

*In the beginning was Desire.
And it was Desire that
created the World ...*

Sexuality and Social Work

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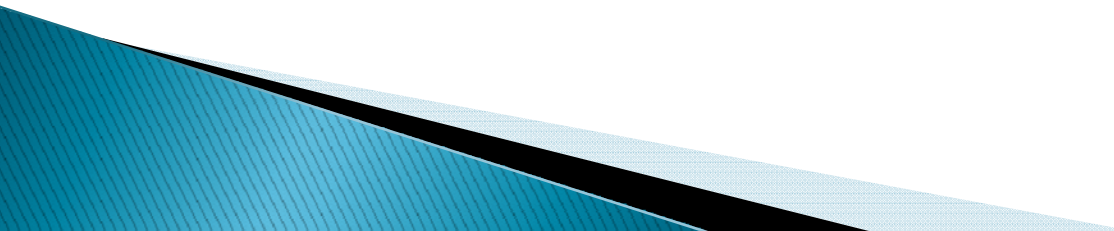
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Is there a place for sex?

- ▶ What are the client situations and issues related to sexuality you have come across in your work?
 - ▶ When you deal with these issues or situations, what challenges have you faced?
 - ▶ What kind of knowledge and skills you think will best support your professional work?
 - ▶ What kind of social, cultural, and organizational/policy change will enhance your work?
 - ▶ Do you anticipate change in your own values, beliefs, and behaviors related to sexuality as a result of this program?
 - ▶ Can you describe some of these anticipated changes?
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The Language of Sexuality

- ▶ Sexuality as a social construct
 - Not a universal concept
 - A particular way of organizing our life-world
 - ▶ The language of sexuality – from sin and crime to sickness and health
 - ▶ Health as well-being – the new metaphysics of the biological, the psychological, and the social
 - ▶ Liberation and a new structure of social regulation
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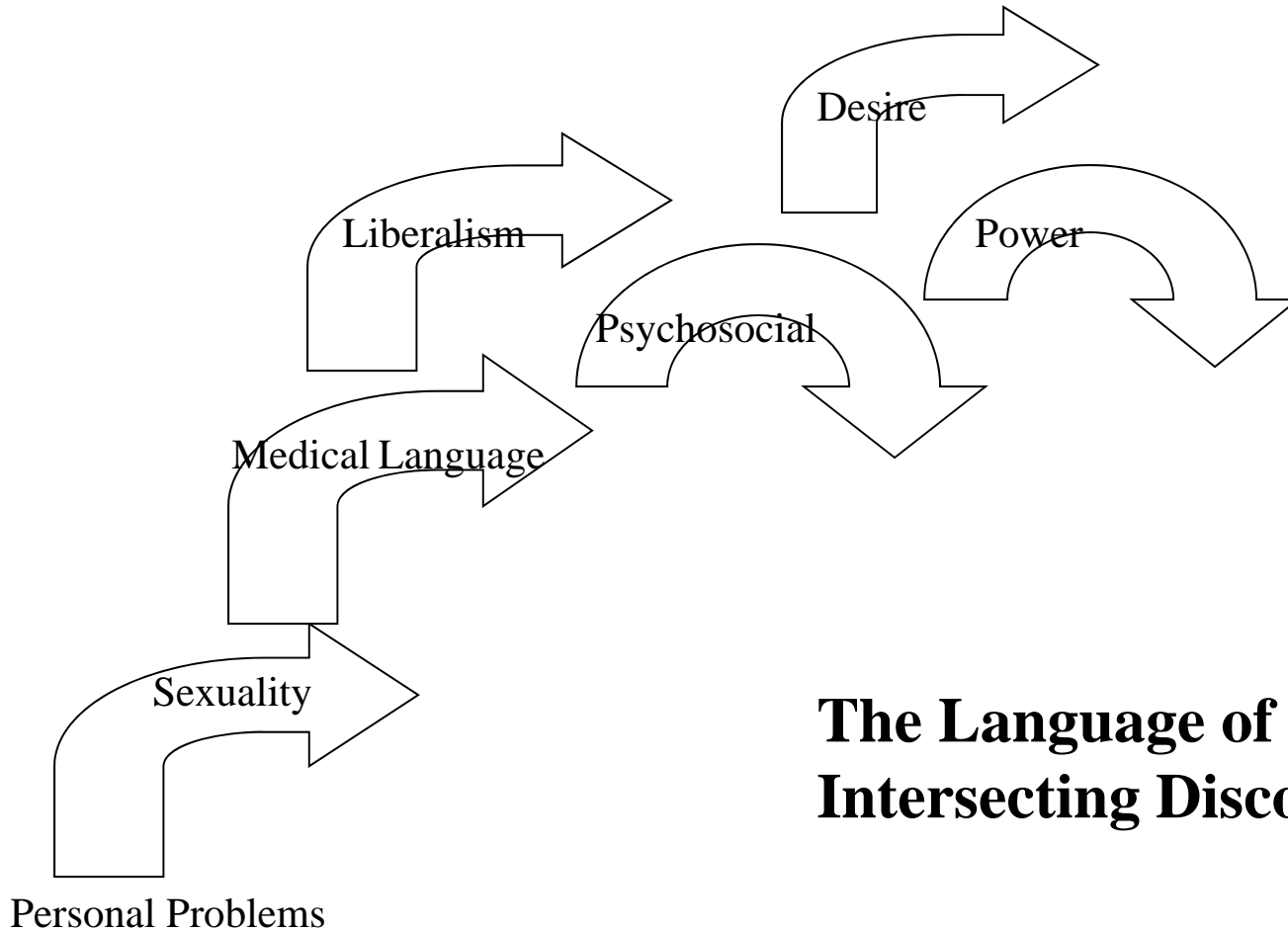
Imagining Sexuality

- ▶ **Biological Dimension:**
 - Genes, chromosome
 - Anatomy
 - Physiology
- ▶ **Psychological Dimension:**
 - Sexual drive
 - Sexual orientation
 - Sexual knowledge, attitude, and behavior
- ▶ **Social Dimension**
 - Social categorization of gender and sexual identity
 - Dominant discourse, social norm and conventional practice

Imagining Sexuality

The Other Dimensions

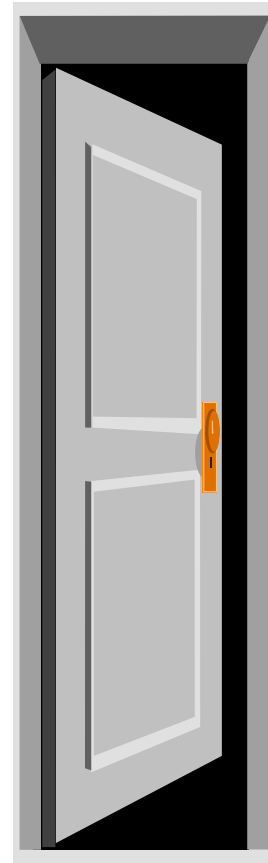
- ▶ Spiritual / Existential Dimension
 - Transcendence / Sacred
 - Ultimate concern / Superordinate structure
 - Metaphysics: holism versus Compartmentalization
 - Being, desire, connection
- ▶ Political Dimension
 - Power, control, domination
 - Political economy
 - Regulation, surveillance
 - Strategies of resistance/identification/being



The Language of Sex and Intersecting Discourses

Paradigm Shift – The World of Desire

- ▶ Desire and the ground of being – Putting the “being” back in well-being
- ▶ Desire as the driving force in human life
- ▶ Desire as appreciation, connection, and realization
- ▶ Desire as self-affirming, self-actualizing, and self-transcending

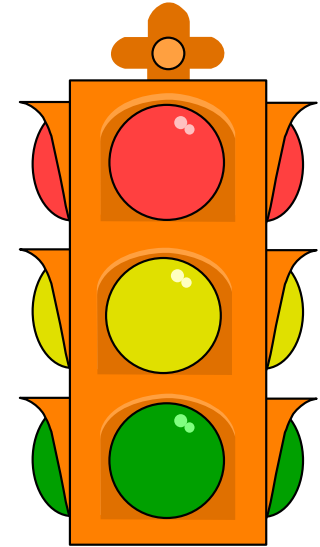


Healthy Sexuality: Regulating Desire



- ▶ The disease model – pathologizing the socially undesirable
- ▶ Diseases or dysfunction – materiality and social significance
- ▶ Health as normative – medicalizing the socially desirable
- ▶ Community and diversity – negotiating shared values

Regulating Desire: Institution and Discourse

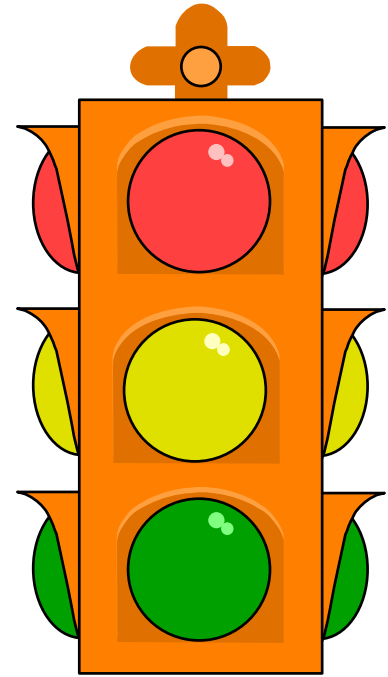


- ▶ The Marriage Mystique
 - restriction and surveillance
 - socially constructed life-script
 - denial of the reality of desire, perpetuation of hypocrisy and passing
 - missionary position: propagated world-wide through imperialistic imposition and/or colonial implantation
 - marital sex and the perversion of desire – family, private property, and commodification

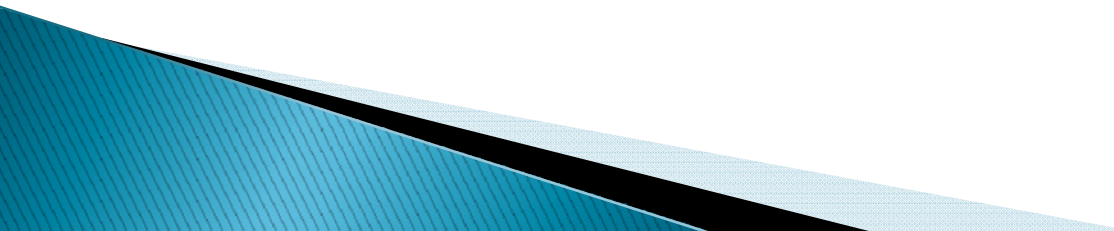
Regulating Desire: Institution and Discourse

▶ Romance and Consumerism


- Romance as consumption
- Individuality and conformity
- Resisting disciplinary practices and expanding our life-space
- Desire and being human



Healthy Sexuality and Beyond

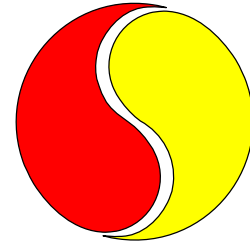
- ▶ Physical sexual well-being and the topology of pleasure – Beyond the Vagina Monologues
 - ▶ Psychological sexual well-being and personal fulfilment – Beyond gratification of psychological needs
 - ▶ Social sexual well-being – Beyond socially scripted lives
 - ▶ Erotic justice: The political as spiritual
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Rethinking Sex

- What are the forces that shape your current thinking, beliefs, values, attitude, and behavior?
- Religion, moral philosophy, ideology
 - Personal history, family background, particular events or experience/exposure
 - Culture, media
 - Scientific/Professional knowledge
 - Work of art, literature, movies etc.
 - Social and environmental (e.g., school, housing, space)
 - Significant others, peers
 - Other forces/factors
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The Dao of Desire

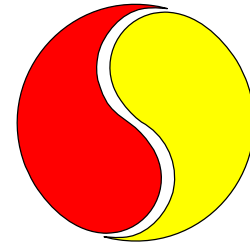
無欲則萎、反常合道



- ▶ Desire connects us to the ground of our being, and never stops expressing itself as long as we are alive
- ▶ Erotic desire seeks holistic connection with other human beings
- ▶ Holistic connection transports us to another realm of experience – Ecstasy
- ▶ Desire is fluid, unpredictable, overwhelming, awesome, and “dangerous” (associated with chaos and annihilation)

The Dao of Desire

無欲則萎、反常合道



- ▶ Fear prevents desire from emerging, becoming, and realizing itself
- ▶ Many of us need a sense of order and control
- ▶ The quest for fulfilment and ultimate well-being involves risk – we need the courage to be (different)
- ▶ We can never have full knowledge and control – we need faith
- ▶ Choosing transcendence is exciting but risky
- ▶ We can choose (or even desire) stability and order, but it is another path of faith

Workshop: Exploring The World of Desire

*Desire is at the ground of our being.
It is the force that articulates who we
are as human beings*

- Desire drives our action and major decisions in life
- Desire engages us with the aesthetic
- Desire connects us with the being of the other
- Desire takes us beyond ourselves
- Desire transports us beyond the common-sense-world



Desire and Fear

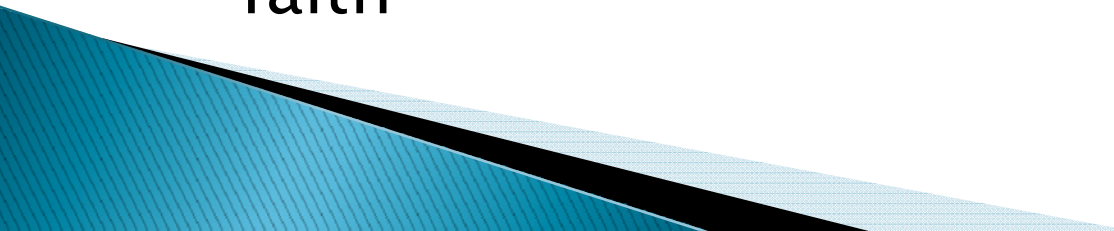
What desire can do

- Overwhelm us, throw us off balance
- Expose our “lack” incompleteness, and vulnerability
- Inspire awe, scare us
- Take us beyond the commonsense world

What society teaches

- Value control
- Associate desire with guilt, moral inferiority
- Associate pleasure with danger
- To conform, follow rules, in order to be accepted

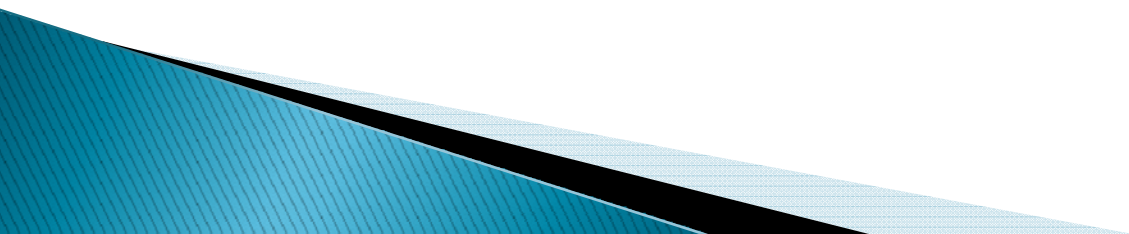
The Courage to Be: Risking Being Alive

- Desire is rarely allowed to emerge fully, for we do not give it the chance
 - We take in what is socially desirable as what we really desire – To have, to do, instead of to be
 - Society actually makes it dangerous for us to pursue our true desire (punishment, violence)
 - We need to give ourselves a chance to connect with Desire
 - Risk is inevitable, and we have courage and faith
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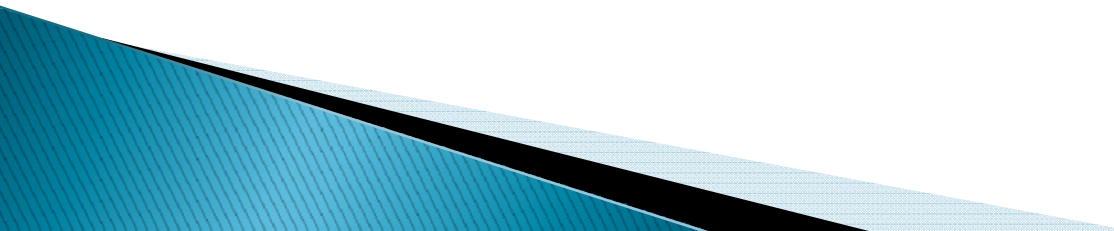
Exercise: Give Desire a Chance

1. Take five minutes, let your heart go, follow the emerging desire (life situation, state of being)
 - Do not censor or control any thought, idea, image
 - Let the situation/scenario emerge, and follow it through
2. Quickly make some notes (for your own reference only)
3. Sharing with the small group (3 members):
 - What have you learned/discovered?
 - What are the voices, concerns, and/or fears that interfered with your process?

The Social Work Agenda – What do you think social workers should do with regard to sexuality?




Social Work Intervention

- ▶ Clinical practice: Therapy and counselling
 - ▶ Psycho-educational programs
 - ▶ Institutional practice (e.g., residential service), organizational practice
 - ▶ Community practice and advocacy
 - ▶ Policy and public discourse
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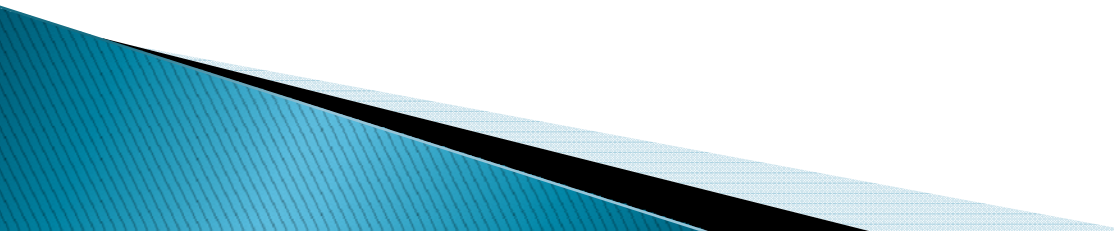
Direct/Clinical Practice

- ▶ Allowing the space for client presentation
 - Respecting the client's being and desire
 - Establishing safety and trust, free of judgment
 - Facilitation (profile/image, setting, information to client)
 - Dealing with our own internal process
- ▶ Working with specific issues
 - Desire, sexual being, identity and self image
 - Intimate relationships (including diverse, unconventional ones, e.g., same-sex, bisexual, multiple, EMA, BDSM, etc.)
 - Sexual dysfunction
 - STD (including HIV/AIDS) and other sexual-health issues
- ▶ Building professional knowledge and skills – an ongoing process

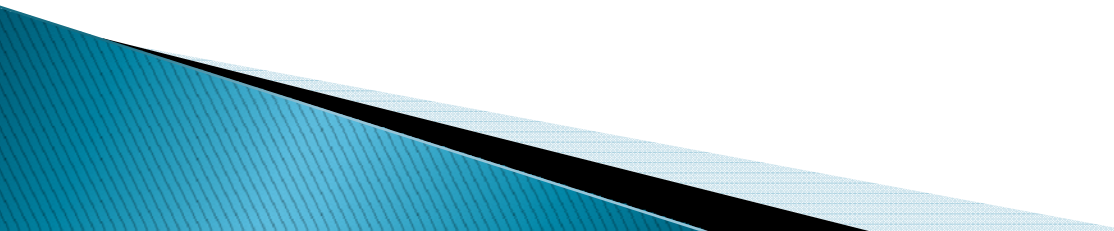
Psycho-educational Programs

- ▶ Indoctrination, control and disciplinary practice versus emancipation, liberation, and empowerment
 - ▶ Objectives and learning outcomes to be established with regard to the participants needs and goals (desire)
 - ▶ Recognizing the Knowledge-Action (K-A) Gap: The role of experiential and action-oriented learning
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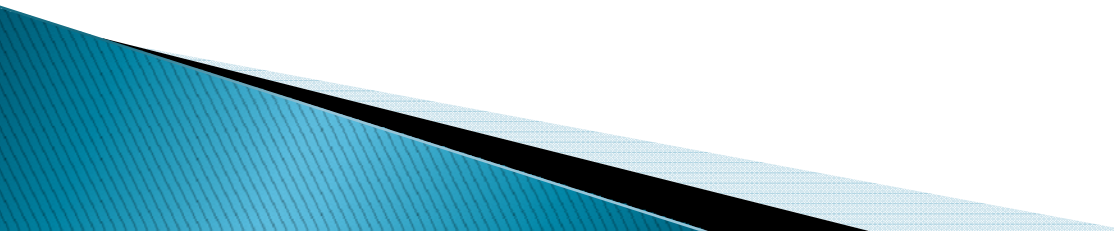
Institutional and Organizational Practice

- ▶ Social workers are often involved in the perpetuation and reproduction of social institutions; but at the same time we are supposedly agents of social change
 - ▶ Institutional influence is most effective when it is invisible, naturalized and taken for granted (e.g., the desexualization of older people, individuals with developmental issues or physical challenge)
 - ▶ Bringing about institutional or organizational change involves a dynamics of power
 - ▶ Power and discourse: Strategies of resistance and being – alliance building, subversion, discourse management, confrontation, etc.
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Community Practice and Advocacy

- ▶ Community building: Alliance, identity, and membership
 - ▶ Social movement as a matter of space: Propagation of ideas and bodies, (re) claiming of social space
 - ▶ Discourse: Voice, articulation, and (re) production
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Policy and Public Discourse

- ▶ Many public policies impact on sexuality, including housing, education, health, welfare, public security
 - ▶ Policy and legislative changes involve political processes
 - ▶ Public opinion, mediated and conditioned by public discourse, is a key process for social work
 - ▶ Lobbying, public discourse management, and community organizing
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Echoes to the Eschatological Laundry List*

(*borrowed from Sheldon Kopp's "If you meet the buddha on the road, kill him!")

- ▶ *Life is difficult and full of risks*
 - ▶ *You never know*
 - ▶ *Pleasure can be dangerous*
 - ▶ *You have to allow yourself to lose your grounding and to fall, in order to be in love*
 - ▶ *Love can make you feel helpless*
 - ▶ *There is no life without pain, suffering, and hurt*
 - ▶ *It is worth it nonetheless*
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