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## FOCUSING ON POWER

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### Report on the AHPP Conference

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As a trainee counsellor at my first conference of this kind I had little idea what to expect and was delighted to find the first part of the proceedings developing into familiar chaos: the struggle to establish a consensus from extensive options on the day's programme. As an illustration of the 'Tyranny of Structuralessness' it was matchless and made an interesting start to a conference Focusing on Power. In vain the co-ordinator strove to please everyone; frustration mounted and we were welded together under its weight, erupting finally to ride roughshod over democracy and escape into the action of the day. I felt immediately at home.

The options on the two-day programme offered a demanding combination of theoretical and experiential work, of discussion and exchange that really required more than one body per person to respond to even half the opportunities that arose. The workshops I attended were largely experiential and I liked the feeling of involvement, of being part of an event which I experienced through this kind of participation. I had expected, as a mere trainee, to be on the periphery, a recipient of other people's pearls rather than discovering my own trunk of treasure. In fact, though rigorously professional attitudes were displayed in discussion, my relative inexperience did not affect my capacity to participate in any of the workshops I chose and was a minor factor in the choices I made. I confess however, to allowing myself to be intimidated by the reputation and experience of the presenters in the plenary sessions, one of which developed into an enlightening discussion on authenticity to close the first day on a high note.

I must also confess that I had tended to regard power almost exclusively as something other people had, and often exploited, a dangerous 'thing' to be resisted. In the course of the four workshops I attended over the two days, I experienced this 'dirty word' translated into a multi-faceted positive process. Through the different approaches used by the presenters, Hazel Guest, Glyn Seaborn-Jones, Alix Pirani and Ian Cunningham, I developed increased awareness of my creative, personal and professional power and gained some insights into the ways in which I use, abuse and give it away. Any one of these would really have been enough for one week-end, but while I felt slightly overwhelmed by the end of the two days, I found that the techniques used by the presenters of the workshops I attended released rather than sapped my energy. While still mulling over the vivid and

amazing images that surfaced during a hypnotic relaxation exercise on the first day, the next morning I was plunging into a psychodrama to establish the power of the therapist in society, followed after lunch by an analysis of the role of organisations and their power structures. Heavy stuff, but working with a variety of techniques in both small and large groups through exercises, fantasies and discussion, I found it a dynamic and stimulating experience.

While examining myths, images and metaphors of power I didn't know I had, and discovering how they help and hinder the effective and appropriate use of power in different situations, I became increasingly aware of the process behind the ebb and flow of my sense of power while participating in different groups at the conference, from electrifying vitality to virtual paralysis - an unexpected bonus to carry back to my training group.

It was too much really to absorb in two days. Some presenters were used to working in longer time-spans, I think, and offered too much material for me to assimilate, and there was never enough time for discussion, making contact with all those interesting like-minds, for tea, coffee and the loo. Although I felt too much had happened to me in too short a time, greedily irrational I was sorry to have missed the other presentations, particularly Geoff Whitfield's Bioenergetic experience and John Rowan's Supervision workshop. At the plenary session others voiced their disappointment that choices had to be made and enthusiasm for the conference content was expressed in hopes of extended/residential events in the future. The conference had clearly been a success: as a trainee I felt inspired.

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### **A Master's Degree in Body-oriented Psychotherapy and Education**

This programme, developed by Will Schutz for Antioch University, San Francisco, is now being offered to potential students in Great Britain. The course will combine the insights of leaders of the body/mind field as F.M. Alexander, Wilhelm Reich, Elsa Gindler, Moshe Feldenkrais, and Ida Rolf with humanistic and more traditional psychology. There is a hope that an international student body will help to articulate somatics in a broader framework with an awareness of how racial and cultural differences affect not only our body movements and posture but also our viewpoints. Dr. Don Johnson, Director of Holistic Studies at Antioch University will be in Northern Europe in April and early May. If anybody is interested in meeting him, please let Self and Society know as soon as possible and we will try to arrange this.

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