

# ***ACTivating University Students for Social Changemaking***

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# ACBS Conference Theme

- How can ACT be used to increase the health of communities?

# Direction for Social Changemaking?

Biglan (2015). *The Nurture Effect*

Reduce coercive social contexts



Increase nurturing contexts



# Principles of Social Changemaking

- Humans are co-producers of the world
- Public life is essential for a fully human life
- Ordinary people can organize for social change through democratic (horizontal) relational power



- Harry Boyte: Center for  
Democracy and Citizenship  
University of Minnesota

# What's Needed? . . . Citizens!

## Citizens . . .

1. Own social problems as “our” problems
2. Develop political literacy
3. Invest personal resources
4. Seek diverse inputs and accept tension of collaborating



# Our Cultural Context

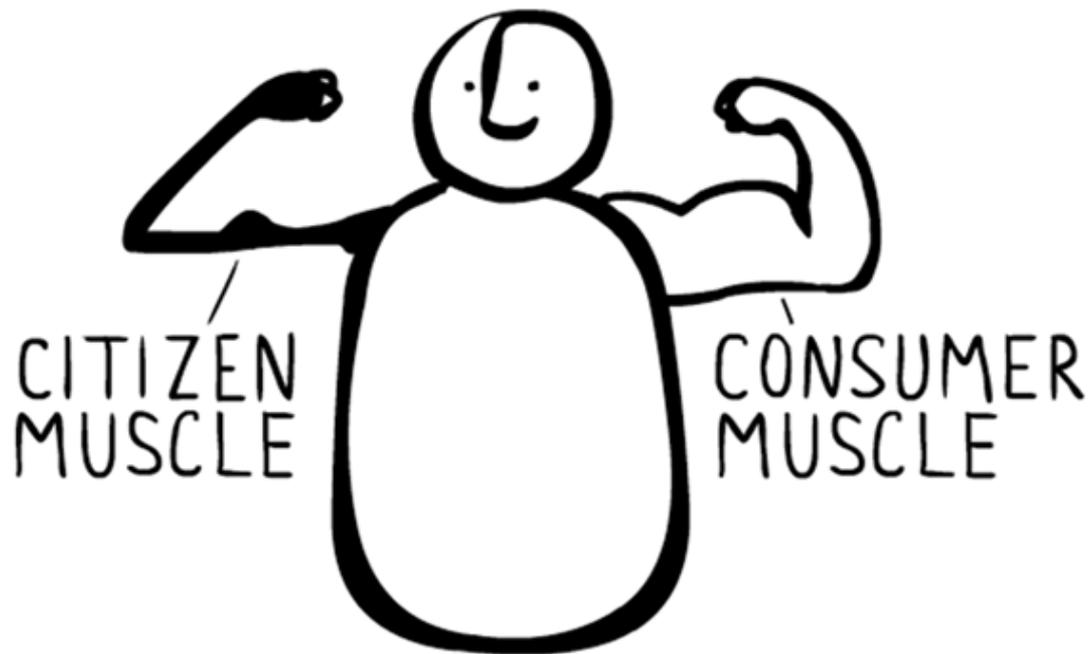
- Education systems and cultures in the developed world emphasize individual fulfillment
- Free market economies aim to produce consumers



# Consumers . . .

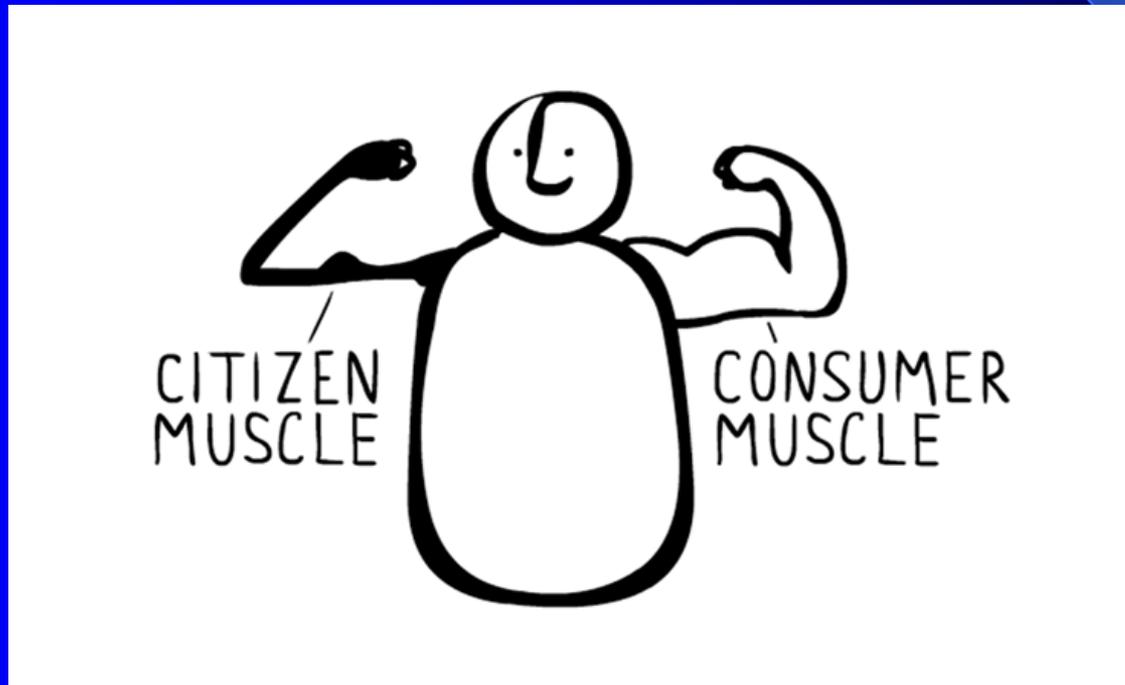
1. Have sense of entitlement
2. Focus on personal well-being and advantage
3. View relations with others as means
4. See social problems as others' problems
5. Expect others will fix and expect to be left to buy the products and services that embody those fixes

# The Consequence



# The Challenge

How can I adapt and use my work to develop citizen muscle?



# My Work

- Community Action Research Experiences (CARE) Program
- Social Changemaking course
  - Upper division undergraduate elective class
  - One 16-week semester

# Changemaking Course Goals

1. Provide experiential learning of effective group functioning needed for social change
2. Expose students to 3 social change approaches and local practitioners:
  1. community organizing
  2. public policy making
  3. social entrepreneurship
3. Have students set their intentions for future changemaking
4. Use class processes that promote citizenship

# Changemaking Course Methods

## 1. Develop and implement a Going Public project

- Form a team of 3-4
- Agree on a social problem to address
- Identify a community organization to collaborate with



Use Horizontal vs. Hierarchical Instructional Methods

# Pilot – Four Teams

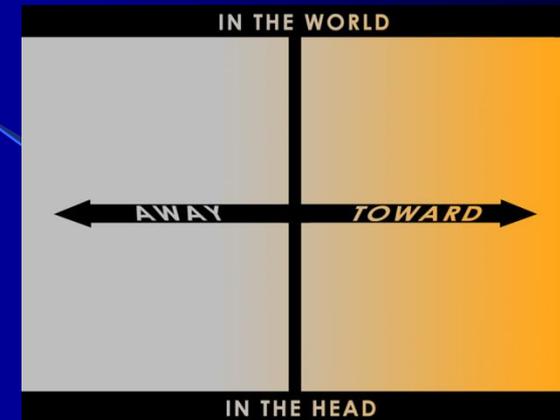
<b>Social Problem</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Community Collaborator</b>
Cyberbullying in middle school	Identify best practices for school to implement	Local middle school principal and faculty
Intimate partner violence - university students	Plan a campus event to raise awareness	Local anti domestic violence agency
Low academic performance of low-income students	Identify best parenting strategies to support academic achievement	Local school district parent involvement coordinator
Sexual coercion – university students	Define and promote consent for sexual relations	University president's task force on sexual violence

# Changemaking Course Methods

2. Teams develop and write project proposal and summary report (for community organization)
3. Individuals conduct peer reviews of report sections
4. Teams conduct peer consultations to get feedback and advice to advance their project
5. Dyads lead active learning experiences for peers based on readings (different pairings)
6. Individuals critically reflect on their experiences as a team member and changemaker

# Integrated ACT and PROSOCIAL

- ACT – Increase individuals' psychological flexibility to attain valued social change goal
- PROSOCIAL – Increase the effectiveness of work groups to attain same goal
- Conducted initial 2 - session training plus 2 status check-ins throughout semester



# Results

- All teams encountered various barriers to team effectiveness
- All teams faced barriers in collaborating with their community partner
- Most cited increased acceptance and collaborative behavior as team members
- Most showed signs of increased citizen identity

# Student Reflections

- “Each person has strengths and weaknesses, but people who are successful understand their weaknesses and surround themselves with people that are strong where they are weak . . . Understanding that you need people is very important.”

- Baset

# Student Reflections

- “. . .the members of my group are people that I would not have interacted with otherwise, but I am grateful that I did because each one taught me a valuable lesson”

- Taylore

# Student Reflections

- “I am now considering going into a field of social changemaking, entrepreneurship, or politics and have changed my second major. . . It’s great to have learned how to make my presence relevant. I’ve actually started my own project at work . . . to motivate my fellow employees to improve their work quality ”

- Felicia

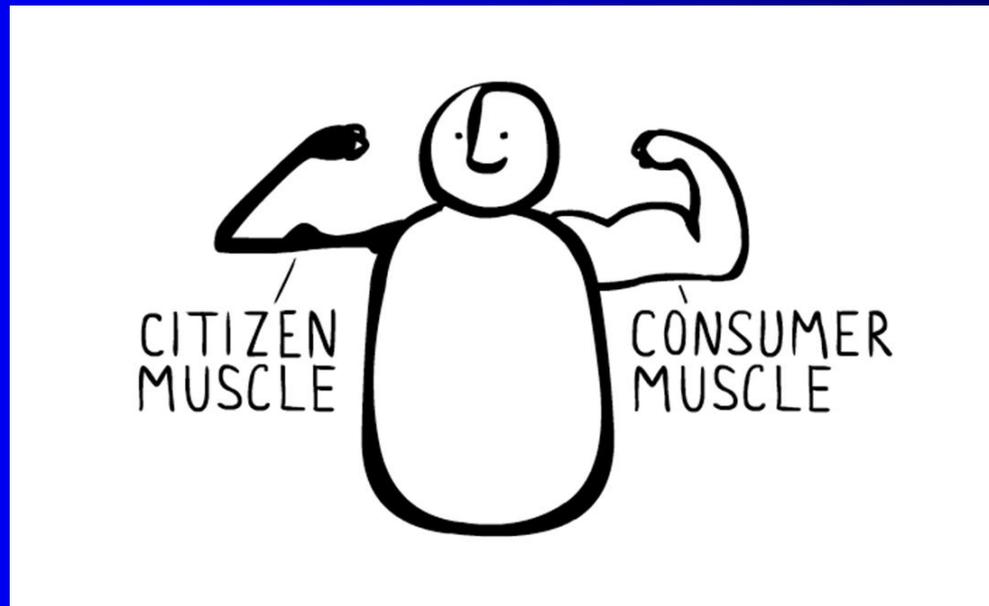
# Student Reflections

- “I have gone from the mindset that I just need to get my degree over with and start my mediocre job to this sense of self-empowerment where I feel like I actually can make a difference and not just in my free time. The most important thing I have gained is knowing when to lead and when to support someone else as a leader. Also, I don't need to be the CEO of some big corporation; I have the power to make a difference..”

- Kyle

# The Challenge to You

- How can you use the work that you do to build citizen muscle and increase nurturing contexts?



# Aim to become a “Citizen Professional” Yourself

- Commit to use your professional skills as a citizen

# Engage others in citizen action

- As way to maintain their own change gains and continue adaptation (evolution)
- Questions to pose to others:
  1. What have you gained from our work together?
  2. Who do you know who could benefit from what you have gained?
  3. What is a next step you could take to make a difference?

# Personal Reflection

- How can you use your work to promote citizenship?



# Resources

- Biglan, T. (2015). *The nurture effect*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger.
- Putnam, R. (2015). *Our kids*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Heifetz, R., Grashow, A., & Linsky, M. (2009) *The practice of adaptive leadership*. Boston: Harvard Business Press.
- Boyte, H. (2008). *The citizen solution: How you can make a difference*. Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota Historical Society.
- Bornstein, D. & Davis, S. (2010). *Social entrepreneurship: What everyone needs to know*. New York: Oxford.
- Doherty, W. (2000). Family science and family citizenship: Toward a model of community partnership with families. *Family Relations*, 49, 319-325.