

**POD Project Paper**  
**May 25th, 2017**

**Nina, Ellen, Daniel, Lisa**

# **VISITING POWER: KNOWN AND UNKNOWN**



## **Reflections on our group process**

We named our group the POD Unknowns. From our initial conversation, where we sat around a table at the ECCU after being put in our group, we found resonance in the intention of working with the unknown. We even played with the idea of not planning a workshop at all, but to entirely trust emergence in the moment to guide the experience we would create for the rest of the cohort. Our biweekly calls were full of rich conversation, co-led and co-emerging as we each brought forth aspects of our own inquiries: power dynamics, how to work with conflict.

Through these conversations, we found a place to land some of the learnings that we have been exploring and approaching through the Integral Facilitator program. We could openly exchange in the wee morning hours of the west coast of Canada, stretched to Eastern Canada and the late afternoon in Germany. Trust grew and there was a genuine love, appreciation, and warmth for the content and quality of our calls.

As the calls progressed, a natural coherence emerged where we landed on a topic: Power. And we landed on some ideas for the workshop process: stations of experiencing power in different ways. It was an experience of co-leadership where one person did not seem to directly take the lead. Rather, it felt as though we were flying as geese through the air together towards a destination that was in our bones, even if not clearly in our minds. So, the topic emerged and co-created itself within our group.

## **Exploring Power**

We each explored power through our calls. The following is a reflection from each of our perspectives as our own relationships to power shifted and deepened.

### **Lisa's perspective:**

"For me, the explorations about power have been long, deep, and wide. For over two decades, I have been reflecting and questioning what power is and how to work with it. I am embedded in circles and spaces where conversations about power and privilege pull and prod, in bottomless pools of suffering, guilt, pain, blame. I teach and talk about ways to look at how power shows up in the four quadrants. No

matter what, the conversation is messy. And, all too familiar. So what I have craved through this POD is a new route in, and a new way to experience power.

What has delighted me about how our POD approached this call has been that through our explorations, I have been filled up by the ways that power and love, or power and vulnerability form an intractable polarity in my body, in the collective, and in sticky systems. Our initial POD intention of diving into the unknown as our guidepost has meant that throughout, I have tethered the unknown to anything I know about power. I realize that in the end, I don't have much to say or write about power. It is known and unknown at the same time, and it is here that the next move is to transition away from my mind and into my body to feel, live, and be the paradox of power-no power.

### **A Poem about power**

Power came  
as a dream one day  
rich and wide.

I stood strong  
unyielding

looking for a place  
to put my me-ness,

to experience  
my indestructible  
wholeness,  
blind and content

in the strength  
that held me up

until I saw ashes  
unfold vulnerability,

waving all that  
I was into

nothingness

and the wounded heart  
that lay bare

saw the universe  
with vision anew.

Power melted into vulnerability  
vulnerability into power

and I fell back  
into the deepest of  
unknowns,

to find the inconceivable  
possibility  
of the strength in  
this delicate pink blossom,

the softness  
of the most fierce  
warrior."

### **Nina's perspective:**

"I've explored and experienced power for a long time, in many different directions. Power to, power over, under, victim - perpetrator polarity, in the body, in the self, in a group, structural power. I've seen it being used in service to all as well as in incredibly devastating ways. And even these "distinctions" don't seem to work at times, when black and white fade into grays and what seems difficult for a person to hold as a result of the use of power turns into an accelerating opportunity. Like most of how I choose to look at the world and relate to it, my main attention rests

in the self, in the upper left quadrant. It is where I feel I have the most immediate power, to shift how I relate to a situation, to own the power I have in each given moment, to choose how I respond in intensity, and it's a freak'n art to master this one! One that attracts me like nothing else.

Since most of my lens is on how individual evolution contributes to a more vibrant and healthy (human) existence, I also worked with "the two sides of power", the distinction Adam Kahane introduces in "Power and Love", speaking of the generative and degenerative use of it. Degenerative power is mostly "power to" morphing into "power over" due to conflict of interests and no other way forward in the repertoire of the one using it. While there are many attempts to describe, work with, and make sense of power, and the troubles in the social field give perspective, I feel its vastness, inconceivability, and unknowability. And a deep inquiry into how to be present to the alchemy in the use of power.

And then Diane spoke about power in one of her last sessions in the "Freedom To Fight" Course, and framed it as "simply a structure of attention, incredibly liberating when used well, and devastating when used badly". She also mentioned how we might have power in one moment, and no power in the next one, an invitation to relate to having power from a humble place. Diane's reflections made me reconnect to intention: What am I serving using power? What are the intentions as I execute power? Do they come from a "clear" place, in service of what's healthy? How do I "know"?

During our POD exploration, the fluidity of power, the breath, in and out, come and go, the life force in it, is what has most "massaged" my own way of relating to power. One moment there, then gone, an impulse, felt in the body, offered to the present moment."

### **Ellen's perspective:**

"In our POD exploration of power we kept coming back to something one of us had heard Diane say: "Power is a structure of attention". My first impulse was to do research, and this is what I found:

No results found for "power as a structure of attention".

No results found for "power is a structure of attention".

PERFECT.

I dug into my memory of the last times I had researched power. I was aware of my impulse to start with what was KNOWN to me, and from there dive into the

UNKNOWN. I know about the powercube[1]: a three dimensional analysis looking at forms of power (visible, hidden, and invisible), spaces of power (closed, invited, and claimed) and levels (local, national, and global). An analysis of the exterior world (third person), created for facilitators working with social change. I also knew the distinction between power over, power to, power with, power within and, more recently, power under[2]. This model felt more integral as it included first and second person as well. And finally Adam Kahane's book where he explores the polarity of power and love[3], using the concepts generative and degenerative. That is as far as I had gotten. As I revisited some of this material I was feeling BORED. (And you are probably too, just reading this.) Oh, the limitations of trying to navigate the world with cognitive powers!

I liked the mystery of "structure of attention" better. In fact, I wanted to soak in it, swim in it, and play with it. And so I did.

This is what I came up with, inspired by James Kavanaugh, 1971 poem called "Will You Be My Friend".

*What is power? I am not sure.*

*Once I was an explorer, discovering my surroundings. I played and learned about 'right' and 'wrong'. There were boundaries. I was keenly aware. I rebelled more than I followed.*

*What is power? I am not sure.*

*Once I was predictable. I was educated. I understood the world and found others who did too. There was no reason to change. We had more answers than questions. My world felt safe, we had the power.*

*What is power? I am not sure.*

*Once, almost suddenly, I changed. I was less sure, with more questions than answers. The world became bigger with friends less easy to find. What do you see? Do you suffer like I do? Who are the bad guys? Is it me? Is it you? Who has the power?*

*What is power? I am not sure.*

*Then my heart broke open and I became softer. Warriors for love were everywhere. We united and supported, to heal and repair. We were believers, we were fierce. We talked a lot and were exhausted.*

*What is power? I am not sure.*

*Then, one day, I found the power. It lived in the cracks, flowed with the light, and I used it. Offering the gift of multiple views, the world felt safer, more hopeful and more intimate. I was full, I was free, I flowed with the light and found dance partners everywhere.*

*What is power? I am not sure.*

*There is nothing to rebel, nothing to understand, no security to provide, no commitment to make and no goals to reach. Power is flowing, it stimulates itself, understands, grows, explores, it smiles and weeps. It is evolution, it is "I amness" - and it plays a lot.*

---

[1] <https://www.powercube.net/analyse-power/what-is-the-powercube/>

[2] [https://justassociates.org/sites/justassociates.org/files/mch3\\_2011\\_final.pdf](https://justassociates.org/sites/justassociates.org/files/mch3_2011_final.pdf)

[3] Adam Kahane, Power and Love: A Theory and Practice of Social Change, 2010

## **Daniel's perspective:**

I see power as existing across the whole AQAL field.

I see it in the mind, where Victor Frankl states in *Man's Search for Meaning* that "everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of human freedoms - to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way" (UL). I see it in the carefully trained and measured power of the Athlete (UR). I see power also in culture as it determines what we can and can not say, controlling both the oppressed and the oppressor through the often unsaid rules of social interaction (LL) and, I see it in the apparatus of control: the government, the military, the prisons, the stock market, the medical system; the overt symbols of the powerful and the powerless (LR).

I also see power at the various levels of development, from the strength of power over, to the social prowess of a demagogue, to the dynamic way that an artist can capture their audience with a dance or brush stroke.

Still, above all others, the power that intrigues me most is the power I have seen in expressions of vulnerability. This power can sometimes call forth a response in others, can move people to open to their own vulnerability as well. It is the strength in that vulnerability that I feel drawn too. There is a courage, a robustness to the openness, a soft strength that can transmute. It is that form of power to which I would choose to become a zealous disciple, to the power of opening the hand, of sharing fearlessly, a power which can face its own death.

## **Design "Visiting Power"**

Following is the outline of the "Visiting Power" workshop that we designed to share with the cohort in the final Integral Facilitator intensive.

Logistics:

Open space, chairs are moved to the side of the room.

Signs across the room with "Power as ... " statements.

Materials:

- Paper + drawing materials, pens, markers

- Flipcharts/markers

- Bell

Outline "Visiting Power"		
Module, Purpose	Purpose	Instruction, Framing, Challenge. Debrief Questions
<b>Introduction</b> 5 min (Lisa)	Clarify why this topic, the process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce our pod</li> <li>• Introduce the topic of Power as a fluid exploration.</li> <li>• Ground rules for engagement</li> <li>• Explain to the group that they will be going on a journey through various developmental expressions of power. Explain that this is a brief journey and they will have more time to reflect at the end.</li> <li>• Dropping in reflection: What is your relationship to power?</li> <li>• Reflection question throughout the stations: Notice the ways you feel powerful, and the ways in which you don't. What comes up for you?</li> </ul>
A felt experience First station: <b>Power as strength</b> 5 min (Lisa)	Have it come alive, dropping into felt experience  An experience of fluid exploration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome people to "Power as Strength"</li> <li>• Grounding exercise: Feeling power in the body. Explore what it's like to push yourself.</li> <li>• Have people get into chair pose (modified instruction).               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Guided instructions while people are in the pose: notice the sensations in your body and in your mind. How do you feel powerful, how do you not feel powerful?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Dyad reflection: One breath reflection: What thoughts come to mind? How did it feel inside your body?</li> <li>• Ask people to move with their partner to the second station</li> </ul>
Second Station: <b>Power as control</b> 5 min (Daniel)	An experience of fluid exploration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome people to "Power as Control"</li> <li>• In dyads: play the "Simon says" game. One person is in power to begin, then switch.</li> <li>• Reflection question: Explore what it is like to obey, to rebel, to feel dominated, to dominate another. Ask participants to take body postures of each of these experiences (no words).</li> </ul>

<p>Third Station:  <b>Power as expression</b>  7.5 min  (Ellen)</p>	<p>An experience of fluid exploration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome people to power as expression</li> <li>• Individually: Opportunity to draw something. People express their idea of power, show their personal or an abstract concept of power, “draw power” .</li> <li>• In dyad: Present it in a triad, without using words</li> </ul>
<p>Fourth Station:  <b>Power as a structure of attention</b>  7.5 min  (Nina)</p>	<p>An experience of fluid exploration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome people to power as a structure of attention.</li> <li>• In dyads: A mirroring exercise with each other, playing with who holds power and how power plays.</li> <li>• <i>(Transitioning into group movement through POD member interventions.)</i></li> </ul>
<p>Large group  <b>sharing and processing</b>  5 min (Nina)</p>	<p>Reflection on what has shifted</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In a big circle:</li> <li>• Reflection: How has your journey through the different stations shifted in how you feel and think about power?</li> </ul>