

The words of 6 travel award winner's thoughts on the 2016 NA-SPR conference:

Lauren Lipner:

"Throughout the conference, I was struck by how the essential components of the alliance were played out, amongst the attending students and professors. The theme of our meeting, "Made-to-Measure: A Personalized Approach to Psychotherapy", acted as a shared goal between attendees from all across North America, while each discussion, panel, and paper served as fodder for the negotiation of tasks for how we reach this goal. And an affective bond amongst students and professors, in not only sharing questions and ideas, but in creating a welcoming environment to a relatively new student member to this organization, wove itself like a thread throughout the conference.

By the time I boarded my flight back to New York, I had listened to novel perspectives and contemplated complex questions. I left feeling tremendously inspired to take so many ideas back to the lab, discuss them further, and continue working towards our shared goal of personalizing psychotherapy by applying these thoughts to my own work on the therapeutic relationship. Many barriers remain, as discussed in the closing plenary, but what I observed most from the bond between the NASPR members was the genuine desire to find creative ways around these obstacles, an effort to which I hope to continue contributing."

Yogev Kivity:

"I feel that the nature of this kind of a local chapter meeting, and the smaller amount of participants, allows for a more intimate experience than the one that is already provided in the international meetings. The chance of participating in discussion groups, alongside both senior and junior researchers, left an especially deep impression on me. I felt a genuine curiosity on the side of the senior NASPR members to listen to the opinions and thoughts of the new generation of SPR members, to which I consider myself to belong to.

This year's theme, Personalized Approaches to Psychotherapy, was especially appealing to me. Being a researcher and also a licensed clinical psychologist, I often find myself grappling with questions regarding the relevance of empirical findings to my clinical work. I feel that the work presented in this meeting, and the new and exciting lines of research on the topic, is a significant step toward reconciling the practice-research gap, and a true inspiration for my future work.

The social events I attended – the opening reception, the business lunch, the banquet, as well as the coffee breaks and meals – provided an opportunity for me to get to know other SPR members, to meet the "faces behind the empirical findings" and to engage in stimulating discussions about research and practice.

In sum, participating in this year's NASPR meeting was truly a delight for me. I came back to work following the meeting, feeling energized and motivated to continue my research work and develop new ideas that will hopefully contribute to personalizing psychotherapy to the individual."

Nicholas Morrison:

"As a fifth year graduate student, I have now had the opportunity to attend three NASPR conferences. Although I have thoroughly enjoyed each conference and have appreciated the opportunities to present my research at these venues, this year's meeting was particularly notable for me. In these final years of graduate school, I feel I have been able to truly take ownership of my research interests and activities. As a result, this year's meeting in Berkeley presented me with the opportunity to organize and moderate my first symposium. I not only presented as a panelist, but was also able to work in conjunction with undergraduate mentees from our lab to present additional qualitative findings during the poster session. The warm and accepting environment generated by the NASPR community lends itself well to graduate students learning to disseminate their research to a wider audience. I am truly grateful not only for the financial support to present at these conferences, but also to know that I will always have an academic home in SPR and NASPR as I look toward my career options after completing my graduate training."

Stephanie Wiebe:

"Attending the NASPR conference at Berkeley was a wonderful experience for me, both personally and professionally. Throughout the course of the conference, I enjoyed several talks that stimulated new research questions for me on the topics of working with trauma in group psychotherapy, therapist and client effects, clinical supervision, empathy, the therapeutic relationship and new ideas for tailoring therapy to address individual client concerns. I also truly enjoyed being at the University of California, Berkeley campus – it gave me the chance to experience a new university campus with a unique history and culture.

On Friday, I presented a piece of my postdoctoral research exploring session-by-session change throughout group psychotherapy for patients with chronic illness/disability at the Rehabilitation Centre at the Ottawa Hospital. I appreciated the interest I received from conference attendees. The discussions were intellectually stimulating and collegial – I was offered new ideas and perspectives on my work that will be highly valuable as I plan the next steps in my research.

Overall, attending the NASPR conference was highly valuable in my own development as a psychotherapy researcher. I am at a crucial place in my career as I wrap up my postdoctoral work and look toward the future. I am actively looking for a place to begin a career as a professor and psychotherapy researcher in a university setting. The many connections I was able to generate with new colleagues have been invaluable for me both in terms of hearing about new opportunities and developing my future research plans. I am truly grateful to have had this opportunity to share ideas and learn from such a warm and dynamic group of colleagues. "

Kristen Giddens Pinto-Coelho:

“This was my fifth SPR or NASPR conference. I always come away feeling renewed enthusiasm and vigor for both psychotherapy research in general and for my own work. Participating in such conferences offers such a wonderful opportunity to learn about the latest research, to catch up with far-flung colleagues, to develop new relationships, and to benefit from being a member of a community of individuals who have shared interests. In addition to providing me with fabulous opportunities to build my network and increase my awareness of the latest trends happening in psychotherapy research, participating in SPR and NASPR always inspires new ideas for my own research. I’ve also noticed that when I am presenting, as I did at NASPR 2016, readership of my published work spikes before and after the conference. I presume that before the conference, participants read presenters’ work to help them decide which presentations to attend. And after the conference, they are likely either delving into articles of presentations they enjoyed or catching up on presentations they would have liked to have seen but missed. So my network is enhanced by increasing others’ visibility into my work (and vice versa), even beyond individuals with whom I interacted personally. This conference was particularly beneficial for me because I received a job offer! I believe this would not have happened (or it certainly would have been less likely) had I not been at the conference with the individual who offered me the job. In addition, I met a researcher I had not met in person before who surprised me after the conference by sending me a book and some articles he has written in an area of particular interest to me. What a lovely group of people! I really cannot say enough about the benefits of attending, and I feel it keenly when I am unable to be present for one of these conferences. I am already looking forward to Toronto in 2017!”

Mei Yi Ng:

“And boy was I thrilled to attend plenaries, panel discussions, and paper sessions given by several distinguished individuals whose work I had read about and cited, and learn about the latest developments in their work. I even got to speak with and present my work to some of them, and received really thought-provoking responses and feedback that will help me to plan my next steps with my dissertation and future research. I also gained exposure to several fascinating programs of research I am unfamiliar with and am now eager to learn more about. The relatively small size of the conference made it easier for me to have conversations with various conference attendees, from undergraduates, to graduate students and trainees like myself, to rising early career psychologists, to giants in the field, and that was something I really enjoyed. The supportive and welcoming atmosphere of the conference was also helpful for getting more comfortable with talking about my research and interacting with others in the field--an essential part of professional development. I am so grateful to NASPR for this valuable opportunity to learn so much and connect with others interested in psychotherapy research!”

Kathryn Kline:

“For me, one of the most treasured aspects of NASPR conferences is walking away with new ideas and insights about both psychotherapy research and clinical practice. As a current doctoral student, I am very invested in my training as a scientist-practitioner and I continually think about how my identities as a therapist and researcher inform one another. SPR conferences have been an ideal platform for me to foster this interconnection, and the 2016 NASPR conference in Berkeley was no exception. The two sessions that invoked the most excitement for me were “Therapists and Clients Crying in Psychotherapy” and “Therapist Effects: What Do We Know and What Do We Need to Know”. It was fascinating to see how research can spark some of the most fundamental questions of clinical practice.I learned about the four proposed factors that explain why some therapists are more effective than others. The more effective therapist is thought to be better at developing the therapeutic relationship, proficient at implementing facilitative interpersonal skills, is humble, and engages in deliberate practice, especially for more difficult clients. As a student, the most exciting part about both of these sessions was seeing prominent psychotherapy researchers and clinicians debating such important topics, and to be a part of these discussions. I am so grateful to NASPR for the student travel award and the opportunity to showcase some of my own research and to hear from other researchers and practitioners. “

Xu Li:

“ I sincerely enjoyed my experiences at the conference, and benefited a lot from a number of very thought-provoking presentations, and highly inspiring conversations with other conference participants. Apart from my own symposium, I also attended a number of other presentations. The Discussion session of “Therapist Effects: What Do We Know And What Do We Need to Know” was one of the sessions that impressed me the most. Being a therapist in-training myself, the identification of key factors (e.g., deliberate practice, seeking feedback, humility, etc.) that contribute to therapist effectiveness and the wisdom about therapist development from the conversation between graduate students and experienced clinicians resonated a lot with my personal experiences and inspired me to reflect deeply on my research in psychotherapy training and my own professional development. Other presentations that really intrigued me include studies that focus on therapist responsiveness and individualized psychotherapy, and the use and effect of feedback in psychotherapy. In sum, I’m deeply appreciative and honored to be one of the recipients of the student travel awards which provided crucial financial support for me to attend the NASPR conference. This has been a very valuable professional experience to help me grow both as a researcher and a practitioner.”