

## Power Potentials

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*In 2011 I produced a workbook in which I reviewed what various authors had written about power and pulled out my own version of the sources of power, calling it 'power potentials'. The following is an extract from that workbook, plus updates I have added over the years, concluding with some reflective activities that I have designed during 2018 when considering professional identity and professional relationships.*

### Altorfer, English, Jacobs, van Poelje

Nearly 40 years ago, Otto Altorfer (1977), who at that time was a Provisional Teaching Member in Special Fields, contrasted formal courtesy with authentic courtesy, and formal power with personal power. He made the case [without references] for awareness and appropriate use of strokes and stroking patterns, and avoidance of discounting. He explained that authentic courtesy is needed to respond to the true feelings that may be hidden in the non-verbal messages, and that personal power "relies on mutuality and the principle of seeking agreement and consensus...[and needs that we] recognize needs for belonging, self-development, and self-actualization..." (p.341).

Fanita English (1979) quoted 18<sup>th</sup> century philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau for the notion that everyone emerges from childhood with a slave or tyrant mentality, labelling them respectively as Type I, helpless victims or rebels who seek strokes from powerful Parent figures, and as Type II, helpful yet bossy Powerful Parents who start out as rescuers but shift to persecutor and eventually to victim (no initial capitals in original). Hence, Jones in Guyana, and Hitler before him, became the Great Leader or the Grand Inquisitor, who could offer the slaves (Dostoevsky, 1957) someone to worship and hence an escape from autonomous functioning. English points out

how people appear to function more effectively in such circumstances, as they no longer have to deal with contradictory or unpleasant emotions and have now got a stable conception of the object of life (Dostoevsky).

Alan Jacobs (1987) continued with English's questions on which his article was based: "Why do people join political, religious, professional, or social movements, of whatever size, and surrender so completely, giving up everything including their lives, their fortunes, their families? What needs do people have to find and love a marvellous parent who has all the answers, and in his or her name, to even commit murder and suicide?" (p.59). He goes on to refer to various political, religious and social movements that seek to impose their own view of reality and hence to control large numbers of followers – such as Nazis in Germany, Bolsheviks in Russia, Khomeini in Iran, Pol Pot in Kampuchea, as well as fundamentalist religious groups including those of Jews, Christians and Muslims. The atmosphere that allows such autocratic structures to emerge is one of "economic turmoil, war, and social, religious, or political oppression [which] exacerbate personal existential fears..." (p.60). He goes on to suggest that there will be masters, followers, bystanders, sources of evil, slaves, and resisters.

Several years later Sari van Poelje (1995) suggested that in the current climate of rapid changes and globalisation of local problems these ideas become more relevant. It is almost as if the complexities and the uncertainties of modern life lead people to look to their leaders for certainty. This is a recipe for autocratic systems to begin to take hold. She develops Berne's (1964)/Jacobs (1987) by using thicker lines to show that the external boundary is permeable allowing bystanders to be recruited during the early stages. Then the external boundary is closed, and

Lieutenants are appointed to manage internal agitation. Only Lieutenants can cross the external boundary to convert followers. To further strengthen the external boundary an enemy or Object of Evil is identified (Jacobs 1991). For example, Enemies for Hitler were Jews and Gypsies and for US President Bush they were Terrorists and the 'Axis of Evil'.

The Lieutenants deal with any agitation and now may be divided in their tasks, some managing the internal group process (Police) and others managing the external group process (Army). Those managing the external process will be responsible for acquiring resources, including labour. Where this labour is forced they are known as Slaves. Finally, Resisters emerge. They refuse to accept the symbioses and fight to overthrow the Master.

Power is therefore a significant contributor to the appropriate and inappropriate maintenance of boundaries, whilst also being how boundaries may be breached when the power option is chosen instead of building bridges. Power may reinforce or challenge boundaries within any of the categories I describe below.

### Krausz on Power

Krausz gained the Eric Berne Memorial Award in 2012 for her articles on power and leadership. In her 1986 paper, she defined power as "the ability to influence the actions of others, individuals or groups." (p. 85). She then defined leadership as the way that power is used in that process of influencing. She went on to consider two sources of power: organisational power related to status within the structure, function in the system, and the extent of influence on others that the status assigns; and personal power as the specific characteristics, experiences, knowledge, expertise and ways of relating to others. She pointed out that organisational power is formally distributed between the members of an

organisation whereas personal power is not distributable and depends on each individual. She also claimed that organisational power is activity oriented while personal power is results oriented, although she did not give any explanation for that.

Krausz went on to identify three types of organisational power and three types of personal power:

#### Organisationally based:

- *Coercion/pressure* – based on fear of punitive acts and employed to ensure that individuals or groups will comply. Leads to an organisational climate of alienation.
- *Position* – related to the status a person has in the organisational structure and/or their job, this is also known as institutional, legal, traditional or legitimate power and theoretically those with equal status have equal power. Leads to an organisational climate of depression and confusion.
- *Reward* – the capacity to assign direct or indirect, material or psychological compensations such as money, position, strokes, etc. Leads to an organisational climate of insecurity.

#### Personal based:

- *Support* – based on the ability to stimulate the involvement of peers, superiors, subordinates and others. Leads to an organisational climate of anxiety.
- *Knowledge* – related to skills, knowledge, and experience relevant to the job and the organisation. Leads to an organisational climate of acceptance, security but also possibly dependence.
- *Interpersonal Competence* – based on communication skills, empathy,

authenticity, respect, trust and capacity for intimacy. Leads to an organisational climate of trust and openness.

### Seven Sources of Power

Steiner (1987) commented in his Abstract that “Power is almost universally and mistakenly seen as the capacity to control other people”. (p. 102). He proposed a more positive paradigm of power as the

capacity to effect change and identified seven sources of power based on the ancient theory of the chakras of Kundalini yoga. He referred to these as a rainbow of options rather than the unidimensional power based solely on control, commenting that each may be underdeveloped to the point of nonexistence or overdeveloped so that it crowds out other sources of power. His comments are summarised in Table 1.

The Source of Power	Chakra	Under Developed	Over Developed
<b>Grounding</b> The capacity to stand one’s ground	<b>Earth</b>	Easily pushed around and unsteady	Stubborn, unmoveable and dull
<b>Passion</b> Power to create, recreate, transform	<b>Sex</b>	Unexcitable, boring	Driven by sexual passion or fanaticism through repression
<b>Control</b> Ability to aggressively manipulate others and the environment	<b>Power</b>	Unable to deal with internal or external environment	Competent in power games of one up. Constantly testing who is better/right.
<b>Love</b> To nurture, heal and instil hope	<b>Heart</b>	Inability to experience loving feelings and to benefit from strokes	Driven to excessive sacrifices and self neglect
<b>Communication</b> Create in others feelings and ideas that reflect our own	<b>Throat</b>	Remains quiet and fails to convey ideas	Overbearing especially if used in conjunction with control
<b>Knowledge</b> Science, wisdom, vision and intuition	<b>Third Eye</b>	Ignorance	Over reliance on knowledge as power
<b>Transcendence</b> Appreciation of unity with the Universe	<b>Cosmos</b>	Considers self as separate from others and insensitive to them	Detachment from earthly ways, mystical

Table 1: Summary of Seven Sources of Power, based on Steiner 1987

Hay 2015	Krausz 1986	Steiner 1987	French & Raven 1959	Hicks & Gullet 1975
<b>Physical</b> - as in being stronger, bigger, etc than others or using supporters who have physical power, such as gangsters, mercenaries, etc	coercion	grounding	coercive	physical
<b>Pecuniary</b> (i.e. Financial) - having control over tangible rewards and penalties	reward		reward coercive	economic
<b>Performance</b> – being an expert, having knowledge that others lack	knowledge competence	knowledge	expert	performance knowledge
<b>Personal</b> – interpersonal and communication skills, emotional intelligence	reward interpersonal	control Communi- cation		personality
<b>Psychological</b> – positively as charisma or negatively through ulterior transactions	support	passion love Transcend- ence	charisma referent	personality
<b>Positional</b> – the power that comes with the role, the level within the hierarchy, the legal context	positional		legitimate coercive	positional
<b>Political</b> – based on ideologies, beliefs, values that others (can be persuaded to) adopt				ideological

Table 2: Power Potentials (Hay, 2015)

### Power Potentials

Table 2 shows how I classified power sources mentioned by others such as Krausz (1986), Steiner (1987), French & Raven (1959) and Hicks & Gullet (1975). The last two are not TA authors but are well known for their material on power and leadership.

Note that I regard coercion as a behaviour rather than a source of power, and control as an outcome of power rather than a source.

I also suggest review activities as part of workbooks produced during 2018 for an ongoing TA programme:

### Activity: Power and the Practitioner

Review how you might unconsciously be influencing clients (or colleagues) through the potential power that you have. For each Power Potential:

- How might this be impacting a client or colleague?
- Is this a conscious and positive use of influence or might it be undermining their autonomy?
- What changes will you make to ensure that you are not unconsciously influencing them?

### Activity: Power in the Professional Relationship

Use the prompts below to consider how the various sources of power might be having an impact on your professional relationships. Consider what you might need to do to minimise any inadvertent power differentials, in either direction.

- **Physical** - even if this applies inadvertently because you are bigger or smaller than the client; do you ever feel intimidated by a client?
- **Pecuniary** (i.e. Financial) -who sets the fees, reduced fees or pro bono working, paid to you or indirect; impact when clients withhold fees; when clients offer gifts?
- **Performance** – being an expert, explaining your role; having a client who is a (TA) practitioner; client who is expert in their profession?
- **Personal** – interpersonal and communication skills, emotional intelligence – when different levels for you and a client; when client is more skilled than you?
- **Psychological** – positively as charisma or negatively through ulterior transactions – the impact of transference, counterdependency, etc?
- **Positional** – the power that comes with the role, the level within the hierarchy, the legal context; of you and of the client; of other stakeholders?

- **Political** – based on ideologies, beliefs, values that others (can be persuaded to) adopt; impact when you know the client's political views?

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