

Shigeru Iwakabe's Candidate Statement

I am honored to be nominated for the position of General Vice-President. SPR has been vital to my development both as a psychotherapy researcher and as a clinician. I therefore accept this nomination with enormous delight and enthusiasm and welcome the opportunity to give back to an organization that has provided me with so much throughout my career.

My interest in psychotherapy research and SPR was sparked when, as a beginning graduate student at McGill University, I first encountered articles in *Psychotherapy Research*. I had just joined the psychotherapy process research group led by Anastassios Stalikas, who would later become my dissertation supervisor. Concerned by the way in which conventional research designs and statistics seemed unsuited to capturing complex patterns of change in psychotherapy, I was searching for ways to analyze data on change processes which were rigorous without oversimplifying the complexity and nuances of what transpires in moment-to-moment interactions. When Anastassios introduced me to *Psychotherapy Research*, I was amazed by the sophisticated and creative methodological attempts to capture clinical phenomena and model change processes. I devoured the articles and genuinely felt my horizons were expanding.

My first experience of an SPR meeting was in 2002, as the recipient of a travel grant in my first faculty position. Many colleagues have noted the warm, friendly, stimulating atmosphere of SPR meetings, and I, unsurprisingly, enjoyed every moment. I was moved by the sense of openness, collaborative spirit and mutual respect shared among SPR members and felt immediately welcomed. I consider myself incredibly fortunate to have discovered such wonderful mentors, colleagues, and friends in SPR, who have become invaluable resources in my professional development. My sense of gratitude to these individuals and to SPR for facilitating these connections is enormous.

I took up my appointment as Professor in the Department of Psychology at Ritsumeikan University in Osaka, Japan in April of this year, after 18 years at Ochanomizu University in Tokyo, where I worked with students on a variety of research projects. My principal research focus is the investigation of emotional change processes. In this context, I have been investigating the outcome and process of two integrative affect-focused therapies: accelerated experiential dynamic psychotherapy, and emotion-focused therapy. Although my interest in and curiosity for psychotherapy research methods is extensive, I am particularly interested in qualitative and systematic case study methods aimed at integrating rich clinical description with scientific rigor. My interests also extend to cultural and social issues surrounding psychotherapy practice, as well as to therapeutic failures, training issues, and building practice-research networks.

Over the past 10 years, I have had numerous opportunities to participate in various academic and professional organizations both in Japan and internationally. I served as an executive committee member of the Society for Exploration of Psychotherapy Integration (SEPI) for several years before assuming the role of President in 2020, when I designed and developed a series of webinars and discussion groups enabling international members to connect in the face of pandemic restrictions. I have also served on the executive

committee of the Japanese Association of Clinical Psychology for the past four years, during which time I have organized a number of workshops and symposia featuring high-profile international speakers, including the Association's 40th online meeting which attracted over 10,000 participants. Most recently, I am proud to have been a founding member of the Japanese Society of Psychotherapy Integration.

Currently, I am a Director of the Japan Institute of Emotion-Focused Therapy, which offers individual and couples therapy as well as training in EFT to Japan-based practitioners. In my previous position, I acted as Director of both the training clinic and student counseling center. Throughout my career I have continued to seek out diverse training opportunities which allow me to further develop as a clinician.

For the many years since my initial encounter with SPR as a student at McGill, I have been an active member, including as a Program Committee Member for many meetings and as leader of the Society for Psychotherapy Research Interest Group for Society and Culture (SPRISCAP). With the members of this interest group, I initiated an international collaborative project on cross-cultural experiences of depression. In addition, I served as an advisory editor for *Psychotherapy Research* and have, with students and colleagues, delivered a number of presentations at international meetings.

If elected to this position, I would work to further initiatives that broaden the diversity of our membership and to facilitate international collaborations and stronger representation of SPR in those countries where psychotherapy research is not yet fully developed. One of SPR's strengths is its substantial scientific foundation. Also, it promotes collegiality between researchers from different countries based on mutual respect and on constructive relationships between seasoned and emerging researchers. Without a doubt, there are many young researchers in Asian countries who would benefit not only from learning how to conduct empirically valid and clinically relevant research studies, but also from mentor relationships defined by openness, respect, and support, all of which are available in SPR. These interactions are particularly valuable in developing productive and healthy research infrastructures in those countries where psychotherapy research is not yet so pervasive.

I am confident that SPR has the intellectual and interpersonal resources to contribute to the betterment of psychotherapy and, more widely, to global mental health in general by furthering and communicating our understanding of human suffering and success. As we enter the post-pandemic era, one of my primary foci will be on making the best use of telepsychology resources in order to expand collaboration, communication and research dissemination so that SPR members can remain consistently and effectively connected and make positive contributions to mental health on both local and international levels. Finally, I will work toward bridging research and practice by creating fora for dialogues between all stakeholders—clinicians, researchers, clients, and mental health providers. I sincerely appreciate my nomination for this position and very much look forward to having the opportunity to contribute more fully to SPR, an organization which has contributed so much to my professional growth.