


# POLITICS OF PLEASURE

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In the Beginning there was Desire,  
and it was Desire that created the world ...

太初有欲，欲创造了世界

# Pleasure Scan

- What are the most pleasurable things you do in your life?
- What was the most pleasurable experience you can remember?
- What were the most pleasurable things you did in the last week?
- What are the pleasurable things you did that people around you either do not understand or do not accept?

# What is so bad about feeling good?

- The fear of pleasure: The fear of chaos, the fear of losing self
- Pleasure as reward and the work ethic: Working and earning, the idea of deserving
- Pleasure as commodity:
  - The pleasure industry and the market
  - Manufacturing pleasure
- Regulating pleasure
  - What is being regulated?
  - Regulation for whose benefit?
- The fear of punishment, exclusion, dehumanization

# Desire & Pleasure

- Erotic desire and sexual pleasure: Desiring and experiencing pleasure
- Physical, sensory
- Emotional: Needs, fantasies, self-completion/fulfillment (including the desire to be desired), transcendence
- Interpersonal: Connection, bonding, intimacy
- Cognitive, meaning, significance (can include spiritual, political, existential signification)

# The Many Names of Desire

- 欲 (*yu*)/慾
- Needs
- Wants/Wish/Wunsch
- Desire/Desir (Lacan, Kristeva)
- Aim (Freud)
- Interest (Parsons)
- Goals
- Aspiration
- Motivation
- Demand
- Utility
- Incentive
- Rights
- Entitlement
- Access

# Eros and Sex

## Erotic

- Time: can be condensed or diffused
- More into public space
- Primarily autonomous and agentive
- Wider range of objects, non-human objects and activities
- More linked to felt-sense, emotions or feelings

## Sexual

- Time: more likely to be condensed
- Usually put into private space
- Transitive and/or inter-subjective
- Usually linked to human objects or interpersonal significance
- More prominent as action, performance, or behavior

# Desire and Justice

## Why Am I Interested?

- Desire is an integral aspect of our being, the energy that drives us through life
- Being able to experience, understand, embrace, express, and actualize our desire is central to our well-being
- Erotic and sexual desires are systematically conditioned, suppressed and/or restrained through multiple forms of social regulation or disciplinary practices
- Social regulation of desire can be destructive and oppressive: People are punished for who they are and for realizing their desire and potential





# Critical Justice Issues

- People not allowed to be who and what they are
- People punished for trying to realize their desires
- Life-chances for being themselves and realizing their desire are unevenly distributed, especially when they are denied or severely compromised.
- Factors contributing to such uneven distribution/access include identity politics, dominant discourses, material conditions, and personal capacity
- Social work is not only interested in analysis, but also in change. Such change can occur on multiple levels: Personal, family, community, social, cultural, and policy.

# Justice Issues

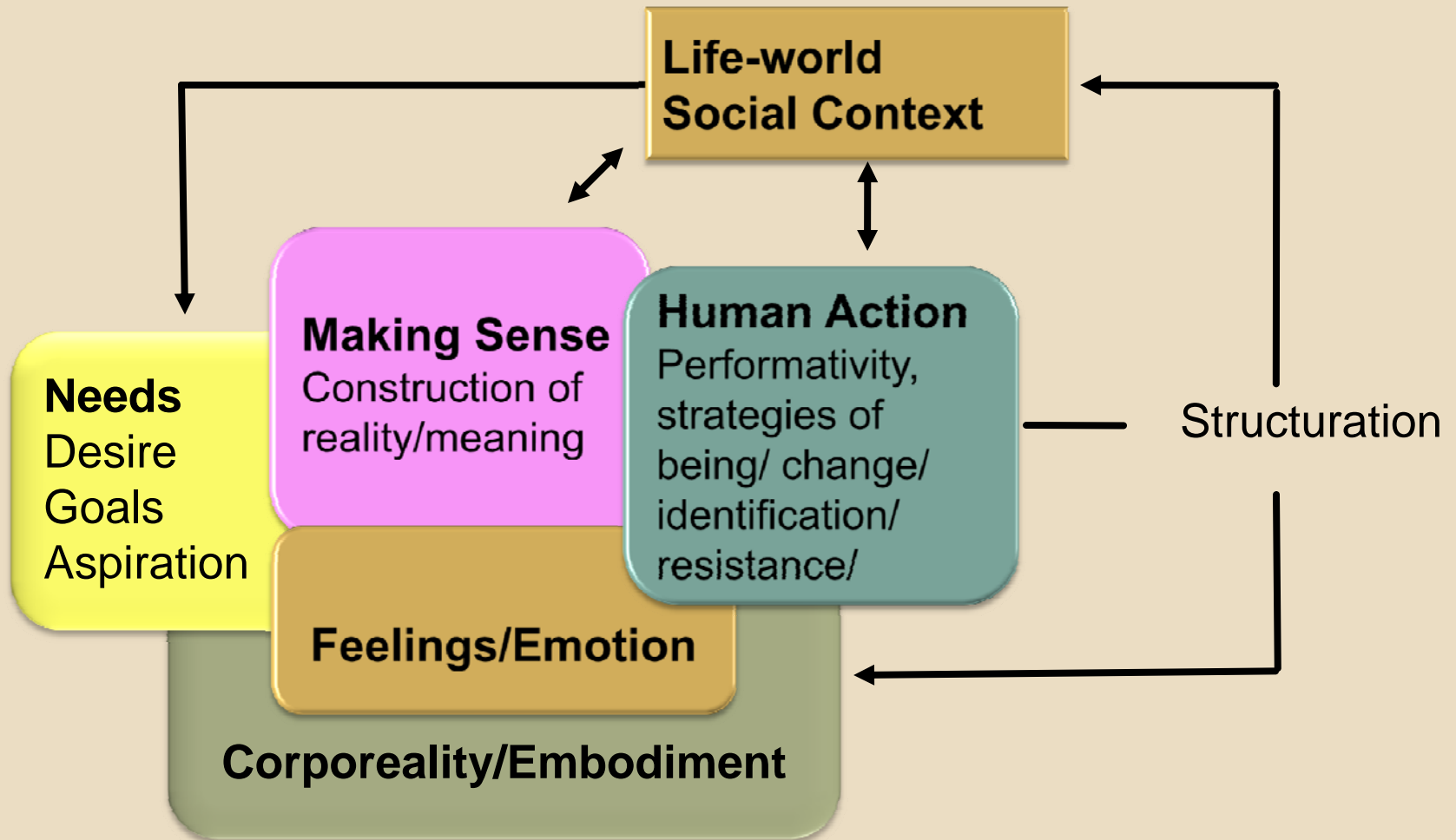
## Injustice

- Prohibition of acts, articulation, speech, expression
- Reconstructed to deny, suppress, denigrate, demonize, erase, obliterate
- Punishing people for who they are
- Depriving people of life-chances, opportunity, access, etc.

## Justice

- Rights
- Claims
- Identity
- Equity regarding preference, choice
- Access, enabling, facilitating (including personal capacity, options, means)

# Agentive Beings and the Life-world



# Regulation of Desire

- Differential legitimization: heteronormality and the marriage myth
- Good and bad sex
- Sexual citizenship
- The culture of nature and the perversion of desire
- Identity and sense of self: Performance and being
- Political economy of life-chances

# Desire and the Political Economy of Life-Chances

- The market as space for meeting needs and desires
- Subjects and objects, intersubjectivity
- Value as sexual beings and social exchange
- Sexuality as polythetic commodity
- The creation of sexual value/utility – not a zero-sum game
- Intersecting diversities and the PC (political correctness) market – currently dominated by queer, gender and multicultural issues.
- Exclusion, denial, exploitation
- Sacrificing the sexual: Order and self-preservation

# Internalized Oppression

*The most powerful weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed*      *Steven Biko (1946-1977)*

- Internalization and the formation of self
- Automation of social control
- Participation and becoming agents of control, regulation, and oppression
- All social change involves individual change in thought and action

# Strategies of Change

- Trespass and revolt: Deviating from the socially scripted life
- Agency, empowerment, and self-efficacy: working with the marginalized and disenfranchised
- Discourse management and negotiation: Subverting current scripts, re-scripting, new scripts
- Getting organized: Personal and collective empowerment
- Strategies and Skills Learning and Development (SSLD) and Anti-oppressive practice (AOP)