

**Foundations In BP: Genealogy Paper**

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In this genealogy paper I will discuss how my personal influences have led me to pursue my MA in Somatic Psychology, touch on the differences between bodywork and body psychotherapy, my views on bringing creativity, intuition, and contemplative practice in my therapeutic modality, and diversity and multicultural issues.

### **Verbal Discussion and Presentation**

My presentation is a summary of the topics discussed in this paper. It is intended to provide the class with an integrated perspective on how my background has shaped how I came to be here, how I'm working on integrating my background into BP, my perspective on where I am looking to take this work, and some of the challenges I feel lie ahead.

### **Personal Influences**

For me, the most coherent way to relay the personal influences that led me to pursue my MA in Body Psychotherapy is to break them into three groupings. As a child I tested as being bright, but also as being a person who lives with dyslexia and ADHD. I became very interested in sports, and by the time I reached high school I'd started putting a lot of energy into competitive skiing, while managing to get by at a college prep school that was quite rigorous. At this point in my life I read Dan Millman's, *Way of the Peaceful Warrior*. It was the first time I'd been exposed to a link between sports and spirituality, which probably would have been called mindfulness had the book been written today. Competitive skiing was a discipline in which I found my Zen and my willingness to allow myself to excel. I transitioned from skiing to competitive cycling, a brutal sport, and through this I found my way into studying Sports Science at the U of U on the Sports

Psychology Track. Through cycling I learned a lot about self-discipline, attention, pain management and goal setting, as well as developing a solid background in physiology, anatomy, and general psychology; all of which supports my interest in working as a somatic therapist. While I was part of a structured ski program, the framework of my undergraduate experience solidified my interest and knowledge of the mind/body connection. As Terry Orlick said, “No one can tell you how important something is in your life; that is your decision” (Orlick, pg. 174). I always paired this quote with Kent Bostick’s: “The will to win is nothing without the will to prepare.” In other words, how much we want the goal is only relevant if we are committed to doing the work. Cycling led me into parachuting – through skydiving and BASE jumping I honed my ability to track myself in space, to manage fear, risk and, unfortunately, how to deal with profound loss. Parachuting led me to climbing – alpine climbing has become one of my passions. It has consolidated and integrated my broad/deep athletic interests, bridging embodiment and mindfulness in ways that give me a rich well from which to draw when looking at how the body and brain integrate to form the mind.

Secondly, after graduating I went into recruiting. It was the beginning of the dot-com boom, and at the time there was a lot of opportunity in tech recruiting. From general tech I began recruiting for trading systems, setting the stage for my recruitment by Citadel Investment Group to be their VP of IT Recruiting during a period when they doubled their IT staff in a year – a very intense professional experience. The Head of HR at Citadel came from GE, and brought GE’s practices around Topgrading (Smart, 1999) and Behavior Based Interviewing, which grew out of Industrial Organizational Psychology Practices. This experience helped me develop my interviewing and assessment skills, and exposed me to

using probes, open-ended questions, and building programs/initiatives around digging beneath peoples narratives to discover how their behavior/choices did or did not line up with their intentions.

After Citadel I formed my own recruiting/consulting company, which I ran for seven years, and did consulting around recruiting program development and structured interviewing processes, including presenting at several MS Level Career Workshops at NYU Curren. By 2011, I finished a project for The World Gold Council in India, and reached a point where I was done with recruiting – professionally, emotionally, and spiritually. I hit a wall and knew I needed to make major life changes, so I cut the cord and shut my business down, having no idea of what I was going to do next.

Lastly and most relevantly, perhaps, this was in this chapter of life in which I wanted to connect with my children. I didn't want to be my father and miss my kid's childhood. By volunteering in my daughter's class I came to realize I really enjoyed working with the kids who were presenting with challenges around ADD/ADHD and dyslexia. This led me to begin looking at grad programs, which led me to speak with Kelly about the Somatic Program at Naropa. Kelly advised me to seek some clinical exposure to help my candidacy. This advice led me to BIPR (Boulder Institute for Psychotherapy and Research) where I landed a one-year Bachelor's-level internship around Program Development for ADD/ADHD, working with Cindy Divino, BIPR's executive director. Dr. Divino referred me to Geoff Ochsner who worked with that population, and was also a Neurofeedback (NFB) practitioner. In addition to exploring training with Geoff, I was assessing NFB as a treatment for ADHD. After a mere three weeks of training with Geoff, I signed up to go do my Didactic Training in NFB at the ISNR Conference in 2013. Upon completing that training

I went to work for Geoff doing NFB trainings in a clinical setting for the 10 months prior to the start of school. Through my work with BIPR and at the clinic I came to believe that the first step of working with ADD/ADHD is embodiment – you have to get people into their bodies before they can train attention. NFB training for ADHD works by training Sensory Motor Rhythm waveform on the sensory motor strip in the brain (Arns, et al, 2012). This is the greatest point of intersection for me into my BP lineage as this maps into Pat Ogden's work with Sensorimotor Psychotherapy.

My background maps my place in the lineage of Pat Ogden's BP work with Sensorimotor Psychotherapy, as her work looks at re-integrating "her clients' disconnection from their bodies, their physical patterns and their psychological issues" (<https://www.sensorimotorpsychotherapy.org/about.html>). Dr. Ogden's work looks through a different lens at the neuroscience of the roles sensory motor loops plays in psychology, behavior, and trauma, among others. Ogden was a student of Ron Kurtz, and cofounded the Hakomi Institute with him in 1981. Under this umbrella she launched The Sensorimotor Psychotherapy Institute here in Boulder.

Kurtz's work with Hakomi, and bringing mindfulness and nonviolence to psychotherapy as a means to strengthen the therapeutic bond, is also, therefore, part of the lineage with which I feel aligned. In particular, Kurtz's differentiation of energy vs. information-based models speaks to my somatic orientation, that "minds are information systems" (Kurtz pg. 35). In this way kindness and compassion are not limited resources – by giving compassion to ourselves, our clients, and others around us, we increase our world's accessibility to compassion, as we have made another copy.

The Moving Cycle, as defined by Caldwell (1997), is an operational framework that I believe will serve to integrate my sports psychology and I/O psychology into the framework of being a skilled body psychotherapist.

The work of Edward Podvoll also is something I want to study more. His paper, "Uncovering the Patient's History of Sanity" (Podvoll, 2002), reconceptualized many notions around illness, pathology, and wellness, suggesting that rather than trying to treat away what is sick, perhaps we can expand on what is well, and that through courage and compassion, healing can occur in cases where most would give up hope.

Moshe Feldenkrais's work also aligns with my current orientation within BP. His work with alignment, motor learning, and the wisdom of how an integrated body/mind psychotherapy can work is a process I wish to learn more about as I go forward. Feldenkrais developed a whole system for kinesthetic awareness and alignment as a means to align the mind, as well as the body.

Fritz Perls' Gestalt therapy work paved the way for those I've already spoken about by looking at the interactions of systems as both a whole and the sum of parts.

There also are the contributions of Wilhelm Reich, who was a student of Freud until his expressed views and his Jewish heritage led to his fall from grace with the rise of fascism in Germany. One of Reich's most profound contributions was the idea that we should "attack neurosis by its prevention rather than treatment" (as cited in Bennett, pg. 114), a very early call to promote wellness.

### **Bodywork and Body Psychotherapy**

I understand that there is a historical context to pairing bodywork and body psychotherapy, and that this is partly how the field has evolved. I also appreciate that for therapists who approach BP with a bodywork background there could be rich modalities that blend the two. For me the use of touch – be it a hand on a shoulder, a hug when it’s appropriate, and as a means to specify, intensify, or relieve a sensation or tension – is something I can see integrating into my practice in similar ways to how a coach, personal trainer, kinesiologist, or physical therapist would use touch – that is, to bring awareness to particular area, muscle, or movement. While the USABP ethical guidelines say that “the use of touch has a legitimate and valuable role as a body-oriented intervention when used skillfully and with clear boundaries, sensitive application and good clinical judgment” (<http://usabp.org/about-us/usabp-code-of-ethics>), I do not intend to integrate bodywork into my practice at this time. Perhaps my feelings on this will change after taking Dr. Caldwell’s class on touch in BP next year. From my current perspective as a first-year somatic student, the linkage of these practices feels overly weighted, while sports psychology, physiology, and NFB/BFB map into BP more for me, as much as bodywork might for someone else.

### **Creativity, Intuition, and Contemplation**

For me, creativity is to the therapeutic process what “free flow” is to movement, in the language of Laban. If we are truly to meet the client where they are at, we must be able to draw creative applications from a tool kit we are committed to expanding as our skills and experience develop. Just this week I was in a session with a client, and her dilemma of

how to navigate her current and past relationship prompted me to implement a Gestaltian experiment. It was something I'd never done before, but it seemed to align with what she needed, so I went with it. In this case it worked out, but I'm sure if we get creative, sometimes we will miss. However, if we stick to a script we will likely fail in developing our therapeutic alliance and attunement.

Intuition seems to have two distinct contexts for the sake of this paper: The first is gut intuition, having a sense that something is about to happen. While this is a great skill, I'm not sure how one would go about improving one's performance of this form of intuition beyond greater attunement to one's gut. The second is having a sense of where someone or something is going. There is an element of given talent or ability to tune in that can help this develop, but more so I believe this form of intuition comes from experience and commitment to professional development. One builds on past experiences to begin seeing connections that would have gone unnoticed at earlier phases of his development as a therapist. A commitment to personal/professional development, attunement to our clients, and the ability to draw on a deeper/broader professional experiences are the foundations of developing this second form of intuition. This is a critical skill for therapists to hone.

Contemplation begins with curiosity and learning to befriend oneself. I came to Naropa and chose a Contemplative MA Program because Naropa's merging of Eastern and Western philosophies of education, and emphasis on deep personal reflection appears to be a means to facilitate being in service to the world in which we live. Contemplation as a therapist is the combination of compassion and curiosity; forming an essential building block a nurturing therapeutic relationship.



### **Diversity and Multicultural Perspective**

This is a complex and challenging topic. It's everywhere and it's rarely simple. As a straight, white male, I'm only now gaining perspective on how just being me carries tremendous privilege. I would mostly like to stay open and curious rather than profess that I possess sweeping wisdom on this topic. It is undeniable that prominent white people are in my lineage. My experience working on Wall Street was by far the most ethnically diverse population I've been apart of – far more so than Naropa or Boulder – but the culture was Citadel and/or Wall Street, so that doesn't map apples to apples. They do a far better job, however, of hiring men and women from various racial and cultural backgrounds than I've seen anyone give them credit for. Being one of two men in a 26-person cohort is an immersion learning experience of what it is like to be in the minority.

I have been actively pro-LGBT rights from a very early age, and feel very strongly about social justice for all people. How macro-level oppression and marginalization layer over other cultural and institutional layers is something I'm looking forward to – with a small knot in my stomach – learning more about. How this will affect my skills and abilities as a therapist is also something I'm holding space for, more than claiming wisdom three months into this process.

One thing that really complicates this topic for me is that I have the history of being a straight, white man with some learning challenges that has, on many occasions, marginalized me as a “special needs” person. Often this placed me in institutions, the majority of which were designed, governed, and administered by women. That my population of interest is largely ADD/ADHD and dyslexic boys and men who have and/or

are living with experiences similar to mine, has me feeling braced for impact that I'm just not on board with the philosophical orientation of the institution. Without trying to be dramatic, I feel that it is going to be a steep learning curve and a challenging process to reconcile multiple perspectives to expand my own. As Dan Siegel said when he spoke on campus, "It is not my fault, but it is my responsibility" to be a contributing member of a society that drives a shift to social justice. I'm signed up to be aware of own my part of the problem and the solution, and to take meaningful action. From where I currently sit, how to reconcile all of this and still be of service to marginalized boys and men is looking like a high-wire juggling act. I am curious how much support and/or resistance I'm going to encounter on this path. Until this chapter of my life I would have kept my head down, my mouth shut, and soldiered on, but if I'm going to embody my own contemplative practice and critical thinking path, my felt need to not hide my perspective or to be closed to others are both essential elements to taking responsibility for creating a more compassionate world – something I would like to be part of the lineage I leave behind for everyone.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion I am approaching my process and path to become a somatic psychotherapist with a better understanding of how my background can/will integrate into the work of the people who have come before me. As well with a better understanding of how the beliefs that are syntonetic for me and my intended modality of practicing. Finally that I have given significant contemplation to challenges and blind spots that will need to be addressed in in my professional development.

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