

Anti-Oppressive Practice in Social Work The SSLD Approach

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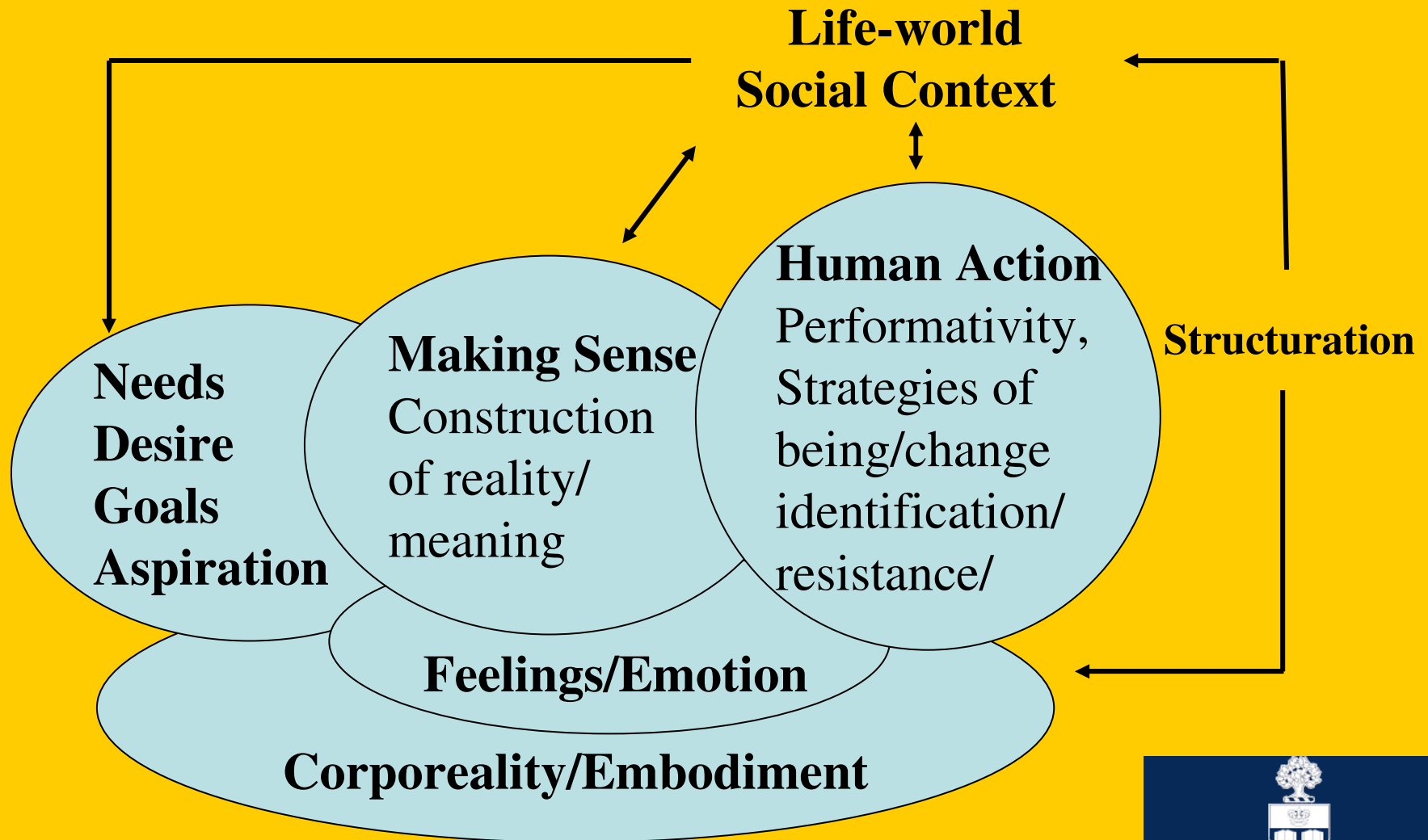
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Strategies and Skills Learning and Development (SSLD) and Anti-Oppressive Practice

- Aims at changing the social realities and material conditions in the life-world of the oppressed
- Change is brought about by individual and/or collective agentive action of the oppressed
- Focuses on action, not just critical analysis
 - Real life experience of oppression generates multi-layered knowledge and understanding, as well as subjective reactions
 - The intellectualization of oppression can be oppressive and disempowering
 - AOP rhetoric may meet the needs of privileged professionals more than those who are actually suffering from oppression



Agentive Beings and Their Lifeworld



- SSLD is an action-oriented procedure focusing on learning new ways to deal with social realities
- The primary objective of SSLD is to expand the repertoire of strategies and skills that individuals and/or social groups have so that they become more effective in attaining their desired goals in life
- SSLD draws on principles derived from social psychology, psychology of learning, including social cognitive and social learning theories
- Application of SSLD to AOP is informed by critical discourse analysis and anti-oppressive formulations



Basic Theoretical Premise

- Human beings are active agents, even when oppressed. Human actions are motivated and goal-directed.
- People react to oppressive realities, and they make choices and take action to deal with them
- Human action and external realities interact with each other; and there is a process of mutual influence and transformation (structuration, reciprocal determination)



Basic Theoretical Premise

- Human action is embodied and mediated by biological, motivational, cognitive, and emotional processes
- Most human actions are learned: Some are learned in informal, everyday situations (observation, modeling); and some are learned systematically (e.g., critical pedagogy, teach-ins, social work intervention)
- The effectiveness of human action varies with regard to
 - whether personal or collective goals are attained or realized
 - whether the oppressive social realities (institutions, practices, arrangements, etc.) and material conditions (e.g., availability of housing, income, medicine, clean water) are changed



Basic Theoretical Premise

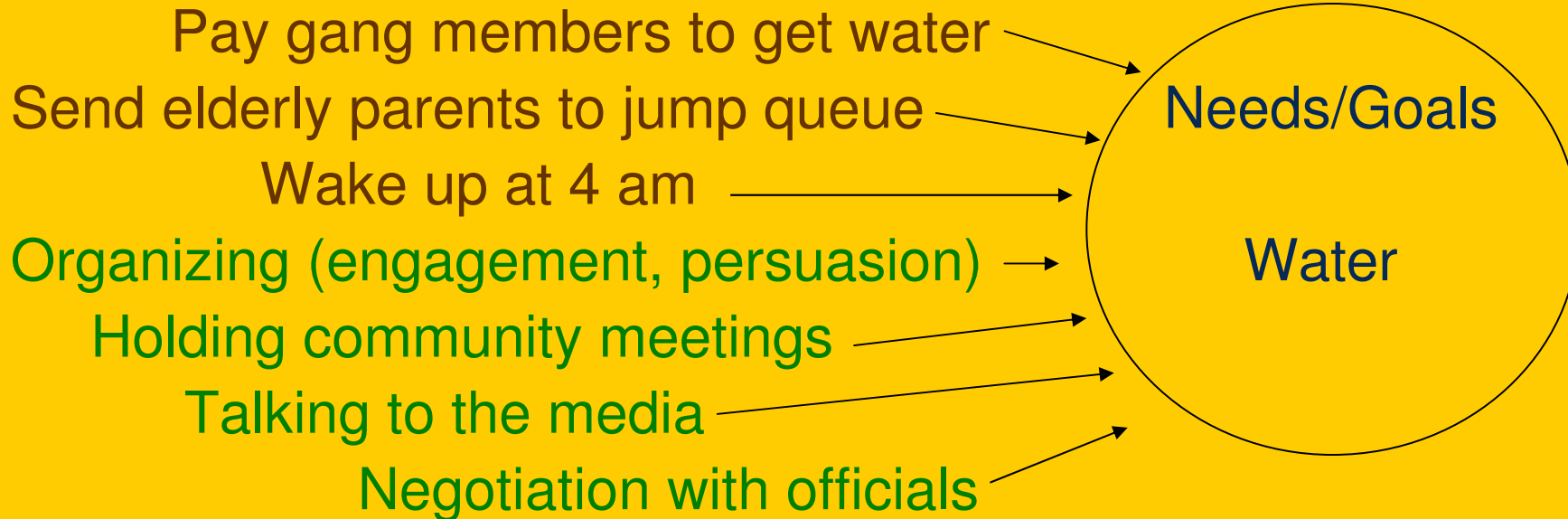
- Ineffective action (including empty talk and inaction)
 - Does not lead to positive change, but perpetuates, reproduces, and reinforces oppressive realities
 - deprives people of what they need and/or compromise their rights
- The mastery of new strategies and skills that are effective can lead to displacement of formerly learned ones that are ineffective or inappropriate
- Anti-oppressive strategies and skills can be learned and developed systematically



Case Illustration

Residents without Water Supply

ORIGINAL STRATEGIES



NEW STRATEGIES AND SKILLS

Case Illustration

Marginalization and Disadvantage Youth

ORIGINAL STRATEGIES

Criminal activities, act cool (dealing, vandalism, violence)

Joining gangs

Drug/alcohol abuse

Work/Economic survival

Stress management skills

Organization and leadership

Strategies for achieving pleasure

NEW STRATEGIES AND SKILLS



Case Illustration Abused Family Member

ORIGINAL STRATEGIES

Putting up, submission, appease →

Avoiding provocation →

Social networking →

Interpersonal skills →

Accessing/utilizing service →

Managing emotions →

Occupational/financial competence →

Needs/Goals
safety, order
self-esteem/efficacy
relationship
income

NEW SKILLS & STRATEGIES

Systematic Application of SSLD

1. SSLD analysis and problem translation
2. Designing new strategies and skills to be learned
3. Systematic learning of strategies and skills
4. Maintaining an organic, regenerative structure



SSLD Step 1

Functional Analysis & Problem Translation

1. Identifying needs

- Oppression and the politics of desire
- Distribution of resources and life chances
- Differentiating needs and wants

2. Setting goals

- Goals are meant to be achieved successfully
- Feasibility – risk of exposing the oppressed to further disempowerment

3. Functional analysis of current strategies

- Clients are always doing something in response to oppressive situations (strategies of being, resistance, and change)
- Strategies and skills audit: Identifying strength
- Capacity building and empowerment



SSLD Step 2

Designing new strategies and skills to be learned

1. Strategies and skills as goal directed acts produced by human agents
2. Human actions are learned
 - Actions and reactions are learned in an oppressive context
 - Internalized oppression: The most powerful weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed
 - Internalized oppression are often enacted, normalized and naturalized
3. Strategies and skills are actions leading to desired change/ outcome
 - Beyond politicized emotional ventilation and the NATO routine
 - Goal-oriented, likely to be effective
 - Incremental learning and mastery



Example

Political Participation in Incremental Levels

1. Passive Respondent
2. Active Respondent
3. Passive Participation
4. Active Participation
5. Task Leader and/or maintenance leader
6. Organizational Leader



SSLD Step 3

Systematic Learning

1. Learning can take place in groups or individually
2. Client centered experiential learning involving multiple domains: Motivation, intellectual, emotional, action
3. Systematic procedure
 - Instruction/modeling or collaborative generation
 - Experiential learning: Simulation, role play (video recording and review)
 - Rehearsal and practice in real life
4. Community capacity as collective repertoire of strategies and skills
 - Development and innovation
 - Acquisition, retention and transmission



SSLD Step 4

Maintaining an Organic and Regenerative Structure

1. The ultimate purpose of anti-oppressive practice is client autonomy and independence
2. A built-in function of SSLD is to enhance client agency through an expanded capacity to learn and develop effective strategies and skills
3. Clients (individuals or collectives) need to learn to work with the social worker and move through the phases of engagement, consultation, and self-directed utilization of service
4. Documentation and the development of modules
5. Clients can become leaders, trainers, and designers of programs and activities: TTT (Train the trainers)



Outcome of SSLD Intervention

1. Clients achieve their desired goal, and more effectively meeting their needs
2. Changes in clients' social realities and material conditions – reducing or eliminating actual oppression
3. Clients learn to respond to oppressive social realities with regard to instrumental strategies and skills for changing them
4. Clients' self-efficacy increases both in terms of subjective sense of agency as well as actual mastery of effective strategies of identity, being, resistance, and change
5. Clients become dynamic systems capable of further development, transmission and mobilization of strategies and skills
6. Clients are empowered vis-à-vis the social worker



Exercise: SSLD Analysis and Formulation

1. Describe a situation that requires AOP intervention
2. Identify the oppressive structures and processes
3. Analyze the problem focusing on clients needs that are unmet, ignored, denied, etc.
4. Analyze what clients are currently doing in response to the situation, assessing the functional value of such responses, including an audit of current capacity, resource, potential, and strength
5. Formulate alternative strategies that can address the situation more effectively (meeting client needs and aspirations)
6. Prioritize the relevant strategies; and design an incremental plan, identifying the first step(s)

