useful to my work with patients. The 5 days at the AGPA meeting were easily the 5 most formative and educational days of the year.

Thank you to all that made it possible.

Sincerely,

I truly cannot say enough about my experience at AGPA this year. The Institute was an event that I find myself having a difficult time summarizing. Perhaps I'll just say that it was at times enormously challenging, powerful, and beautiful, and in the end it brought me closer to some indescribable thing that lies at the depths of my own self. I

will never forget it.

I met more people than I could begin to count, and truly felt welcomed into a large and warm community of interesting and interested people. I have already kept in touch with several of the people I met, including both new therapists and more experienced professionals. I don't doubt that these relationships will be renewed every year, and the renewal itself will become an inspirational event. (I very much plan on attending the conference in New York next year.)

I truly cannot thank the Foundation enough for the opportunity to attend an event that, for me, was truly momentous and enormously influential.

Sincerely,

I was blessed and fortunate to be in Jeff Hudson's Institute. This experience helped me to grow emotionally and professionally by being involved and getting a deeper understanding of the way he runs his groups. It also allowed me to take risks in expressing myself in a safe environment. I continued to peel away the layers of some deep-rooted issues and realize now that I have a right to cry and show expression of my pain and love in this way, without the shame and embarrassment.

I also felt an openness to approach people in the hallways whereas I may have taken a "time out" and isolated myself. I took the opportunity to introduce myself to friendly "strangers" and had some amazing conversations with people that were rich in content that allowed for deeper connections. I met some amazing fun people from different parts of the country. I also bonded more deeply with people affiliated with GPALA and am looking forward to seeing them again.

I attended a workshop on Group Therapy for Schizophrenic Patients, by Nick Kanas, that will help me with the existing process group that I run daily on an inpatient hospital setting. This session also inspired me to work with my colleague in discussing with supervisors how to institute a group designated for this population exclusively and increase the clinical work that happens on the unit.

I was a happy recipient of a full conference scholarship this year. I attended all 5 days of workshops. I owe you my gratitude. The conference met and exceeded my expectations and I have since been a more open, grounded and consciously fallible leader of doctoral students in training. I have much to say about my appreciation for the experience.

First, I would have not been able to come without your award. As a new professional with a marginal salary, the scholarship afforded me the opportunity.

Second, I participated and left the conference sensing that AGPA could be my professional home. What most impressed me were the people that I met and their particular quality of self-reflection coupled with a conscious effort to be authentic and explore in relationships. I have yearned for relationships like that from the first days of my clinical training 6 years ago when it was harder than I'd imagine to find it.

The 2-day institute with Francis was the highlight in this respect; I had a powerful set of experiences in our group in which my voice, power and vulnerability all came into the room in ways that reinforced my confidence and a sense of knowing who I am again. I saw that energy translate over to my job back home in Berkeley as an educator and group facilitator of psychology trainees. In the Institute, Francis also modeled a variety of approaches that supported us to do our work. I am in touch with a couple of the group members from my

Institute, and most of our group plans to get together in New York. Half of us enjoyed the dance together at AGPA.

I also attended a mindfulness workshop that disappointed me in terms of content. To be fair, I have a lot of experience leading mindfulness courses and a twenty year practice. I believe this challenge in integrating meditation practices with therapy is not so straightforward and what I experienced more reflects the fields confusion with how to do this. I'd recommend calling on leaders who are first mindfulness teachers and second psychologists (i.e. Jack Kornfield in CA, Bill Morgan in MA, or in NYC Jon Aaron).

That said, I was again impressed by the strength of the members of this group to speak to this dissatisfaction in the room; an experience that I very rarely have in professional and academic settings in my life, yet deeply yearn for. From that and inspiring workshops on Secrets by Oona Metz and another on Self-Disclosure by a woman whom I forget the name of, I brought an infectious authenticity into my training group back home where I lead students in case conference. These experiences left a residue of the AGPA conference that has allowed me more trust the complexity of dynamics and feelings in group settings; and a basic paradigm for how to understand some of the multifarious issues that arise in groups.

On a similar note, I enjoyed seeing the openness about their own fallibility of some of the workshop leaders. An ability to say, "I don't know" and "Let's look at that together" was comforting. It untethered me from the idea of how "professional" and "together" I needed to be to lead groups effectively. I also appreciated the staff and board members who consistently held friendly, open, humorous and professional demeanors; qualities I aspire to as a young psychologist.

Last, the setting was nice. I enjoyed many breaks walking with new friends and playing frisbee with my best friend, another psychologist who attended. The connections with him over the week were a hidden gift of your support. After our moving workshops, we discussed many big personal issues openly in a nourishing way. One important discussion convinced me of my readiness to ask my partner to marry me. I did so soon after my return home. How's that for an gift. Any scholarships for wedding expenses?

Thanks so much,

I meant to write to you soon after my return back to Israel in order to thank you and express my deep appreciation for everything that happened to me at the SD conference. Again family affairs kept me busy and occupied. So, I take this opportunity to thank you, and all of AGPA staff members, and helpers for A MOST WONDERFUL and SUCCESSFUL meetings I have ever been to. The organization was superb. The reception and guidance of your people- extremely helpful and welcoming. The social events were so wonderful, I had a difficult time to say goodbye to people: the lunch & music, the party, meetings at eating spots, the reception room and all the wonderful people there, tours of SD and in my case even a visit to the SD Opera to see Nabuco was inspired by your hospitality committee and very well appreciated.

As far as my educational benefits I wish to mention a few. Firstly for the two days institute I attended Sara Emerson's group (viii-1) and for me that was a prime example for a very balanced, wise, controlled, and empathic way of running a group. There were storms which were very elegantly navigated, approached. There was full participation and every member of the group found his voice (including myself, who had come from Israel and was anxious about the language and culture differences). For me, I found in Sara, a model for group leading and I sure will wish to work with her again.

I enjoyed the Large group meetings, although attended only two of them. I think of LG as a very powerful tool and very much in the right place when it comes to such a big conference with so many people of so many colourful backgrounds and countries.

I had a particularly deep experience in attending the play reading and learning about the use of a stage play to illustrate principles of psychodynamic group therapy (303). I am working with theater people and using drama and play reading in my work so, this was a wonderful opportunity to see it working with the play in choice. I liked the acting, directing, and group involvement at the end. The time given to them was too short but a lot happened and it stayed with me for few days.

I remember also very vividly the workshop on Vicissitudes in an international group run by Maria Van Noort. There I learned how to approach an international or multicultural group of people to work together in order to find some common interests and desire. The meeting also had an interesting theoretical part about multicultural societies and special needs, and was very well balanced with the experiential part.

It has been very useful for me to end the conference with a whole day workshop on mindfulness (73a) given by two very experienced leaders (Gaea Logan&Siddharth Advin Shah) I had time for reflection, meditation, and

combining it with group work. As I am doing both regularly, it certainly gave some ideas of how to combine the two and help my group be at ease with each other in a very peaceful and yet productive way.

I thank you and the committee for enabling me to get this special scholarship. I appreciate it and thank you from the depth of my heart! (I guess here I am short of proper English thanking words, as a result of a language barrier) Accept my thanks and I shall always remember this wonderful and educational week I had in San Diego.

Thank you again and I hope I will be able to come all this way to attend your next meeting in NY.

It was a privilege to attend the San Diego AGPA conference this year. For the first time, I was able to attend the Institute, where I attended an entry-level group. Because I am not in a clinical program, I do not have process groups available to me in my Business PsyD program. I was blown away by the depth of the relationships I was able to build with my group members in such a short time. I know that the people in my first process group will be warm faces at future conferences. In the end, we all exchanged contact information and have been keeping in touch through social networking. As a diverse group of students, we have a wealth of student experiences to share.

On the first day of the conference I attended a tremendous session on Conversations about Organizational Leadership where I met Ella Counselman. I was very excited to hear of her experiences in the business world and receive guidance about my career moving forward. We were even able to dine together through the Women's SIG Dinner. Although it was a small group, I thoroughly enjoyed being able to make connections with fellow women in the SIG group. It was nice to recognize a few more warm faces as I moved from session to session.

As I mentioned in my scholarship essay, the business world has much to learn from AGPA. I have already received a commitment from one of my consulting partners to attend next year's conference. He specifically focuses on executive coaching, and I know he could benefit from the knowledge shared at AGPA. Just sharing a few minutes of my experiences sold him on the idea!

Lastly, I wanted to thank the scholarship committee for providing financial assistance so that I can attend. It has been a rough year for many, and your help was greatly appreciated. I know that once I finish school, I will want to help other students have the opportunity to attend AGPA conference.

Sincerely,

It was a great chance and opportunity for me to attend AGPA Annual Meeting in San Diego. Let me express special gratitude to GPF for providing me with the possibility to attend Annual Meeting for the seventh time. This meeting had special importance to me because I have been elected a fellow. The suggestion to apply for fellowship I considered symbolically as a trial, as a chance to proof my work in this field from outside . It was great honor to me to be fellow of AGPA. I would like to express my deep gratitude to the members of fellowship committee for recommendation and to the boards of directors for approval. It nurtures my professional self and I feel support from trustworthy competent organization like AGPA is.

I also want to express my special gratitude to Dr. Sue Jensen, who helped me financially to come to the conference. I enjoyed the conference and I gained a lot from it. The conference fulfilled all my expectations and I am happy to receive the rich experiences. The impact of such a full, creative and enjoyable experience will be shared with my Georgian colleagues . It was a great pleasure for me to be a participant of as many workshops as it was possible. Especially interesting was the Yvonne M. Agazarian's a system-centered approach to groups, where I learned how to discriminate and integrate differences through functional sub grouping;

how the subgroups form around the similarities and separate around the differences. I grasped to distinguish driving forces from restraining ones and how to listen to the system.

P.J. Flores SI-2 on addiction as an attachment disorder, the all day workshop on states of intersubjectivity led by R. Billow and J. F. Hiatt on transpersonal group psychotherapy struck me too. The workshop were creative and gave an opportunity to learn more. I had feeling of belongingness to the big professional family, where the creative spirit of collaboration and interdependence reigned. To have such annual meetings, is great privilege for psychotherapists, psychiatrists, clinical psychologists and counsellors ,where one can fulfil his/her professional needs. These impressions will last me the whole year by all means.

I was fortunate to be awarded a full-tuition scholarship to attend this year's annual meeting in San Diego and am writing to thank you both for your commitment to training and your generosity in making the training experience accessible for me.

The week was unlike anything I had ever experienced before; it felt wonderful to be in the presence of so many talented therapists, and I felt honored to be able to learn from them both personally and professionally. I especially enjoyed the two institutes I attended- the special institute led by Stu Aledort and the 2-day institute led by Jeff Hudson. Both were educational and stimulating in different ways, and I left with a greater understanding of myself and my own emotional process as well as many techniques to implement in my own group work. In addition, I felt very connected to the other members of my group, and am happy to stay that all of us have stayed closely in touch!

Since returning from AGPA, I have found myself instinctively leading group differently; I am more engaged, more attuned, less self-conscious, and better able to see interpersonal process, comment on it, and facilitate it. The depth of the group that I co-lead has increased exponentially in the month since the conference, and I am so thankful- as a person and a therapist- for the things I have learned. I look forward to continuing this learning process in the coming years, and recently applied for and received a scholarship to attend a weekend training at the Center for Group Studies in NYC. I am excited to continue the growth that began at AGPA there, and am already eagerly awaiting next year's conference in NY!

With deep gratitude,

I had a very pleasant welcome into AGPA and AGPA conferences, thanks to the generous scholarship I received. While I was not able to attend many of the sessions, due to my busy academic calendar, those sessions that I did attend (e.g., about addictions/attachment and psychoeducational groups) exceeded my expectations; that is, what I learned applied directly to better understanding and working with current and future clients. Further, at the final luncheon, I had the pleasure of sitting at a table with many friendly, interesting, and inspiring therapists, including one from New York City, and one from Canada, and I look forward to staying in touch with them, and to seeing them at another AGPA conference! Thank you so much AGPA for this wonderful and memorable opportunity.

Kind Regards,

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to join AGPA and attend this year's Annual Meeting. I found all aspects of the meeting from participating in an Institute to the final luncheon valuable.

I attended an entry-level two day Institute with Dr. Michael Frank. My participation in a process group has informed my own facilitation of a process-oriented Interpersonal Relationship Group at my pre-doctoral internship at University of Southern California, Counseling Services. I have observed myself, and received feedback from my live supervision and co-facilitator, that I am taking more risks and appear more confident since participating in Institute. Also, through the two-day institute I have met wonderful people with whom I have maintained contact and exchanged professional and personal encouragement.

Among the events I attended both East-Meets-West and Therapeutic Self-Disclosure and Heterosexism stand out in my mind. I was encouraged by East-Meets-West to continue my education in mindfulness and to conceptualize working in the here-and-now in group as a practice in mindfulness. As a lesbian-identified psychotherapist, TSD & Heterosexism was a particularly thought-provoking. The discussion the group engaged truly felt like an honest exploration of a dilemma without a clear-cut answer. It was comforting recognize, however, that I share this on-going struggle with other professionals. This comfort was particularly poignant for me as a young professional nearing graduation.

As a young professional, it was an honor to be able to present at an open session. Being able to participate in Dialogue and Mutual Respect: The Interplay of Religious and LGBTQ Issues in Group as a panelist was a unique opportunity to both present my dissertation research for the first time in a professional setting and to network with other clinicians with similar interests and concerns. I felt encouraged as a new member and a new professional to pursue my clinical interest not only within the therapy room, but also within my research and outreach efforts.

Overall, I felt warmly welcomed into the AGPA community. I felt at home attending SIGLBGT meetings and as though I found a family within a family. The theme of this year's meeting was how group is like summer camp, and as I fondly remember my own summer camp memories, this experience ended with promises to keep in touch and to see each other next year. So far I have kept the promises to keep in contact with many colleagues I have met and I intend to see them all next year.

Best regards,

It is with much appreciation that I write this letter of thanks and gratitude. I was awarded a full scholarship to attend the AGPA conference in San Diego. I would like to highlight some of my experiences for you.

For the first two days I attended an institute group with Dr. Robert Berley. My experience was challenging, educational and insightful. Dr. Berley was an amazing facilitator who was able to reach even some of the most resistant group members. I would highly recommend this experience to others. I came away from this experience with the motivation to continue exploring some of the areas of my life that present a struggle for me.

I was also able to attend many of the workshops and would like to summarize a few of them. One of the workshops that was designed to provide information on the "nice group" seemed to have several drawbacks. The first was the location. The room was too small to accommodate an effective experiential group. The facilitator was helpful and knowledgeable but seemed to struggle in the environment as well.

I attended a workshop on "couples gone wild" which was interesting, funny and informative. Several of the other workshops such as "healing the wounded healer" and a panel on GLBTQ issues were refreshing and engaging.

Attending AGPA with several of my colleagues helped deepen our bond as professionals that work together as well as strengthening our friendship. I absolutely love the closeness that we feel with each other when we return

home. I feel that as each year passes my attendance at AGPA is like reuniting with an old group of friends. The community is so warm and inviting that I often tell other professionals that they *need* to attend.

Thank you again for this enriching opportunity. I look forward to New York in 2011.

Sincerely,

As usual, I had a wonderful experience at AGPA and cannot express how grateful I am for the scholarship. It is hard to summarize all I learned as there was so much; most important is the sense of rejuvenation I experience every year. I look forward to getting back to my groups and experimenting with new ideas and techniques I learn at the conference. I completed my two year Institute. I think what I took away was more understanding of the ways people thwart intimacy in their lives and in group. I've been paying closer attention to that process in my groups since my return. I loved Gerri Alpert's seminar on the use of singing in group psychotherapy as I am also a musician and have been experimenting with the use of music in group as well. I also enjoyed the workshop on writing and how to incorporate writing in groups. There was a lot at the conference on mindfulness and neurobiology which fascinated me and I took a CD home with me to continue the learning. I also enjoyed the workshop on psychodrama and family therapy. I would like it if AGPA brought back the two day Institute on psychodrama--psychodrama is an incredibly powerful technique and I'd like to gain more expertise in that area. Again, I had a wonderful experience. My only criticism was that the hotel was too far away from the city proper and all the nearby restaurants were extremely expensive which added a lot of cost to the conference and was hard for the scholarship recipients to manage. Other than that, it was terrific. Looking forward to New York.

I just read the article, "The Mystery and the Magic of the Group: What Happens Here That Happens Nowhere Else" by Connie Concannon in the *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy* and was delighted to see an acknowledgement of the actual magic of groups that is experienced at the AGPA conference. After my first attendance to the 2009 meeting in Chicago, I was hooked! I felt fortunate to witness and experience exactly what Connie Concannon speaks of – AGPA being one of the richest learning environments in the mental health profession. I was immediately moved by the collective wisdom and diversity of voice that is present at this conference. I appreciate the exposure to so many brilliant approaches to working with groups. I highly value the group process experience, which I believe contributes to nurturing effective group leaders. And now, after attending my second conference to the 2010 meeting in San Diego, I completely embraced the joy in reconnecting with AGPA scholars and members that are no longer new faces. The scholarship gift has allowed me to participate in the invaluable experience of AGPA. I have a deep appreciation and passion for working with groups and being a part of groups (community). I feel tremendously grateful for all of the individuals that donate to this fund in order for students and new professionals to attend. It is truly moving—the dedication and heart that is displayed by the members of this association. I thank the donors, the scholarship committee, and the entire AGPA for giving me this opportunity to become a part of this family and community. I would also like to thank those that have contributed to making AGPA sustainable and continually flourishing. I intend to be a part of this beauty, magic, and wisdom for a very long time. AGPA meetings have been inspiring and rich with allowing the emergence of something fresh.

Much Gratitude,

I attended the AGPA conference for the first time this year. Although I was only able to make it for one day, I learned a lot. I was really impressed with how actively audience members participated in discussions during or after sessions. I felt like many psychologists there were passionate about group work, and the focus on clinical application really made the conference worthwhile. (Most conferences I have attended have been very academic and theoretical--interesting, but not as useful for clinical practice.) I haven't had the chance so far to lead groups, and being at the conference made me prioritize opportunities for group work as I apply to training sites for next year.

I was part of a panel presentation, so I wanted to extend my thanks for the scholarship as a graduate student who struggles to get to conferences at all because of financial reasons. I learned so much through researching and

working with a team on our presentation, but often I have to pass up opportunities like this because I cannot afford airfare/hotel/conference fees. It really makes a huge difference when organizations are willing to support students financially!

Thank you,

I would first like to acknowledge my deep felt gratitude for being awarded an AGPA scholarship which enabled me to attend this year's conference. This scholarship allowed me to remain connected to your organization, an organization that continuously motivates, inspires and pushes me to expand my mind in this field while better serving the veterans I work with.

I started off my conference by attending a two day institute entitled: *vulnerability, Sustainability and Healing*. The process throughout those two days was and still is, in many ways indescribable to me. What is so profound about this conference is that personal change is felt and experienced, not simply spoken about. I think this is why it leaves such a deep mark. My own personal fears and vulnerabilities were exposed in this group and held in a way that changed their intensity. I was profoundly moved by others' similar experiences and learned immensely from my group leader, particularly around the capacity of empathy to mediate the experience of shame. This has already helped me profoundly in responding to clients' experiences of shame in groups.

The rest of the conference for me was a mix of experiential and more didactic presentations. I attended presentations related to veteran's care, given my work in a VA Hospital, and was able to take this information and directly apply it to my own organization. I also attended workshops that related to attachment, hunger, metaphor in groups and schema therapy. These topics overlapped well with my own narrative approach to therapy and helped me in envisioning new ways of deepening stories (and, therefore, connections) within groups.

Perhaps most profound for me of all of these experiences, however, were the connections I made that brought life to these topics. I re-connected with members of my first institute as if days had passed, rather than years. I also made new friendships and connections with people I know I will see again next year, resulting in the same warmth and joy in feeling that I belong. I also became hooked into the Women's Special Interest Group and sat in awe of many amazing women in the field.

What do I take from this experience? I can point to the new skills and knowledge that I've taken with me or to the connections that were made or to my experience in process, but the truth is that I don't entirely know. There is still some mystery in the "end point" of this conference. Pieces of experiential learning continue to emerge in my personal life and in my clinical work that bring AGPA into the present moment. This conference galvanized a process that I am still watching unfold; I cannot think of a greater outcome than that.

Thank-you again for your generosity to those of us who are new in the field. I hope to continue putting down roots in your nurturing organization.

Warmly,

Words can only inadequately convey the sense of appreciation I feel for having been granted the opportunity to experience some of what the AGPA has to offer. The Special Institute was one from which I took a great deal (including the treasured, "you are a very strong person", uttered by one of the "machers" of the organization), and while I don't agree with all of Flores' perspectives, I was so appreciative of the very meaningful day he provided

for all of us in attendance. I felt that the Institute was well worth my while and that I benefitted greatly from it and facilitated others' benefitting as well.

The Institute I attended was probably the most wonderful one I've attended. I felt, finally, that I was with a therapist who worked in a style most like that which I dream of identifying my own as being, and there was something so healing in that. That Molly was insightful and gentle and trusting of the group process was extraordinary. I don't know that I am as "good" as she (there are flashes, and some groups that I facilitate or lead, which leave me feeling, "yes!, that's it!"), but I know that what worked in the group was great - and, I believe this was so for the other participants. (I don't wish to sound so humble or insecure, as I really feel that I'm quite an able group therapist, but getting the chance to be in the process group for the two days was terrific and very "practice enhancing" ultimately.)

I'm remembering Phyllis Cohen's workshop on why I'm not offering a workshop as potentially transformative. I felt completely confident and competent and perhaps have had changes in my relationship to the organization sufficient enough to make possible my moving forward and seriously contemplating this next step. I accept myself as what a former "boss", who held me in high esteem once called me, a 'moishekepoyer' - one who does things backwards - yet amazingly gets things done... I've always just thought that I marched to my own drummer, and have increasingly been understanding how this has come to pass. This workshop was terrific, and only didn't last long enough. I've continued, in my spare seconds, to think about moving into more of a leadership role.

Maria's afternoon workshop was not to have been missed, and I found myself brought to tears by the loveliness of our recognition that there is the universality that there is. I took from the workshop a tremendous amount, including a new friend (literally) who brought me to new place (literally). I loved the workshop and don't think that I'll ever forget it.

Although the workshops in which I participated on Friday didn't feel as superb as those of the previous day, I took from each something that was profound and meaningful. I was grateful for both, though I can't remember what the "message" for me from the afternoon's workshop was, I recall having had the feeling of certainly from the morning's that "I am loveable exactly as I am" - and in the moment that had a great deal of meaning.

Saturday's work all day was great, although I find myself struggling to remember just what it was that left me feeling I took much from that, too.

The sum of the experience can only be called great. "A+" seems to have been what I felt the conference would garner. The social opportunities and the chances to have moments to myself were incomparable. I love (not just like) many of those with whom I got to spend time. I think of myself as still a teenager in many ways, coming into my own in a very slow and deliberate way.

That I am parenting four newly minted teens and simultaneously looking at my fifty-fifth birthday leaves me with a bit of a Benjamin Button feeling. I shall, when I've the confidence to do it properly, return to the organization much of what I feel I owe. I've made that commitment. In the meanwhile, I'd like to offer myself as a volunteer for next year's conference, in NYC.

I'm hoping that the work I'm doing will enable me to not need to ask to be a scholarship recipient next year. My husband is about to begin his sixteenth month of unemployment (there have been some intervals with some little bit of consulting, but I believe that we are earning significantly below the poverty level). Our health insurance premiums are well over twenty five thousand dollars a year. The generous loan (made nearly nine years ago) of my half of my parents' home to my younger brother (who was traumatized by 9.11 - having worked as a consultant in the financial district and the towers for a quarter of a century) has yet to be repaid - I need him to be strong, and to heal and to make again, a success of himself, for himself. His health was significantly compromised from birth and I have been caretaking for fifty-two years... Complicating pieces, I know, and not really your business, but I wish for understanding of some of my challenges. I'm a menopausal woman with quadruplets who each have special needs. One of my daughters is developmentally delayed and the other three children are intellectually gifted, meaning that they, too, are atypically developing. Sometimes, I feel that the challenges I face are impossible, for there's little support externally, but I soldier on.

The scholarship from AGPA makes me feel that I can do what I need. The organization has been mine since just after I lost my beloved father. I've suffered the losses of my firstborn and my mother since joining, and sometimes feel I've difficulty getting securely on my feet, but know that the support of AGPA is validating and life-sustaining.

In my dreams, I'll have increasingly become that me that I'm meant to be, that I may shoulder the burdens I have and dance forward as I'm meant to. I don't know whether you can all understand how incredibly much your vote of confidence in me has meant. Your granting of the scholarship has really touched not only me, but my children, and all of the patients with whom I'm working. I always look strong, and seem to be doing it effortlessly ("San, I don't know how you do it"), but I'm paddling furiously, as I've let you see, by showing you some of what's going on below the surface.

Thank you, thank you, thank you. As I began, words are not sufficient, and I shall be forever in your debt, but I aspire to repay in the most significant of ways. I am at your service, and filled with gratitude.

Sincerely,

as a new AGPA member and recent scholarship recipient, it is my pleasure and honour to write this letter of thanks to you for the opportunity to go to San Diego and to attend one of the best professional conferences of my career as therapist and clinical social worker in British Columbia, Canada.

The conference afforded me the great privilege to partake in an outstanding, experiential learning during my 2 day institute with Robert Schulte. It was equally a tremendous personal growth experience. I enjoyed the social and professional connections I have made. In fact, I have already heard from one of my institute members asking if I plan to go to New York next year! I deeply enjoyed listening to fabulous speakers that spoke about interpersonal neurobiology, mindfulness practice, mirroring, attachment, the importance and need for twinship and allies in groups, dyadic couples counselling by Gloria Khan who I feel has wonderful, soothing energy was extremely knowledgeable, skillful and interesting. In terms of the modern psychoanalytic experience in groups, Gloria (I hope this is her name; we were in the basement on the last day) was also incredibly skilled. I appreciated her tone of voice which helped me to process things at a deeper level. Gloria's immediacy skills were excellent and I loved her sense of humour. I really enjoyed the systems-centered training that Yvonne demonstrated with a group of individuals of about eight. Yvonne demonstrated a brief SCT exercise which made a huge impact on me. "Anyone else?" I'm certain many would echo similar sentiments. The other members of the panel were quite intriguing as well and I appreciated doing the mindfulness activity.

I really enjoyed the workshop healing for the wounded healer. The music at the outset and at the close was a wonderful way to reregulate my system and help restore me to a sense of groundedness after partaking in group process work. Both facilitators Deborah Schwartz, cofacilitator, Marcia did a fantastic job at facilitating an extremely rich group experience! I must say thank you to all the professionals in the field that agreed to partake in experiential activities as volunteers as their roles equally contributed to my learning and positive experience. This experience was quite timely for me in that I am actively engaged in the process of rigorous research activities and much of what I learned has further enriched my work and made me curious about exploring other areas of research that I hadn't considered prior to the AGPA conference. The social aspects were wonderfully planned, particularly the dance and the lunch - what a great way to end but sad to say good-bye~

with many thanks and appreciation

I'm so appreciated that GPF gave me the International Scholarship to support me to attend the AGPA annual meeting in San Diego, which was such an unforgettable memory in my life. I felt the very warm welcome atmosphere from AGPA during the meeting time. In my impression, AGPA just like a huge family, in which I was nourished.

During the time, I took the two days' Process Group Experience Section. Through the PGE, I not only personally experienced the group members' experience, but also learned from the group leader how to facilitate the group process and to deal with various important group moments. It expanded my skills in conducting group therapy. Besides, the PGE provided me an opportunity to communicate and connect with other participants, and reflect each other. It facilitated me to explore myself more and understand myself better. This experience group also was like a container to hold my anxiety to individualize, my shame to be weak, my thirty to improve, and so on. It was really a rare experience.

After the PGE sections, I attended the plenary addresses, several open sessions and some workshops. The open sessions named 'Conversations About Organizational Leadership', 'Current Research in Group Psychotherapy' and 'Therapeutic Impact of Therapist Self-Disclosure in Groups' and the workshop named 'Father and Daughter: The Promise of Intimacy' impressed me most. It was a good opportunity for me to know the overview of the group therapy, and to observe the different kinds of and different theoretical orientated group therapies, which enriched my knowledge on group therapy. I really learned many wonderful formats of workshop and open session. Since I hope I could utilize what I learned in AGPA to influence more Chinese psychotherapists, I intended to hold workshops on group therapy in the national conference on psychotherapy in China in this October. So this time I also paid close attention to how the chairs conducted the workshops and stirred the discussions.

All of my experiences in AGPA annual meeting will contribute to my profession, either as a group psychotherapist or as a psychotherapy trainer. I am going to do more work on group psychotherapy after I came back from the annual meeting. Firstly, I will continue to study theories on group therapy. Secondly, I will go on to conduct psychodynamic group therapy and to be supervised by Dr. Kauff. Thirdly, I will train more trainees from the national areas in my department. Fourthly, I hope I can help to spread psychodynamic group therapy in China.

All the best,

Thank you for this reminder. I'm happy to give a summary of my experience, especially because it was so positive. I attended the first three days of the conference: the Special Institute with Stewart Altedort and the intermediate process group. I was fully engaged by Stewart Altedort's didactic presentation-- I found myself furiously taking notes, which I haven't done in a long time. I volunteered to be a part of the process group, which made it that much more engaging (understatement). I find his model of working with groups very interesting and I look forward to integrating some of his techniques into my work.

I'm sorry that I don't remember the name of my process group leader-- it was Barbara someone and she was a substitute for the original leader who couldn't make it. I had a very positive experience in the process group, mostly because the other members were so open to and interested in having a meaningful and intimate experience. I felt connected to them by the end of the two days, and felt supported by the group entity.

I really appreciated the overall feel of the conference-- inspiring, friendly and encouraging. I enjoyed Walter Stone's opening remarks and was happy to meet other therapists from all over who were willing to make professional and personal connections. While I certainly was exhausted by Wednesday, I found myself feeling wistful that I was leaving "early"-- it's a special event to be a part of and I look forward to attending next year if I'm able to afford the experience. I'm grateful that the scholarship award afforded me this opportunity-- thank you!!

Sincerely,

The scholarship to attend the conference in San Diego was a career enhancing and life changing experience for me. After twenty years of facilitating workshops for business and military, I finally earned my MS in Rehabilitation Counseling. The conference occurred the week I earned my degree, so this was a nice celebratory milestone for me.

- 1) The opportunity to spend a week amongst seasoned professionals who also spend their days working in groups was in itself an affirming experience. To know that other professionals do this for a living was validating and reassuring. In addition, this ability to gather during meals and informal "down" time gave me the ability to absorb the culture, and to see the faces of my associates from across the country.
- 2) The major focus of my degree studies were in face to face counseling, whereas I prefer, and I am very good at, facilitating therapeutic groups. This conference gave me the opportunity

to immerse myself in the group experience, and to learn about the diversity of career titles and people who work in this field.

- 3) I was able to attend the plenary, the pre-conference institute for those who care for military personnel, as well as the Stage Play experience. In addition, I was able to attend the Diversity SIG, and I was also able to casually mingle with many great people. Several significant professional alliances were formed, as well as some new friendships that I know will endure. My work schedule prevented me from attending more events.
- 4) The institute gave me the opportunity to stop being the facilitator, and just allow myself to be a consumer, a part of a group. I was able to allow myself to internalize the experience of being part of the group, and to process those feelings and reactions. It was difficult to let go, to not feel responsible for the proper guidance and steering of the group's mood, direction or timing, but it was also liberating. During the course of the group, I experienced emotions that were new to me, and I found myself reacting to the group process in surprising and illuminating ways. It was truly educational and actually worked as a type of therapy for me, for I was able to process a number of my own issues. In addition, I was able to observe the non-verbal types of cues presented by all other participants, and I have tried to internalize and remember these signs. Could I tell who was resistant? Could I tell who was bored? As a facilitator, these are things I try to assess all of the time. The ability to do this while also being a participant is quite different, for I first have to set aside my own personal reactions in order to evaluate the entire group movement and overall mood. I was able to observe, from within the circle, who was making eye contact and who was sitting stiffly or who was sitting in a relaxed and comfortable manner. I am sorry that there was only one active duty military in the group, for that was the additional viewpoint I was hoping for. However, the ability to interact and share my experiences with others who have done and are doing the same work was very validating for me.
- 5) By the time I entered the plenary session, it was quite crowded. However, this, too proved educational for me. It was enlightening and encouraging to see so many people gathered together in one place who do this for a living!
- 6) Everybody who I interacted with, whether at the first time attendee breakfast or just standing in the halls between sessions, was friendly and positive. What a great group of people I am now involved with! In addition, having reasonable sandwiches available for purchase in the halls was also a nice touch, since the hotel's facility was shockingly expensive!
- 7) My only constructive suggestions would be to have somebody be there to greet people on a personal basis: the staff and volunteers were friendly and worked hard, but I did feel like a visitor, even though I live quite close to the meeting site! In addition, I live in San Diego, and have yet to be contacted by any representatives of the local group: I don't even know where to call! I would have been happy to act as a host, and to answer questions about where to go or what to do in the area, but I have not, to date, been contacted!

So, I would once again like to thank you very much for the wonderful honor of being a scholarship recipient. I hope by next year I will be in a position to be able to contribute to the scholarship fund in order to pay it forward.

Most appreciatively,

I am writing to thank the AGPA for a scholarship and explain the benefits of attendance. I was able to attend the 2 day experiential part of the training. I was greeted warmly by the faculty and given many opportunities to expand my current knowledge and abilities. As a student about to enter the field I am both hopeful and excited about the possibilities in this profession. The clinical integrity and friendliness of the AGPA makes it useful and accessible for those of us who are inexperienced and eager to learn. I plan on attending many more AGPA conferences to come.

I wanted to thank everybody that made possible for me to get a scholarship for this year AGPA's meeting. On this, my second time in the conference, I realized that I want to go every year from now on. The sense of community and the energy at this conference is remarkable and a motivation to start my career as a psychotherapist.

As last year, my favorite part of the conference was the two day institute. I had a great experience in group process and I built wonderful new relationships. I also loved Mc Williams speech and I am planning to quote her on my Masters paper. "We value the new"...she said.."we value brilliance instead of wisdom." She is truly an inspiration! I also attended a Jungian workshop on mandalas which I also enjoyed a lot. I am happy to know that there are people out there that still value symbols, spiritualism and intuition in psychotherapy. The large group process was also very interesting and exciting. It is an opportunity to learn how to navigate confusion with grace.

Thank you again for your support and I hope to see you all next year,

I am writing to express my incredible sense of gratitude for the generous scholarship I received to attend the 2010 AGPA Conference in San Diego, California. And yet, it is feels difficult to find words adequate enough to express just how much the experience has meant to me both as a psychotherapist and more personally as a human being. Since returning from the conference, I have found both my professional and personal life inspired and buoyed by the experiences and connections I made at the Conference. From the emotional power of my Institute to the engaging and stimulating panels & workshops, this year's AGPA conference felt like one of the most fulfilling experiences of my life. Without a doubt, I now consider myself a "lifer" and will look forward all year to being there again in New York.

Sincerely,

I would like to thank AGPA, the scholarship committee, the GPF Board of Directors, the presenters, my mentors and all others who helped me get involved in the momentous opportunity. This year was the first time I attended the annual conference and it exceeded my hopes in every way. I found the instructors, speakers, and group leaders extremely knowledgeable and helpful in many ways. I attended several open sessions and found nearly all of them very enriching and beneficial to my practice. The two-day institute was the most amazing aspect of the work that I participated in. It was helpful as a learning experience as well as a therapeutic one. I found the morning talks extremely interesting, particularly Nancy McWilliams' talk on evidence-based practices. My favorite talk was by Esther Perel, whom I found knowledgeable, warm, engaging and entertaining. The week after the conference I found myself emboldened to try new interventions and take new risks in the groups that I run. I have already become better at my craft due to this learning experience.

I had not anticipated how enjoyable it would be to get to know all of these new people, in deep and meaningful ways. I left the conference with new friends and acquaintances and overall a sense of community that was quite touching. I have "caught the AGPA bug" and am planning on making my attendance in the annual conferences a necessary part of professional development and, equally important, self-care.

I want to express my gratitude to the scholarship committee, the board members, and the donors who have made this possible for myself and the over 100 others who received scholarships. It was truly a great honor to be afforded this experience. I am so happy to have been brought into your circle!

Sincerely,

I am writing this letter to thank you for your generosity in providing me with a scholarship to attend the 2010 AGPA Annual Meeting and Conference. This is my second year receiving the conference fees scholarship and I could not have attended either year without this assistance. You have given me a wonderful gift, both personally and professionally.

This year, I attended the Special Institute with Dr. Flores on Addiction as an Attachment Disorder. I loved watching an experienced therapist do a demo group and interweave his theories and research into the group. The themes of interpersonal neurobiology and the healing within relationships (both therapeutic relationship and others) was a strong validation of the power of group work.

For my 2-day Institute, I had the life-changing experience of being a member in Yvonne Agazarian's SCT Institute. Wow. I am still processing and digesting the profound personal experiences I had in that group as a member and the wealth of knowledge I learned as a therapist from Yvonne. I came out of the group raw, excited, drained, enthusiastic and overcome all at the same time. I keep saying that it was like 10 years of therapy in 2 days. I am still enjoying new insights and personal change as a result of the work I did in that group. I am also utilizing several aspects of Yvonne's SCT theories into my group work as a therapist.

During my last two days in San Diego, I went to workshops on meditation, the "nice group," and an open session on mindfulness and SCT, among others. In addition, I attended the Special Lecture by Esther Perel, which was phenomenal! I also attended the Women's SIG and networked with the IGPA group that is closer to home for me. The theme I came away with for the 5 days I spent at AGPA this year was definitely the importance of relationships on every level for humans. Certainly, from an interpersonal neurobiology standpoint as well as support, healing, growth and health, we all need relationships. I could see the bigger picture of why group therapy is so effective and healing.

Due to my amazing first experience at AGPA in Chicago in 2009, I started my first interpersonal process group in September of 2009. This group has grown and I am ready to start a second group in the coming months within my private practice. The women in my practice and group are mostly traumatized by sexual/domestic violence, alcoholism and neglect. I have seen the group members transform in the context of group. I came home from San Diego energized and bursting with new information and skills to lead an even more effective group. Perhaps most importantly, I experienced profound change within myself at the AGPA Meeting in 2010. There is no greater gift. I cannot begin to thank you enough for your generosity in providing the scholarship for my attendance. I hope you are assured that your scholarship went to good use for me, both personally and professionally. Thank you so much.

With deep gratitude,

I wish to thank you for your generous scholarship support, which allowed me to attend the 2010 AGPA conference in San Diego last month. This is the second time I have attended the conference, and I had an even more positive experience than I did the prior year in Chicago.

My institute was excellent. Run by Jeff Hudson, whom I know slightly from other workshops, it was a wonderful learning experience both in terms of group therapy leadership techniques as well as personal understanding of my own roles and interactions in groups. I experimented with a new role, and was fairly satisfied with the outcome: specifically I let myself be much less active than I usually am in groups. I discovered that Jeff's style and, by extension, the interactions among other members allowed me to challenge myself to move more comfortably from being quiet to expressing myself with more active participation. What I observed and experienced of Jeff's interactions with institute members has helped me to be more open to encouraging and supporting a range of emotions as a leader in my own groups.

Other notable experiences included Gail Brown's workshop "Use the Power of the Moment to Understand the Past" and Robin Good's workshop on "Knowing and Being Known." Both of these workshops enhanced what I learned from Jeff's institute, as all of these leaders ascribe to contemporary psychoanalytic group theory and techniques. After having attended these particular groups, I am considering further training at the Center for Group Psychotherapy in New York, perhaps in a year or two. My exposure to these group leaders was inspiring, and helped me to envision building on my own knowledge with future training.

I was also able to network. I met wonderful and interesting people at the Groups in Private Practice SIG meeting, my fellow institute members and I are still e-mailing each other and hope to see each other in New York next year, and I met other people in training at the CGP who encouraged me to contact them about their experience with that program. In addition, the new member/scholarship breakfast provided information about AGPA's CGP certification process; this is another area I'd like to pursue.

The AGPA conference experience increased my confidence that I can move ahead to become more expert as a group therapist, despite the fact that I have begun this career later in my life. I enjoyed very much feeling more a part of this group and slightly less of a "newbie," and I look forward to solidifying my friendships, professional contacts, and knowledge base in future years attending the conference.

Thanks again for providing me with the means to take advantage of this wonderful opportunity.

I see the long white stretch of screen beneath that line and I wonder, 'how can I ever explain my experience in words, in writing, here?' I am tempted to keep things 'here and now' - to relay my direct process with this page and my experience of it. I want to give 100 percent of myself; I want to take risks. I want to collapse in a sleepless, swirling bed at the end of the day, awash with my own feelings, thoughts, and wakeful dreams. I had such a dream the night after my first day of institute. I was in a place between sleep - and yet I dreamed this magnificent dream. I moved through the pains of my life and drifted into the pains of those before me. I cried for my mother, my father, my grandparents. I felt the pain of my heritage funneled like a tornado onto my back, drilling into my spine, into my soul. I felt the pain of this and yet I felt I was meant to contain it. I felt I had a purpose - that each of my forebears had given me a bit of themselves so that we could all communally arrive at this moment. I felt my body whipped in the wind, and I felt my feet firmly, securely planted in the ground. I felt the earth. I felt the water beneath the earth. I felt this energy erupting within me, out of me, onto my skin, into the wind. I felt strong. I felt proud. I felt connected to myself, to my history, to the world. I felt complete. And beautiful. And then I had to get up to go back for more...

Is this what happens at the AGPA?

Good lord. I'll have to train for next year. Perhaps this regimen would include 6 months of silent retreat in some severe mountain-top monastery somewhere. There, I can flex and build my soul - improve my endurance. This year, the first three days of institute were all that I could bear. I arrived in my workshops on Thursday like a shell. I felt like some kind of survivor, waiting at a barbed fence, losing hope that someone would actually free me from this raw experience. I put one foot in front of the other. I admit, I skipped a workshop to simply sit on the grass by the harbor, looking nowhere, hearing only birds.

Gratitude is an emotion I actually came into contact with during my institute, along with fear, shame, pain, love, tenderness and anger. I felt gratitude for my group - for allowing this experience to happen, for building this experience with me. I felt gratitude for my leader for somehow in his presence/non-presence - for holding and molding our potential base. I felt gratitude for myself for coming and for taking risks with myself. And finally, I felt gratitude for the AGPA, for the community, and for the scholarship committee for giving me this opportunity with myself. So, thank you. Thank you. Thank you. My gratitude wells now and I feel weepy - perhaps I am still raw. I feel I could sleep for a month. I challenge an Olympian to this feat.

But as this experience comes to a close - as I am forced to return to my life, my daily worries, my inbox - I still take so much with me. As I finish my training and continue to mold what kind of practitioner, what kind of therapist, I want to be, I hold group close - for its power and for its clear efficacy. I have known for years that I am a therapist - but now I feel sure that I have a group therapist within me as well. She has been awoken. She has power and beauty. She has a lifetime to share this discovery, like manna, like sunlight, in groups and to groups in the future.

She sets out. She thanks you all.

I wanted to write and give say a big Thank You for providing the funding via the Hochberg Scholarship for me to attend and participate in the AGPA conference. I came home inspired and full.

I was so impressed with the way the conference is organized, the thoughtfulness of all the people invloved, the staff, and the overall feeling of being part of a community.

I would like to find some way to say thank you but am not sure what the best way might be. I do have a few ideas of how to keep the organization growing. If there is anyone that I could speak to about this, they are more than welcome to contact me.

I am looking forward to next year.

Warm regards,

I am writing to express my gratitude for the generous Scholarship to attend this year's AGPA Conference. This has been a truly enlightening experience for me on many levels, and the skills I have learned and the people I have met will be a valuable part of my future career in group psychotherapy. Again, thank you for your consideration and I look forward to more group work in the future.

Sincerely,

It is with warm regards that I send this thank you letter. I very much appreciate the scholarship you provided for me to attend the AGPA conference in San Diego this year. The conference proved to be personally and professionally valuable and enjoyable.

I started the week with Dr. Philip Flores' "Addiction as an Attachment Disorder" Special Institute. This institute was very informative and reaffirming for the work I do as a dual diagnosis counselor . I brought the handouts and information back to my colleagues and presented during our LPC supervision group, which I believe was helpful for them, as well.

The two-day process group I was involved in not only polished my understanding of skilled group leadership, it helped me resolve personal issues that will certainly be helpful to me and my clients. I continue to stay in touch with those I met in this process group and look forward to professional camaraderie with them for the coming years in AGPA.

I attended many workshops over the next few days, including workshops on finding one's leadership style, scapegoating, erotic countertransference, and therapist self-disclosure. I ended up taking something unique from each of these groups which will help in my work with clients. I especially enjoyed the large group sessions I attended. I find that now, when I co-facilitate a weekly conflict resolution class for the men's residential clientele of 55, I have more confidence and understanding in my role as a leader.

I could not have attended the conference without your assistance. Again, I thank you warmly and look forward to future conferences with AGPA.

Sincerely,

I am sitting here trying to figure out a way to convey my feelings without sounding too dramatic, but I honestly don't know of another way to say that my experience at the conference has had a life altering impact on me personally and professionally . I made a promise to myself that I was going to take risks and get out of my comfort zone, and I couldn't find a safer, loving environment to have accomplished this.

My two day institute brought me an eye-opening dose of self-knowledge. I had the privilege of sitting in a room with people from all parts of the world who helped me to expandmy heart and mind and challenged my point of view. This was possible because we were able to make contact on a human level beyond the clichés that have been formed through generalizations and assumptions.

I attended the open session: To speak or not to speak: Is that the question?: A trans-Atlantic dialogue about the therapist in the group. I Watched two incredibly talented, insightful therapists, John Schlapobersky and Melyn Leszcz facilitate a model group in an effortless , poetic way to a state of group cohesion. It was interesting to watch two therapists from different theoretical backgrounds,achieve the same depth within the group with the same amount of intelligence and heart.

I found the attendees that I met to be accessible, open and enthusiastic. Before arriving I was worried that I would feel isolated because I did not know many people there. I ended up feeling glad that I didn't know many people because it left me open to meeting the most wonderful therapists from all over the world. I arrived home with an excitement about group and a first-hand experience of the impact and effectiveness that it can have. I am committed to continue my training and my practice of group therapy. I cannot thank you enough for this wonderful experience and opportunity.

Sincerely,

I want to thank you for all your help with the conference. I had wonderful time. There were some great groups, met some interesting people doing really terrific work, and am very happy I attended. For all your efforts before and during the conference I send a heart felt thank you.

Look forward to next year!

All the best,

I want to take only a moment of your time to thank you for facilitating my attendance at the conference via scholarship funding. Words do not capture how exceptionally professional and informative the presenters were. I have a wealth of information I am eager to bring back and implement with my child and family groups. You will never know how important a gift this is has been for me and the population I serve. If ever you should find yourself in San Diego, please let me know. I would love to be your tour guide. Best regards,

I am writing to thank the scholarship contributors for their generosity. I was a scholarship recipient during this most recent AGPA Annual Meeting. It was my first time attending the conference and I had a truly wonderful experience. As a second year student, just about to begin my internship, I found this experience particularly rewarding. I felt a great swell of confidence in myself as a developing therapist having been able to contribute thoughtfully, and meaningfully at this year's conference alongside those who have been in the field for any number of decades. I have only lead a small number of groups during my training so far, and again, I feel vastly more confident and equipped in my ability to both be a productive member of a group, as well as a competent leader.

I particularly enjoyed the Special Institute with Anne McEneaney about Body Attunement in groups as well as the all-day workshop on Saturday about Emotionally-Focused Couples Therapy. I look forward to integrating these new understandings and frameworks into my role as an intern and therapist.

Thank you so very much for the opportunity to participate in the 2010 AGPA Annual Meeting. It was truly a delight, and I look forward to attending many more times in the future!

Sincerely,

I want to thank you, the conference scholarship committee, and AGPA for allowing me to become the person I am today, this day, after five days of conference. I'd like to share a little bit about whom I've become as a result of this immense experience and how I would like to proceed from here.

I have found kindred spirits and companionate souls who have generously showed me different parts of myself, and have invited and welcomed me to see myself in them. I have experienced speaking on my own behalf with the understanding that my words may touch upon the experiences of some people and may at the same time alienate other people. I have experienced the deep, overwhelming longing to be connected to and to go deeper with others, the gulf that seemed impossible to cross and yet so easily crossed by simply sharing how I am in the moment. I have become more compassionate toward my tears, knowing that these tears hold the deep sorrow of a longing that is greater than me, that is felt by other people as well. I have felt the deep sorrow of a longing that is greater than me, that is felt by other people as well. I have felt the sense of crushing helplessness in the face of fear and in the inevitability of death and time's passage. I have experienced judgment and being put off by someone's actions and hating both them and myself for feeling torn from each other. I have experienced the intention to give space to all of me so that I should make space in me for all of you.

The most important has been the realization of hope, that I could be forward thinking and keeping in mind the reality that I want to experience. This includes what I want to see in the world and the belief that it is good to dream big, to be a voice in "Yes, we can." I see that this "we" must include me, and I want to give my voice and trust in the process of becoming known, trust in the fact that my voice matters, that what I have to say will contain an element of truth, that I could add to the dialogue, and that in my participation and inevitable failings, I could co-create with other people a more compassionate and giving world.

From this place of post-conference elation, I would like to become more involved in group work and in AGPA in order to deepen my appreciation of the process and to bring this way of being as a possibility to more people. I am currently a third year in a six-year PhD program at Fordham University in NYC. I know that next year's conference in NYC is still a year away, but please let me know about how I may be of help and about other opportunities to be more involved.

Please share my gratitude with AGPA, and thank you again!

Best Regards,

I am writing this letter to express my deepest gratitude for your generosity in awarding me the Josephine M. Cunningham Tervalon Scholarship. Without it, I would not have been able to attend my first AGPA conference held in beautiful San Diego.

Although I had heard wonderful things about AGPA's Annual Conference, being an experiential learner, I had no idea just how transformative an experience it would be until I actually attended. I had the pleasure of being a part of Stuart Aledort's special institute; being that I am not psychoanalytically oriented, I began the day with some trepidation as to how useful it would be. After a short while, my apprehension dissipated. In short, I felt like I was witnessing a master work, despite our theoretical differences. Truly life-altering!

The next 2 days, I had the pleasure (and pain, because I allowed myself to fully immerse in the group process which, as we know, entails the full spectrum of emotions) of being part of Bill Roller & Vivian Nelson's institute on co-leadership. This was an exhausting and wonderful experience, one that I hope to replicate if I am able to attend future AGPA conferences.

The 3 days of conference workshops and activities inspired me as well. I was able to meet other therapists who work in counseling centers along with those who are interested in diversity, by attending the SIG meetings. Additionally, my roommate introduced me to Tony Sheppard, who has encouraged and inspired me to consider pursuing the CGP. I plan on compiling all my hours of training and experience (a daunting task, given that I did my master's level work in a different state from my doctoral work) and then contacting him for further guidance and mentoring.

To sum up, attending AGPA has made me feel like I have found a home. I look forward to continued involvement and, again, thank you so much for affording me this opportunity.

Warmly,

I am writing to express my sincerest appreciation and thanks for the scholarship I received to attend the 2010 AGPA annual conference in San Diego. I am a graduate student at Naropa University, and without this scholarship, I would not have been able to attend the conference.

This event was by far the highlight of my year, and I returned to my program rejuvenated and excited to share my experiences with my classmates. The two day institute was by far my favorite event; I learned about how I interact

with a group of new people, and observed the facilitator skillfully help twelve strangers form into a cohesive group. I took away skills that pertain not only participating in groups, but also to leading them. I also appreciated the workshops that I attended: I experienced the differences between all-male or all-female groups versus mixed groups, I learned about how to use groups to work with returning veterans, and lived through the chaos and confusion of the large group. Throughout, I made connections with amazing and interesting people, and appreciated the opportunity to interact with my colleagues in the field.

After returning from the conference, I am confident that I will be a lifelong member of the AGPA. Even after one year attending the conference, I feel that I am a better psychotherapist and a better human being. I look forward to learning and growing with the AGPA for many years to come.

Please pass along my thanks to the Board of Directors and the donors that made my scholarship possible.

Sincerely,

I wanted to thank you from the bottom of my heart for helping me to attend the AGPA conference.

I had an amazing time learning new skills and information, meeting new friends, learning how to become more involved, and receiving a big boost to my confidence as a recent graduate and new professional. I grew more than I could have imagined, both personally and professionally. When I returned home, I began inviting other new professionals and a current graduate student to apply for Institute (in Austin) scholarships so they can become involved in my local Austin chapter.

Thank you again for your generosity. You have made a huge difference in my life.

Sincerely,

As a scholarship recipient I want to take a moment and express my deep gratitude toward you all for allowing me to join the (and all of the) group(s) at AGPA this year. I learned an immense amount both intellectually and experientially.

I can't wait for next year! Much like a dream that I did not want to wake from.

Thank you and best wishes,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for granting me a full scholarship for last February's AGPA 2010 Conference in San Diego.

As a first time member, I was happily surprised to have such a wonderful experience. I had heard great things about the conference, but my expectations were blown away. My absolute favorite part of the whole week was the two-day Process Group, where I learned more about group process in two days than I usually do in a year. I am very much looking forward to this next year!!

I was also overwhelmed with the participant's and facilitator's sense of heart – everyone was very supportive and open, and I felt very special to part of this amazing community of therapists.

I wanted to note that I was also very inspired by the Large Group, where I attended two sessions. I hope this group continues to thrive, as I was just starting to be able to find my voice in such an intimidating space. I wish this group could meet every day for an hour, to get more practice and see how it evolves.

Again, thank you so much for the opportunity to attend the 2010 AGPA conference. I look forward to next year in NYC!

Sincerely,

Dear respected AGPA foundation:

I felt so honored to get the Alonso scholarship from AGPA foundation. This gave me a chance to meet so wonderful, excellent group therapists whom I made friends with. In San Diego, I not only learn new knowledge, but help me integrate what I had learned not only about the group psychotherapy, but the individual psychotherapy. With connection with American psychotherapists, I began to know American people and American culture in which psychotherapy and group psychotherapy has been developed. Everything now makes sense. I love this feeling, which helps me feel confident also.

This is the second time to attend to the annual meeting of AGPA. The experience is quite different from the first experience, in which I felt overwhelmed because of the strong shock for the cultural difference. Just the theme of this annual meeting 'sustaining our world through groups', I felt warm, supportive, connected and moved with holding environment which AGPA tried best to present. All of these facilitate me exploring what is AGPA, What is annual meeting, which led me to so wonderful trip to make friends and learn new.

I really enjoyed the presentation 'Addiction as Attachment Disorder', which gave me so excellent understanding and rich knowledge about the attachment disorder and the connection with addiction. The general process group was wonderful experience in which I tried to explore myself, my reaction to others, and understand what happened in the life of others, especially what happened here-and-now in the group. This really helped me integrate what I have learned about the process group.

I want to share my experience in the two-day course presented by Maryetta Andrews-Sachs and Johan Thomas. They are best teachers and group therapists. They gave an excellent, beautiful workshop. I can not help sharing this to each colleague after I came back to China. Why I loved them and their workshop so much? First, they really gave us so wonderful course about the principles of group psychotherapy, which really deepened and widened my understanding about the group psychotherapy. Secondly, they showed us how much sensitive, open, wise, warm the group therapist could be. They really gave us a good model which I can identify with. Thirdly, they really run a very beautiful process group in which we had a meeting with sex, the meaning of life, culture

difference and connection between members, and we felt understood, appreciated, moved, and connected with each other. I appreciated that AGPA did so much for inviting the best teachers to us. I felt lucky to meet AGPA and so nice members

Sometime, as a foreigner in AGPA without enough English I felt I became a little boy who just entered the primary school and knew nothing about what will happen and how to do. Every day, I asked Diane Feirman and other facilitators a lot of questions about what I can do, how I can do, whom I can connect. Every time dearest Diane Feirman always gave me nice, helpful answer, suggestion, direction. Without their help, I can not enjoy this trip so much. I really love them. The luncheon and the party presented by AGPA foundation were so nice and warm also. They gave me a chance to know more about the members of AGPA, the history of AGPA and foundation and to make so nice friends.

Now, I am back and work in China. The challenge which I face is how I can share what I got and learned to Chinese colleagues, how I can set up a bridge between AGPA and Chinese professionals and how I can strengthen the collaboration between AGPA and Chinese professionals.

Many many thanks to AGPA foundation. Because of you, I can have this excellent memory and experience. I really hope I can do more for AGPA and AGPA foundation in the future.

respected

My 6 days at AGPA are beautiful because of the conference, people and the city. It is hand-down the best conference I've ever attended. Monday's Special Institute "Addiction as an Attachment Disorder" by Dr. Philip Flores was an excellent teaching combination of Powerpoint and demonstration groups; the "therapy songs" he picked made me cry and see the meaningfulness of being a therapist. Two-days' institute lead by Michael Frank was intense and transforming – I will write in more detail below. Next, I participated in the demo. group in Dr. Yvonne's System-Centered Therapy demo group and Dr. Judith Coche's "Couples Psychotherapy Group", both were highly engaging and let me learn about the group and myself. The former was particularly mind-blowingly refreshing! Session 301 "Developing Group Interventions in College Counseling Centers" and Colloguy 11 "Understanding How Attachment Theory Inform Group State: Blending Intrapsychic, Interpersonal and Group as a Whole" were informative and highly relevant to my group work at college counseling setting. I also love SaraKay Sumullen's group about self-care, and impressed by her gentleness and care. Last but not least, I enjoyed the social events, from first attendee breakfast, the Counseling Center SIG and the Diversity SIG meetings, to the evening dance and the luncheon. They all make me feel very welcomed and start to form a sense of community. At the end of the 6 days, I walk around and see familiar and warm faces every where – I certainly felt like home, I certainly did not wish to leave.

Below is some detail narrative I wrote one week after attending the meeting. I haven't done any additional editing, but thought it might be of interest to you.

TO BE SEEN

Nightmare -- a school girl was beaten and killed by a group of girl gangsters because "she told things she should not have told". My bedmate heard me sobbing. I woke up at the image of her burnt face on a piece of bone/stone, terrified, scrambled down my dream on a notepad in the bathroom as a way to calm down and make sense... In the morning, sitting across 12 strangers, all look very different from me, my anxiety is mounting...

That was how I started this "institute"/process group, with terrors of being exposed, rejected and alienated, with wishes of getting connected, loved and valued.

At the end of the two days, my fears subsided and my wishes were granted. . The genuine feeling of love and being loved is intoxicating, I feel warm, exuberant, happy and playful. I was also incredibly humbled and grateful...

Group leader M.K. later commented that I "allowed myself to be seen". True. I heard words describing me as "warm", "surprisingly open", "adventurous", "the child who says the emperor does not have clothes", and "like water" -- they have indeed seen me. I have indeed encountered them, feeling connected with each of them, in

different ways. This is an incredible journey, and very much like a lot of other journey I took -- I have no idea where exactly I am going, the only thing clear is my desire to explore, to make the best out of it, to be fully alive...

The joy and adventure continued, as in the next three days in the bigger AGPA conference community. I volunteered for the demon-groups, sitting amongst mostly more senior professionals and being aware of a whole room of professionals' observing eyes... My wish for "full experiences" again was granted. At one of the groups, the group leader directed my shift from overwhelmingly burning anxiety to "the excitement at the edge of unknown". The fears of being exposed subsided, my curiosity and playfulness resumed. When one group member invited interpersonal feedback, instead of trying to reassure him, or taking the easy way out by choosing the answers she offered ("Agreeable" or "Disagreeable"), I allowed myself to be true to myself and stand out -- I said "Both". Prepared to be marginalized, I opened my eyes wide with disbelief when after the first two "agreeable" right after me, I started to hear "Both", "Both", "Both" until the end of the circle! Later, they explained that they didn't know "both" was a choice and was glad I said it, that they appreciated my courage, and even one of the two persons said "agreeable" admitted that he said so because he felt the pressure of reassurance, yet he would rather switch to "both"... I laughed, at the novelty and joy of being heard, welcomed and respected in such a big group!

I feel free now, stretch my body and my voice everywhere. Even the last night at the dance floor. The second morning, one folk who I have been impressed by his delightfully spontaneity at his presentation and his dance move, caught the sight of me in the crowd and said warmly "you are something when you dance", "you should come back, you fit in." I laughed and we hugged...

TO BE ALIVE

I am always a serious "conferencer", enjoying my wide curiosity being fed and my intellectuality being fully stimulated. This time, my emotions are also highly aroused by the content of the conference, high interpersonal and emotional awareness of other fellow conferencers, as well as frequent warm invitation for connections from within the same bed to the other end of the room. I allow my inner richness to react and flow. Even my physical sensations are stimulated, as my skin pores were refreshed by the morning pool water and the spring harbor breeze, my eyes are well fed by the beautiful ocean in front of my balcony, the magical Balboa Park and the bright colors in the Old Town Mexican craft stores.

For days, I feel alive, complete, and free. This is certainly the first time I feel this way, but it is the first time such feeling lasts for so long. This time I feel no needs for particular individuals to create these feelings -- having myself is enough to make it happen. Neither is there shaken feeling that I may lose it the next minute -- I know I won't have it every minute, but I also know that it would come back frequent enough.

CELEBRATING THE BEAUTY

This is not only a sight-seeing trip, or professional trip, it is also a tremendous interpersonal journey. I was celebrating during the entire trip, for my gains professionally, personally and interpersonally; for the incredibly pleasant climate and view of San Diego, for the incredibly genuineness and spontaneity of the individuals I encounter... One evening at the taxi ride going back to our hotel from Balboa Park and went through a downhill path, I felt like a rollercoaster ride and started to laugh, loudly. I suppose I surprised all my friends in the car as well as the driver. Yet I didn't try to stop. I noticed a sense of freedom, a vitality and whole-heartedly happiness in my laugh, and I celebrate that. I celebrate that I am now living the life I always want, that I can love so much and laugh so much.

I have connected with so many people from AGPA and have expressed my enthusiasm individually for the connections and the opportunity to attend the conference. I still feel, as Connie Cannon labeled it for me "The post AGPA high."

It was a tremendous honor for me to receive the scholarship to attend the entire week of the conference. I have never been to a conference where I felt so elated, so motivated and so eager to act! It seemed in many ways a call to action personally and professionally...to better our communities and the people we serve. During each session or workshop, whether it was the institute with Dr. Flores or the Wednesday evening talk with Dr. Perel, I was on the edge of my seat each time...wanting to know and learn more! I truly felt like I gained a wealth of

information...practical knowledge I could apply instantly. I loved the colloquiums and early morning sessions (Positive Psychology; Attachment...) though I found myself wishing for more time to soak in all the wonderful, innovative information! I really enjoyed the conference format...the strong focus on both didactic and experiential learning. I especially enjoyed the format during the process group and principles of group therapy course. It made a huge difference. All the trainings were phenomenal!

Guess what? Shortly after the conference I was asked to teach a group counseling course this summer at Argosy University- San Diego Campus! I am so excited! Mostly because I now have a better idea of how the course really needs to be taught to students from having gone through the training myself! Certainly, I still consider myself a student, always yearning to learn more. I am eager about the opportunity and I hope I can share with my students a glimpse of what I learned at the conference! The experience was so profound that I decided to join my own support/process group to further my own self-growth and immerse myself fully in group work. I am six weeks in and it's great and challenging!

In addition to all the wonderful workshops and sessions I attended, I met some phenomenal people at the conference; people with a shared vision and passion to enhance the human condition through group work, with care and compassion. I have also made some wonderful friends both in state and out of state that I still keep in touch with. And I have joined two of AGPA's SIG!

And last, but not least, I am heading to Haiti at the end of this week for two weeks on a volunteer missions trip to assist with training and support to earthquake victims and those who work with them. I believe this opportunity (to serve those in my native land) came as a result of my connections with folks I met in AGPA. I feel so incredibly blessed and immensely grateful for the opportunity to serve. I had no idea that getting a scholarship to attend my very first AGPA conference from Feb 22-27 was going to offer so many wonderful life defining moments. Thank you so much!

I greatly enjoyed my experience at the AGPA conference. Unlikely many other conferences I have attended in the past, AGPA attendees are encouraged to be active participants in conference presentations and not just passive listeners. This allowed me to learn more about myself, have others respond to my ideas, and make many new friends. I really appreciated the conference's focus on learning through doing. Most all session I attended I felt engaged and that my thoughts and my feelings welcome to share.

The conference was a tremendously growth full experience for me and I would have not been able to attend if it wasn't for the scholarship. At the institute was able to focus of myself and understand how my personal development affects my professional work. In the everyday demands of graduate school in terms of time, effort, and financial resources, the institute provided any important element of training that quickly get overlooked in our rush in completing graduate requirements. I noticed immediate changes in my clinical work upon returning from AGPA. The institute afforded me the time, space, and support move work through previously unseen obstacles in both my personal and professional development.

The second half on the conference I was inspired by great speakers like Nancy McWilliams, while also having individual talks with attendees; where I learned about unique lines of research in group therapy and received career guidance for the more sage members of AGPA. These informal conversations in the hallway or at lunch where as always stimulating and entertaining. The closest analogue I can draw in reference to the conference, is like a child going to summer camp. Never sure exactly sure what to expect each moment, but consistently surprised by the fun you are having all while making new connections that can last a lifetime.

Should I have the opportunity to attend AGPA and next year I will jump at the chance. I would like to make special thanks for those of donors that made this experience possible for me. Not only did this scholarship provide me with a remarkable week that I will never forget, it has had a lasting affect my personal development and my ability to help each client I see.

It has now been over two months since I left the most stimulating conference by far that I have ever attended. My gratitude to CGPA for the Jackman scholarship is immense as the experience, the learning, the sharing, the

mentoring, the meeting and networking all serve the same purpose: that of my advancement toward hopeful eventual CGP credentials, and this conference was so enjoyable that I had a sincere feeling of withdrawal (!) from such a nurturing environment, both experientially and academically.

The Jackman scholarship significantly freed me from the financial burden of cross-continent flight and conference fees. I was therefore able to participate in a specially selected themed Institute during the Pre-Conference as well as the Annual Meeting itself. The two-day Institute had a special focus on Body Attunement, led by Dr. Anne M Slocum McEneaney. In addition to various common and unusual issues being raised and, as well, intellectual discussion and processing on an academic/meta-level, there was the core layer of paying attention to our non-verbal behavior and body language—where and how we experienced feelings in our bodies as well as how our body language was expressing a different, and sometimes incongruous or inconsistent message than what our words suggested. Using this additional layer of information, we gained insights into a more holistic manner of healing in group therapy. I have to wonder if we have really fully healed the mind if non-verbal bodily experiences have not been processed.

If this is the case, are we more prone to re-triggering? This question came up in more than one scenario over the course of the conference. A more unusual aspect of this group was that, perhaps due to body attunement, there was not as much external conflict expressed as internal.

I also attended sessions on the Philosophical Underpinnings of Psychotherapy (Dr. Marc Schramm), Considering Life Changes in a Constantly Changing World, (led by Dr. Elliot Zeisel who replaced the originally scheduled leader caught back east in a snow storm!) The Nice Group, (Judith Schaer) and Beyond Theory: Can We Throw Out the Book? (Marvin Kaphan and Dr. Irene Harwood)

In the “Philosophical” group, I admit that I had those “what am I doing in this group?” wholly intimidated feelings when the group members talked about their various philosophical musings and connections. I had my own, but they were not as intellectually based as virtually all the others. As in any group, I struggled as a member to find my place within and grow stronger, strong enough to offer a valid opinion and have it accepted by others, even in such a short term and initially overwhelming context!

The Life Changes group was very largely grief-oriented, although we did as well discuss positive contexts for change, and how we move through them. Quite unexpectedly, and essentially due to a simple sequence of words uttered by another group member in a different context, I found myself re-triggered and back over twenty years in a place of grief and loss. Nonetheless, I had the safety of the group in which to briefly share and explore it, and heal yet another layer another time.

“The Nice Group” was fascinating on many levels. There was an initial issue of an unregistered individual in the room. As the group was completely full and the venue not a suitable meeting place for the size of the group, the Leader chose to honor the registration boundaries. This set an initial tone for dealing with conflictual feelings about what happened. Many other notable conflicts occurred, and we also later processed the group while examining the various reasons why groups and group members are “nice” and avoid conflict with either group members or the group’s Leader.

We didn’t exactly “throw out the book”, but we certainly did examine stretching traditional theoretical boundaries. What became clear, through histories and processing, is that therapeutic scenarios are not always as clear cut as we would make them out to be, that there are choices to be made in service of the clinical situation in the form of judgement calls, and that there are risks on both sides of those choices.

I also had three other special experiences: attending a breakfast for scholarship awardees and others (which unfortunately precluded another session I’d signed up for), meeting my mentor, and organizing a special on-site Sabbath dinner.

The breakfast was meant to be a gathering for all sorts of people to get acquainted with each other and AGPA-connected people for various reasons. The venue was one of the on-site restaurants and it was well-attended, even if in the early morning! (We are such a dedicated bunch!)

Meeting my mentor Jeanne Pasternak—someone who will guide me through the steps of CGP certification—was a long-awaited moment. I found her to be warm and welcoming, and although there didn’t end up being time for us to meet formally to discuss a plan, email contact will now be with someone to whom I can put a face!

Finally, Dr. George Saiger put me in charge of organizing a Sabbath Dinner on the Friday night of the conference, which turned out to be delightful. I am most grateful for all the assistance I had, and thankfully, the meal was well-attended and the feedback was great.

As I told the person who informed me of the scholarship, it literally made my year! I thank you from all the levels of my mind and heart, body and soul.