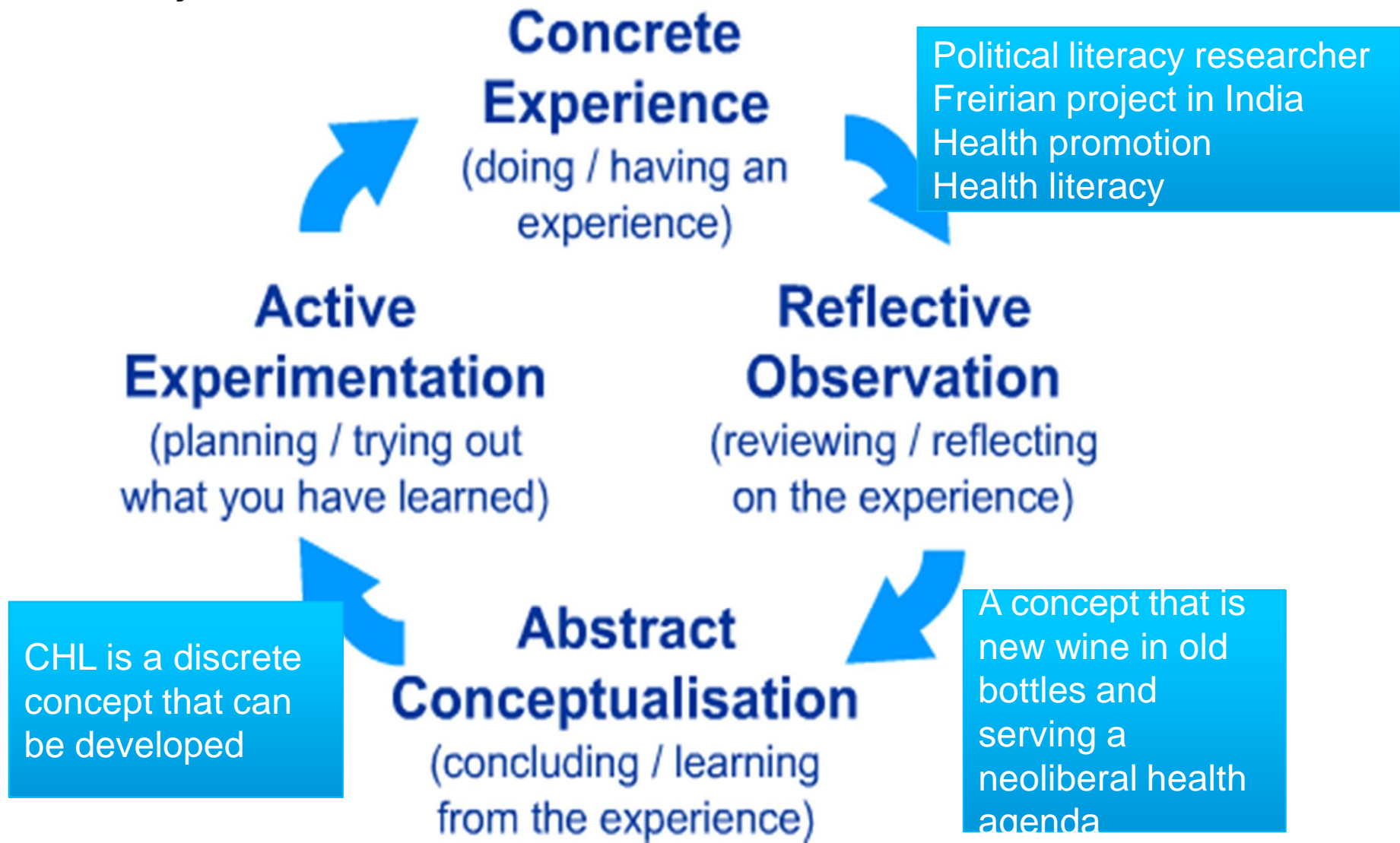


Critical Health Literacy: a prerequisite for active participation in health

Susie Sykes and Jane Wills



Active participation for health

Cognitive

- To access, understand and evaluate information

Interactive

- To navigate health systems

Critical action

- To be aware of the political nature of health equity and act individually or collectively to improve health [through the political system or social movements]

The many contexts in which health is created

Health is created
in the context of
everyday life:
where people *live, love,*
work and play.

Ottawa Charter 1986



Health in a consumer society

The healthy citizen in supportive environments with the competences to take up and respond to health imperatives: to read food labels, to read patient information leaflets, to do 5 x 30 minutes of activity per week.

Health Literacy is a *critical empowerment* strategy to increase people's control over their health, their ability to seek out information and their ability to take responsibility.

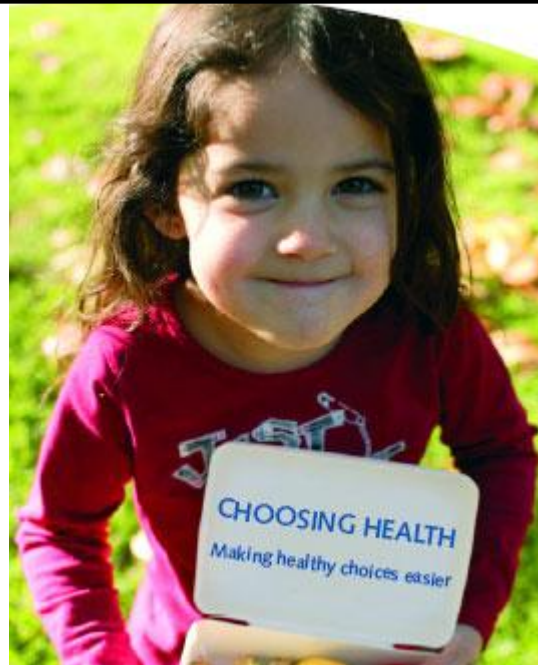
Kickbusch I , Maag D, (2005)
Health Literacy: towards active
health citizenship
at www.ilonakickbusch.com

Self management

living with
long-term anxiety?

The Expert Patient
Programme
is a self-management
programme for those with
long-term anxiety
who want to improve
their quality of life. [\[more\]](#)

Behaviour change



Access to health care



THE NHS
CONSTITUTION
the NHS belongs to us all

The Paradigm Shift for 21st century

20th Century – the patient/citizen in relation to professional knowledge is hierarchical/paternalistic

21st Century – need to “fully engage” the public as co-producers of health (collaborative partnership)

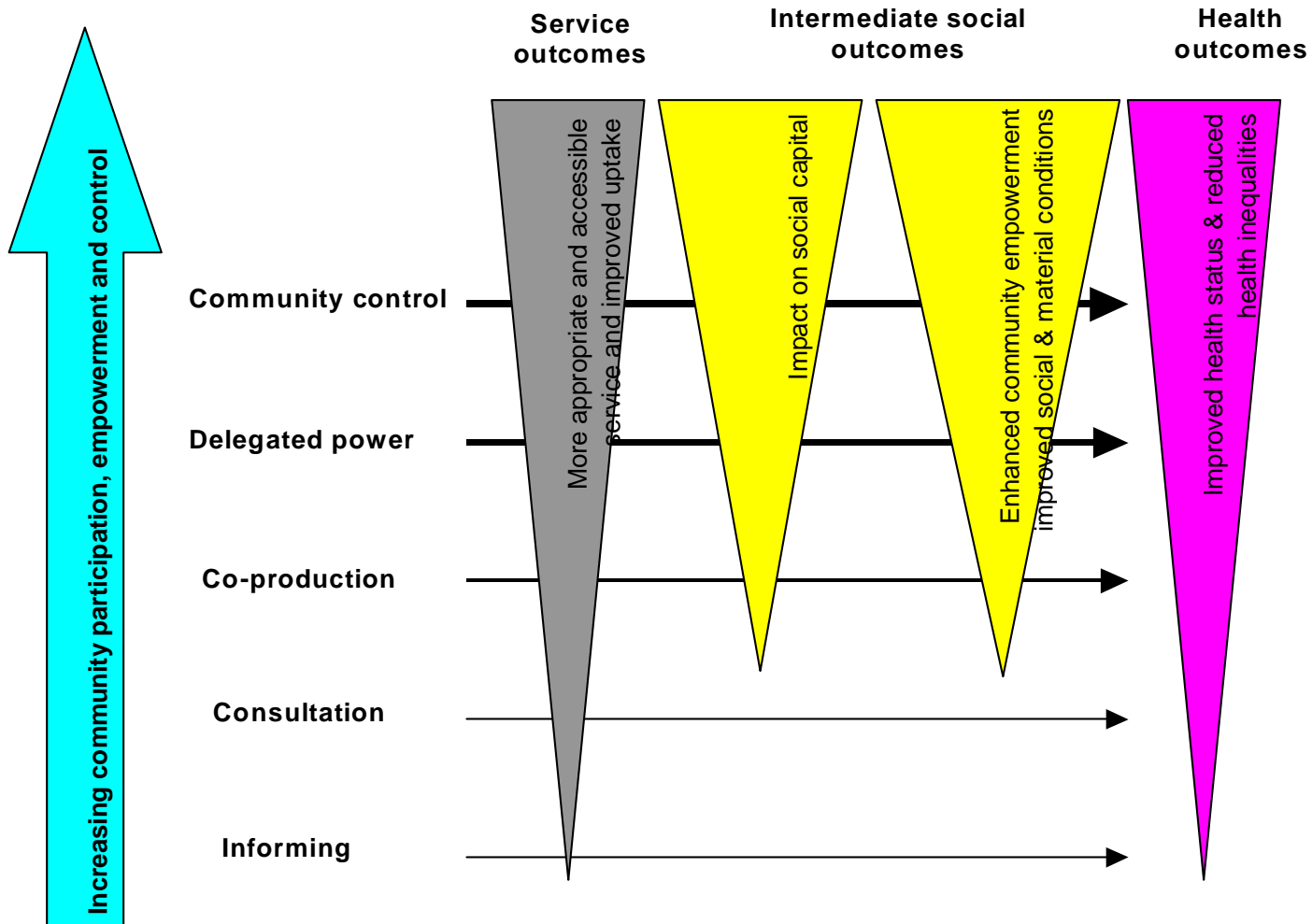
Health in a global civic society

The health actor has an understanding of the social determinants of health and root causes of the problems that affect them combined with the potential and skills to exercise over social, economic and/or political forces in order to improve their own situation

“Critical health literacy is a process in which citizens become aware of issues, participate in critical dialogue, and become involved in decision making for health.”

Zarcadoolas C, Pleasant A, Greer D: **Elaborating a definition of health literacy: a commentary.**
J Health Commun 2005, **8**:119-121.

Pathways from community participation, empowerment and control to health improvement



Health literacy to tackle the social determinants of health

The SDOH Commission's recommended actions to improve daily living conditions and tackle the inequitable distribution of power and resources are political goals and dependent on achieving a critically health literate citizenry.

Health literacy is an educational tool that can be used to 'inform, enlighten and empower individuals and communities so that they are aware of the political nature of health equity' (Sparks, 2009: 201).

Pedagogy for health action

1. Dialogue and co-production:

From the empty vessel to be filled (educated) to the nearly full vessel to be tapped: e.g. storytelling, testimony, oral history



2. Naming the world:

Situating educational activity in the lived experience of participants focuses the activity on naming the world and using this vocabulary to identify the 'causes of the causes' of ill health: e.g. discrimination, attitudes of health service staff



3. Action:

The desirability of praxis or action that is informed means not simply developing skills but making a difference and taking control over the determinants of health enhancing community and building social capital

What happened to Critical Health Literacy in the discourse of HL?

The starting point

“Critical health literacy reflects the cognitive and skills development outcomes which are oriented towards supporting effective social and political action as well as individual action... This type of health literacy can be more obviously linked to population benefit, alongside benefits to the individual” (Nutbeam 2000 p265)

Adoption of critical literacy as critical health literacy:

“More advanced skills for critically analysing information and using information to exert greater control over life events and situations.” (Ishikawa, Takeuchi and Yano 2008 p874)

Definitions that focus on the critical appraisal skills:

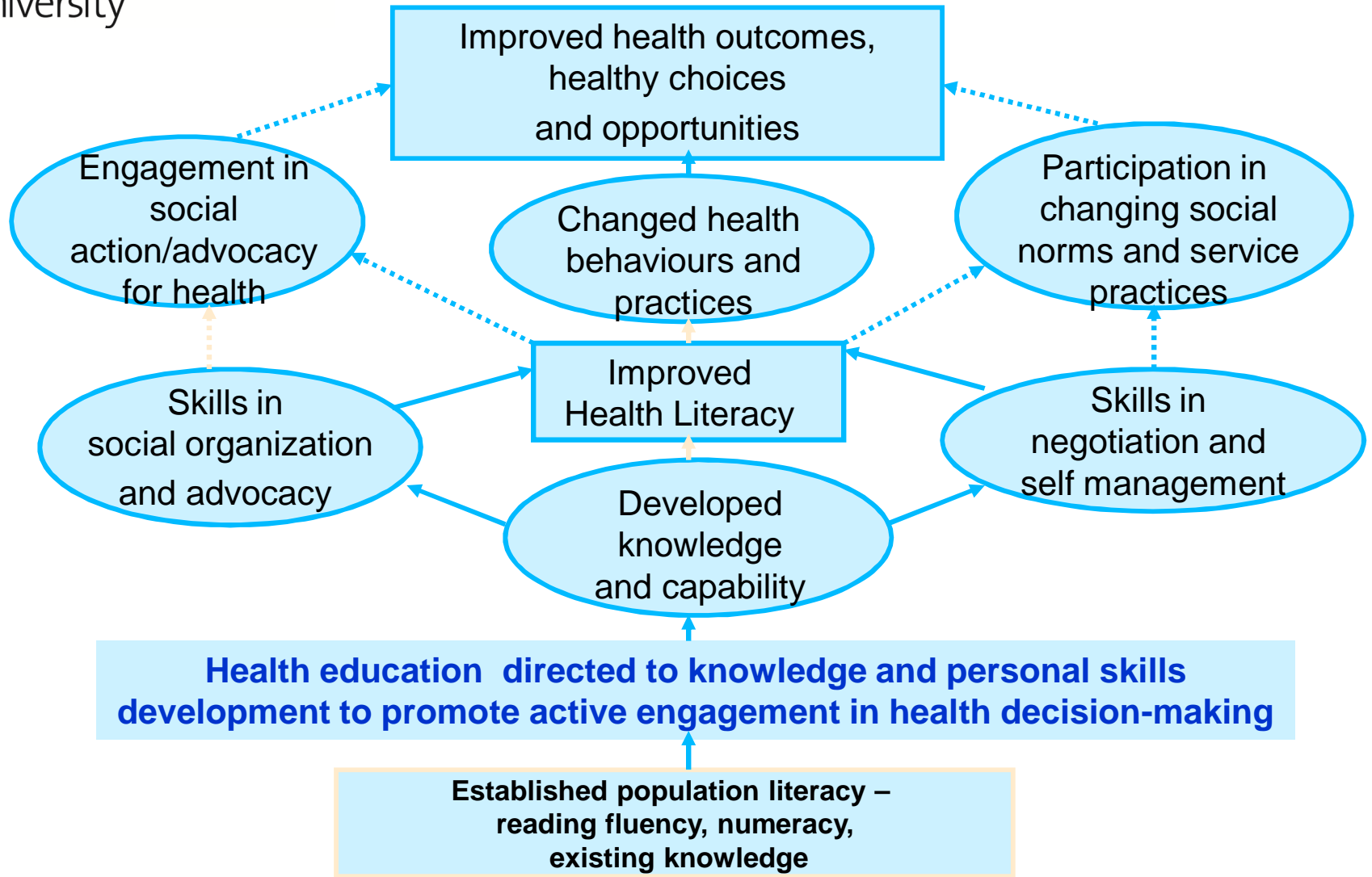
“Evidence based medicine (EBM may enhance consumers’ autonomy regarding health, since it enables decisions, based on evidence and not only on experts’ experiences and opinions. Competencies originating from this new concept are referred to as critical health literacy.” (Steckelberg et al 2009p158)

Definitions that focus on the individual:

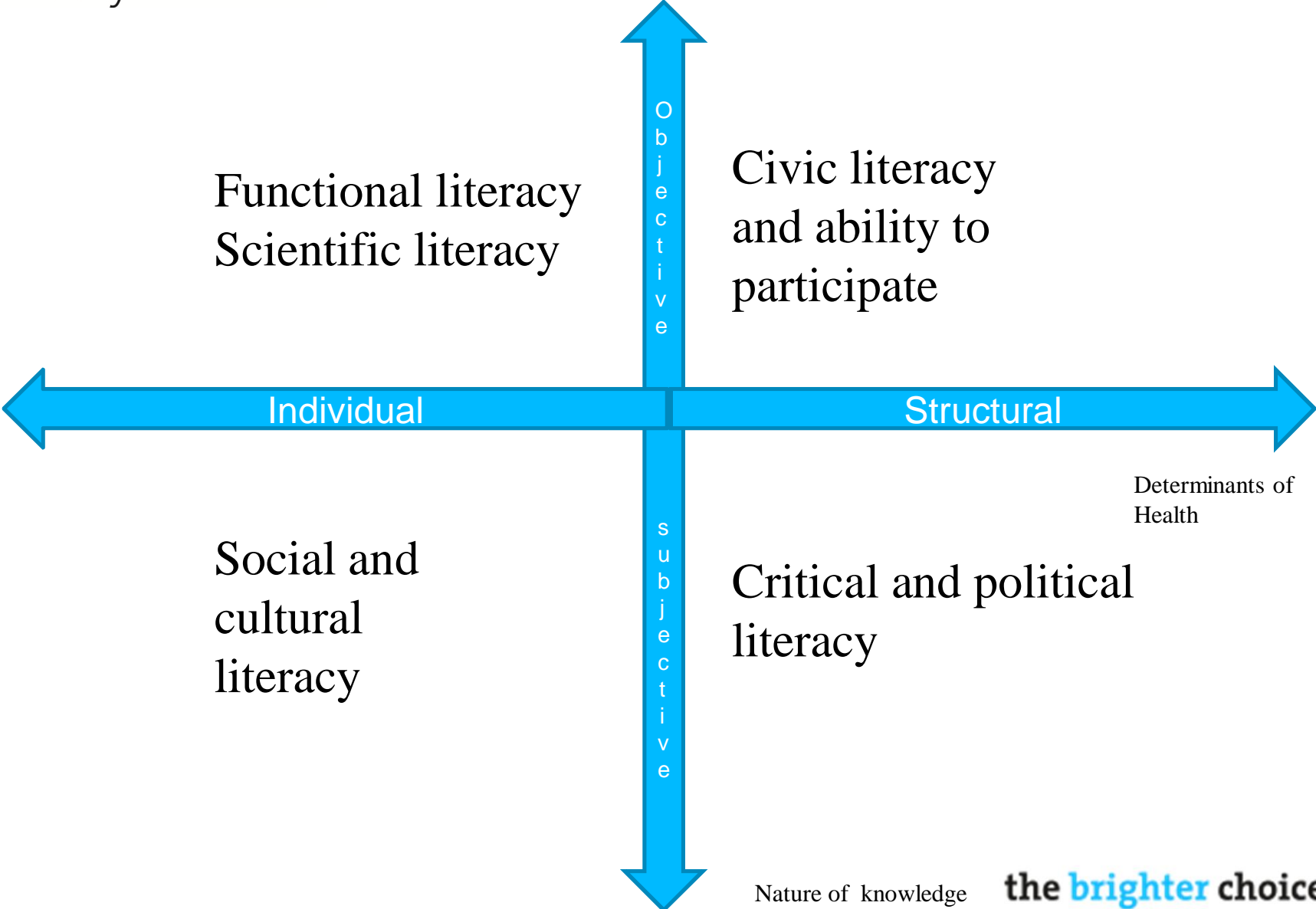
“Critical Health literacy (CHL) is a process of imparting health related competencies to individual citizens. Those competencies allow them to make informed and ‘sovereign’ decisions with positive effects for their health.” (Nebling and Jochem 2009 p38)

And more recently:

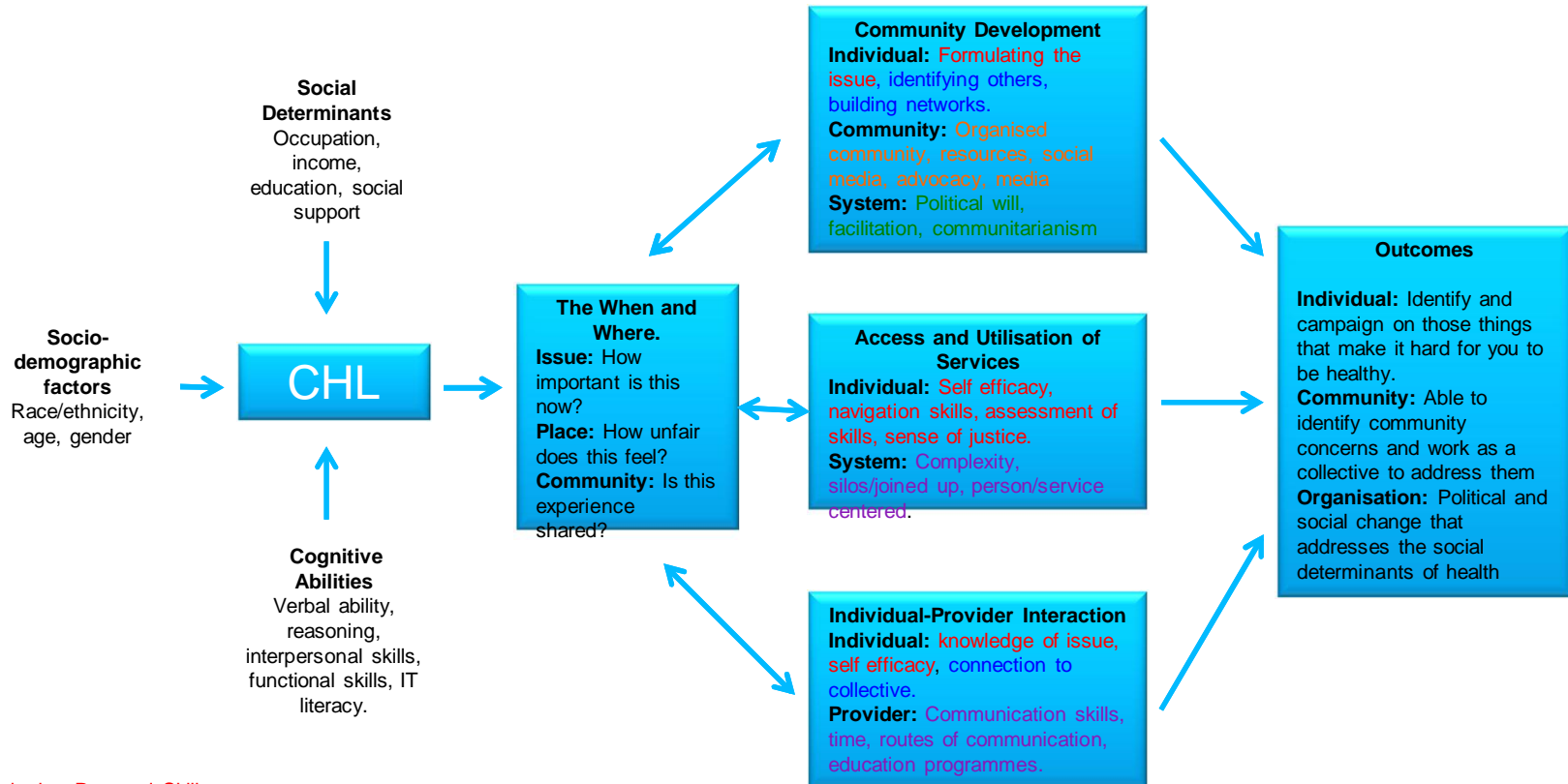
“Critical health literacy reflects the literacy and numeracy skills that support critical reflection on information or advice received, including recognition of the influence of wider determinants of health. These include the ability to obtain, understand and critically appraise different sources of information, and the ability to engage in shared decision making.” (Smith, Nutbeam and McCaffery 2013 p1013)



Conceptualisations of Health Literacy



Critical Health Literacy as a new frontier?



Developing Personal Skills

Creating Supportive Environments

Community Action for Health

Healthy Public Policy

Reorienting Health Systems

Thank you!
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Sykes S, Wills J, Rowlands G, Popple K (2013)
Understanding critical health literacy: a concept
analysis

BMC Public Health 2013, 13:150 doi:10.1186/1471-
2458-13-150

The electronic version of this article is the complete
one and can be found online at:

<http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2458/13/150>