Phronesis through Praxis: Cultivating the Habit of a Rhetorical Disposition in Positive Deviance Action Research

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PHRONESIS THROUGH PRAXIS: CULTIVATING THE HABIT OF A RHETORICAL DISPOSITION

IN POSITIVE DEVIANCE ACTION RESEARCH

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PHRONESIS THROUGH PRAXIS: CULTIVATING THE HABIT OF A RHETORICAL DISPOSITION

IN POSITIVE DEVIANCE ACTION RESEARCH

by

LUCIA DURA

DISSERTATION

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for the Degree of
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They say that a good dissertation is a completed one. I have also been reminded that this is not my “magnum opus.” Nonetheless, this dissertation took three years to conceptualize and write. This has been, most definitely, a social act. I have a lot of people to thank for their insights, support, encouragement, and, ultimately, for their love and patience as I made myself and this work the center of the universe for some time.

I cannot thank anyone without thanking my husband Michael first. I thank Michael for going through this with me, for not giving up on me (even when he could hardly tolerate to hear the word “heuristic” towards the end), and for respecting my work. I am grateful to my mom for letting me rest on her laurels, injecting me with unconditional love and strength every day, and for leading by example. And I thank Pacho for being an extension of that love and a source of comfort. I am fortunate to have as my brother Andres, who has seen me through my darkest hours and has not lost faith in me for a second, inspiring me to move forward in spite of myself. And I thank John, Bonnie, Tristan, Jonathan, and David for their love and support. Thanks to my friends for distracting me and not letting this process interfere with our friendship, especially Mike, Gaby, Chris, Michelle, Julieta, Rebecca, Drea, Steve, JoAnn, Jacqui, and Sof.

In my dissertation defense, Dr. Arvind Singhal asked me what I would tell the girls who were a part of the positive deviance reintegration project in Uganda about the lessons of value that have resulted from this research. I responded that I would thank them for their generosity of time and spirit. There is no doubt that their resilience and the change in their lives has been a major source of inspiration and motivation for me. Furthermore, this project was possible for
me because I had the opportunity to work with Save the Children (USA, Uganda, and Indonesia). I am grateful to Save the Children in Uganda staff, particularly to P.A. (and her team), P.N., B.B., T.C., L.V., and Lisa Laumann (Save the Children USA) for their insights and for the resources they provided.

But what of Dr. Singhal’s question? The only way to know if the outcomes of this research are of any use for the people with whom I came into contact in August of 2008, is to ask them. After all, my audience of focus for this dissertation has been the discipline of Rhetoric and Writing Studies. Although I can infer that the rhetorical concepts discussed herein might be useful and applicable for the facilitation of positive deviance in general, I am not sure that at this point in time, the girls, mentors, and community leaders with whom we worked would be interested in the lessons I have learned. That is a matter that deserves further thought and consideration. However, what I would wholeheartedly tell them if I were face to face with them today is that my first hope is that by introducing positive deviance to my discipline in the way that I have, more people will be solving problems differently, and more people will be building on this innovative approach. And my second hope is that this research, which has evolved from the practice of positive deviance in Northern Uganda, will make positive deviance better understood, and through critical, recursive, and perceptive practice more ethical and effective.

Hence, for the small, exploratory step that I have taken in this direction, I thank the girls, the mentors, and the community leaders in Northern Uganda. I also thank Monique Sternin, Randa Wilkinson, and the board members and staff of the Positive Deviance Initiative for their support and feedback throughout this process. And for challenging me with difficult, transcendental questions and introducing me to positive deviance in the first place, I thank my
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With or without positive deviance, over the course of the last four years I have built a strong relationship with my advisor, Dr. Helen Foster. She has pushed me to what I thought were my limits, challenging me to think more deeply, more critically, more justly. Working with Helen Foster I have seen that limits are often self-imposed as our potential lies beyond them. I am fortunate to have worked with such a brilliant, generous scholar, and I thank her for believing in me. I look forward to continuing our conversations.

I am grateful to my professors, colleagues, and staff in the Rhetoric and Writing Studies program and in the English Department at UTEP. Most constant has been the support of Anita August and Scott Lunsford who have called me from the East coast to check on my progress and well-being on a regular basis. Thanks especially to Anita for encouraging me to “get my life back,” for listening to me, and for reassuring me. She has been a “believer” and a friend during all of my ups and downs. I appreciate the support of my writing group, Dr. Theresa Donovan and Myshie Pagel. Our meetings kept me on track and were wonderfully pleasant! Had Dr. Brian McNely and Nikki Agee not engaged in such profound research, my theoretical chapter would have been much different. They are a tremendous source of inspiration and a testament to our program. Thanks as well to my colleagues in positive deviance, Alejandra Diaz and Patricia Ayala for creating a foundation for positive deviance inquiry in the Department of Communication at UTEP. And thanks especially to my committee members Dr. Carlos Salinas
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Last but not least, I would like to express my gratitude to people I have met along the way, who may not know they have made a difference. Thanks to Henri Lipmanowicz for his generosity and mentorship on Liberating Structures and on showing me the value of process in positive deviance. Thanks to Martine Bauman for challenging me to come up with a really neat title; I am afraid I have failed this challenge. Thanks to Eliana Elias, Karen Greiner, Helen Wang, Monica Perez, Brenda Campos, Meesha Brown, and Maaike de Jong for offering their perspectives, friendship, and avenues for collaboration.
ABSTRACT

Positive deviance is an asset-based, community-driven, problem-solving approach to social change premised on the idea that in every community there are certain individuals or groups whose uncommon behaviors and strategies enable them to find better solutions to problems than their peers, while having access to the same resources and facing similar or worse challenges (www.positivedeviance.org). Positive deviance has been used in over 40 countries to address issues as diverse as productivity in the workplace, infection and disease prevention, education, and child trafficking. This dissertation situates positive deviance within the areas of social change and change studies in the discipline of Rhetoric and Writing Studies. Parting from the notion that praxis begins with applied work, which is informed by theory and exerted again with value added, this project posits a case example of positive deviance as it was applied to the issue of reintegration in Northern Uganda by an international non-governmental organization in 2007 and 2008. Using heuristic reasoning (Lauer & Asher, 1988) as the primary methodology, this project sets forth (1) a postmodern rhetorical analysis to better understand the ways change is mediated (Faber, 2007) rhetorically in the facilitation of positive deviance, and (2) a heuristic theory of positive deviance for action research. The analysis focuses on the elements of power relations, ideology, reality, epistemology, alterity, invention, stasis, and kairos, making explicit previously tacit assumptions about the role epistemic rhetoric plays in positive deviance. Based on this analysis, a heuristic aimed at arriving at a framework of actionable phronesis, or practical wisdom, for the practice of positive deviance as Rhetoric and Writing Studies action research is proposed. This heuristic calls for a habitual rhetorical disposition, which entails critical, recursive, and perceptive practice. As a first step towards
more comprehensive studies of how change is mediated within Rhetoric and Writing Studies, the heuristic of rhetorical dispositions is intended to be tested revised, and adapted. The last chapter sets forth multiple uses of positive deviance within Rhetoric and Writing Studies with implications for research, pedagogy, service, and administration.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Social change has a face.

—Arvind Singhal and Michael Papa in “Intellectuals Searching for Publics: Who’s Out There?”

Origins of This Research

It takes eight hours to drive from Kampala to the district of Pader in war-torn Northern Uganda. The red-dirt moguls under our SUV were flanked by tall grasslands interrupted by small, poverty-stricken villages and still-present internally displaced persons (IDP) camps. Still shell-shocked from more than 21 years of conflict, but hopeful with the prospects of peace, the Acholi people walked and rode their bicycles along the side of the road, many carrying 20 liter water cans, firewood bundles, and crops. Awaiting finalization of the peace agreement between the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) and the Ugandan government, in late summer of 2008, people were slow to return to their permanent homes. Children who had been in LRA captivity for months or years at a time, and who escaped or were rescued, were filtered to transitional centers after having been used as sex slaves, physical laborers, and soldiers. Some young girls returned pregnant with soldiers’ children.

My initial impressions of Acholiland, the region of Northern Uganda inhabited by the Acholi people, were riddled by the vastness of the landscape and an overwhelming silence. The silence I experienced was broken by a joyous welcome song as we approached the first IDP camp, a transitional community for “internally displaced persons.” The group of young Acholi

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1 In Intellectuals searching for publics: Who is out there? (See Singhal & Papa, 2007).
girls who sang wore heather gray Save the Children/Oak Foundation-sponsored t-shirts with a message on the back:

“Girls, the answers to our problems are within us.”
“Work for your life: Be a role model; stop early pregnancy, and no give and take (transactional sex).”

An *a cappella* melody punctuated by the message written on the t-shirts marked my first contact with those whom we called PD Girls, girls selected by the community as positive role models.

In August of 2008, I participated as a research associate in an impact assessment of the positive deviance (PD) approach as it was applied in two separate, complex child protection issues: the reintegration of child soldiers in Northern Uganda and the trafficking of girls in East Java, Indonesia. Positive deviance is an asset-based, problem-solving, and community driven approach to social change based on the observation that in every community there are certain individuals or groups whose uncommon behaviors and strategies enable them to find better solutions.

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2 PD stands for positive deviance, the approach to development examined in my dissertation research. Positive deviance is explained briefly in the next section and will, of course, be covered in greater detail in the forthcoming dissertation.

3 The research team was led by Dr. Arvind Singhal, Samuel Shirley and Edna Holt Marston Endowed Professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Texas at El Paso and William Jefferson Clinton Fellow at the Clinton School of Public Service in Little Rock, Arkansas. I had previous experience working with him as a research associate on an assessment in the Peruvian Amazon. He asked me to join the team because of our mutual interests, my background in rhetoric and my writing experience across various genres. We were joined in Uganda and Indonesia by several fixed and rotating staff from Save the Children.
to problems than their peers, while having access to the same resources and facing similar or worse challenges. (www.positivedeviance.org)

Through inquiry and mapping, positive deviance enables communities to “discover⁴ these successful behaviors and strategies and develop a plan of action to promote adoption by all concerned” (www.positivedeviance.org).

The Oak Foundation-funded initiative implemented by Save the Children, *Life after the LRA: Piloting Positive deviance with Child Mothers and Vulnerable Girl Survivors in Northern Uganda*, was designed with the specific goal of reducing engagement in transactional or commercial sex of formerly abducted and vulnerable girls by strengthening peer support networks, identifying sustainable reintegration strategies, and facilitating access to social services. At the core of the reintegration project in Northern Uganda, implementing positive deviance involved participatory inquiry to articulate the question: in the face of a diminished economy and with all of the trust issues implicated in the return of girls who had committed atrocities while in captivity or who bore children with LRA commanders, *were there any girls who despite the challenges had been able to re-establish community ties and find acceptable sources of income?* Out of a possible 1,000 “child mothers” and 7,500 vulnerable girls in two sub-districts of Pader district in Northern Uganda, the positive deviance program had been working with a total 500 girls and 50 adult mentors since January of 2007.

Over the course of 17 days, our team travelled to Uganda and Indonesia to collect the data necessary to produce a substantial comparative report for the lead implementing agency,

---

⁴ Discovery is a common term in positive deviance practice. Viewed through a rhetorical lens this term implies that knowledge exists and is merely described by language, dismissing rhetoric as epistemic. However, I find it necessary to use “discovery” throughout this project in line with positive deviance phraseology. In this sense, I interpret the word to mean foregrounding or articulating so that discovery refers to behaviors and practices that have not been explicated discursively.
Save the Children, and the funding agency, the Oak Foundation. Overall the research took roughly four months to complete, from the initial review of literature in July 2008, to the production of the final report in October 2008. Research findings indicated that the positive deviance approach had facilitated the effective reintegration of the target population in Northern Uganda, as participants exhibited higher levels of self-confidence and self-efficacy evidenced in sustained psychosocial practices and income generating activities. In Indonesia, the trafficking prevention pilot was replicated successfully and positive deviance social and entrepreneurial practices were sustained over the course of five years, even after the withdrawal of implementing organizations. In 2009, our findings were published as a monograph by Save the Children: Protecting Children from Exploitation and Trafficking: Using the Positive deviance Approach in Uganda and Indonesia.

Parallel and previous to this experience, as a Ph.D. student in Rhetoric and Writing Studies at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), I had solidified my research interests in Rhetoric and Writing Studies change studies as well as intercultural and global rhetoric. This opportunity afforded me hands-on experience in distributed work (Spinuzzi) and qualitative research methods through intercultural, international, and interdisciplinary collaboration and a multitude of lessons about mentoring and its implications for the glocal community-based work and pedagogy. Grounded in my theoretical interests and inspired by work in activist research,

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5 Although we worked directly with Save the Children U.S.A., the organization was in the process of a worldwide infrastructure transition, so that when we were in Uganda we worked with Save the Children in Uganda (SCIUG) and when we were in Indonesia we worked with Save the Children, Indonesia.

6 The Oak Foundation is an international philanthropic organization that funds programs ranging from climate change to homelessness. The positive deviance projects in Uganda and Indonesia fall into the category “Issues Affecting Women.”

7 Chapter 2 explains this designation further. The official name of my doctoral program is Rhetoric and Composition, but I claim that my interests have closer affinity with Professional and Technical Writing.
participatory design, and change studies, the applied research in Northern Uganda and East Java, Indonesia, led to my continued involvement in change research and in applications of positive deviance. The more I learned about positive deviance, the more my curiosity grew as to how positive deviance might be used in Rhetoric and Writing Studies.

Subsequent to my work in Uganda and Indonesia, my involvement in collaborative research, writing projects, and positive deviance workshops has been ongoing, allowing me to obtain a more firm grasp of positive deviance as a methodology. I have continued to learn about the wide applicability of positive deviance in other contexts, for example, in business (Merck in Mexico and worldwide and Hewlett Packard in the United States), healthcare (hospital-acquired infection prevention in the United States), public health (female genital cutting in Egypt and HIV/AIDS prevention amongst transgendered prostitutes in Indonesia), and education (Argentina). In my exploration of the nuances that make positive deviance a unique approach, such as its reliance on inquiry and grassroots expertise—a combination of already existing wisdom and local knowledge-making—I have come to see positive deviance as both an interventional approach and as a research methodology.

**Need and Purpose**

I argue that positive deviance as a methodology addresses serious needs articulated by the following scholars who call for innovative methodologies for social and organizational change applicable within Rhetoric and Writing Studies that

(1) are asset-based (Cushman, 1999; Grabill, 2001);

(2) facilitate grassroots design and inquiry (Faber, 2007; Flower, 2008; Grabill, 2001, 2007; Simmons, 2007; Cushman, 1998, 1999; Mathieu, 2005);
(3) enable sustainability (Flower, 2008; Grabill, 2007; Simmons, 2007);

(4) operate within a locally relevant but globally networked context (Cushman, 1999; Grabill, 2001, 2007); and that, furthermore,

(5) contribute directly to the emerging sub-field of “change studies” in Rhetoric and Writing Studies, within which there is little descriptive work and therefore little credibility, by exploring how change works, and particularly how agency is mediated (Faber, 2010).

While positive deviance can arguably be utilized within any Rhetoric and Writing Studies sub-field, it is of immediate relevance as a mechanism for social change. Social change, which I define in Chapter 2, is generally situated within the Rhetoric and Writing Studies sub-field of community-based work.

The purpose of this dissertation project is to situate positive deviance within the rhetorical landscape and to gain a deeper understanding of how change is mediated rhetorically in positive deviance. I argue that a (postmodern) rhetorical exploration will make explicit previously tacit assumptions about epistemic rhetorical theory as it relates to the mediation of change in positive deviance. Such an exploration will bring to the fore how elements such as power relations, ideology, reality, epistemology, alterity, and invention interact to make change, evidenced in this case, and as called for by Faber (2007), as agency. This knowledge can be useful in the articulation of a theory of reciprocity, which I present as a heuristic of rhetorical dispositions, for positive deviance and Rhetoric and Writing Studies. The heuristic I set forth facilitates a rhetorical disposition for a critical (Sullivan & Porter, 1997; Grabill, 2001, Blythe, Grabill & Riley, 2008), recursive (McNely, 2008), perceptive (Ratcliff, 1999, 2005; Agee, 2009),

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8 The study of the initiation, management, and stabilization of change (Faber, 2010).
and therefore more effective and ethical\textsuperscript{9} practice of positive deviance. Finally, I argue that positive deviance expands our social and organizational change portfolio as it is applicable to and can have important implications for research, teaching, administration, and service.

**Methodology\textsuperscript{10}**

Methodologically, this dissertation is about articulating what I would describe as a third space: *phronesis*. In the *Nichomachean Ethics*, Aristotle distinguishes between two kinds of wisdom, *sophia* and *phronesis*. *Sophia* is philosophical wisdom, while *phronesis*, although it has been translated as “prudence,” refers to practical wisdom. *Phronesis* is concerned both with particulars and universals and is akin to Rhetoric and Writing Studies conceptions of praxis (See Garver, 1987; Phelps, 1988; Miller, 1989; Sullivan & Porter, 1997; Porter, 1998) where praxis is a type of thought/action that questions the validity and usefulness of the theory-practice distinction, yet that must, ironically, rely on that binary for its explanation and justification. Praxis occupies the realm of the probable…and is connected to Aristotle’s notions of practical and productive knowledge…within the framework of rhetorical invention. (Porter, 1998, p. 61-62; See also Sullivan & Porter, 1997, p. 26)

By using practical and theoretical knowledge about positive deviance in the sense described by Sullivan and Porter (1997) as “a kind of thinking that does not start with theoretical knowledge or abstract models, which are then applied to situations, but that begins with immersion in local situations, and then uses epistemic theory as heuristic rather than as explanatory or determining” (p. 26), I propose to arrive at actionable *phronesis*. Actionable *phronesis* is the

\textsuperscript{9} My use of this term does not assume that ethics will be instilled where previously there were none. Rather, it is intended to promote a more deliberate engagement of ethics.

\textsuperscript{10} I understand methodology both as a research philosophy, which includes reflection on biases and limitations, and as an articulation of methods.
synthesis of positive deviance theory as a step in the praxis cycle for continued use, adaptation, and testing.

To do what I propose, I use the deductive process of rhetorical inquiry (Lauer & Asher, 1988), drawing on existing resources about positive deviance and Rhetoric and Writing Studies community-based work. My (postmodern) rhetorical analysis, aimed at making explicit and understanding how rhetoric works to mediate change (Faber, 2007), is based on a case example (See Salinas, 2000; Grabill, 2001; Simmons, 2007) constructed from archival materials from the application of positive deviance in Northern Uganda. From this analysis, I aim to arrive at a theory of reciprocity. In the paragraphs that follow, I explain these steps in greater detail.

**Rhetorical Inquiry as a Methodological Frame**

The process of rhetorical inquiry entails (1) identifying a motivating concern, (2) posing questions, (3) engaging in heuristic search (which in composition studies has often occurred by probing other fields), (4) creating a new theory or hypotheses, and (5) justifying the theory. (Lauer & Asher, 1998, p. 5). As explained by Lauer and Asher (1998), rhetorical inquiry differs from empirical research in that it

- suggests behaviors, environments, or populations for empirical study. It prompts coding schemes, survey categories, and evaluative criteria. It provides hypotheses for experimental research. In return, empirical research refines rhetorical theory, helps verify or repudiate it, and identifies important variables that contribute to new theory formation. (p. 6)

Lauer and Asher’s description conjures the theory-practice binary, and although it is a valid perspective, it can be reductive. However, I argue that the lens of praxis does the opposite of
reducing by re-positing research as a dialectical process between theory and practice with the end of arriving at and articulating phronesis through each iteration or cycle. I propose that articulating phronesis allows for critical reflection with the aim of generating more effective directions or next steps for both action and theory.

**Identifying a Motivating Concern and Posing Questions.** In line with rhetorical inquiry, I first identified my motivating concern. It is proven that positive deviance has been used as an effective approach to problem-solving in a wide variety of geographic contexts and sectors. It is inquiry-driven and values local knowledge while relying on a global network of practitioners and resources. At its best, it is a community-driven and sustainable methodology that has two unique characteristics: (1) it is guided by a questioning heuristic that sets the problem-solution paradigm on its head, facilitating the articulation of already existing solutions whose implementation is accessible to all members of a community, and (2) it is premised on the notion that “it is easier to act one’s way into a new way of thinking than to think one’s way into a new way of acting;” hence, it operates under the assumption that knowledge is produced through practice rather than merely through awareness. The approach’s main, documented challenges stem from its strengths. One of these challenges is that it requires a certain level of comfort with inquiry, which translates to comfort with uncertainty. A second challenge is that it places increased emphasis on community (collective) expertise and a decreased emphasis on traditional (top-down) expertise, a challenge easier to apply in theory than in practice.

As an interventional approach, positive deviance has been documented in numerous publications worldwide as effective (See [www.positivedeviance.org](http://www.positivedeviance.org) “Publications”). Its focus on inquiry has led to its adaptation as a research strategy (See Diaz, 2010; Ayala, 2011; PDI, 2011;
However, in this adaptation, positive deviance stands to lose some of its most desirable attributes: it can cease to be community-driven and sustainable. Nevertheless, positive deviance inquiries can change radically the ways we perceive and address problems by shifting the foci of our research questions and raising awareness very differently. Hence, I argue that positive deviance also holds promise as an action research methodology, an option, which to my knowledge, has not been explored. These assertions, which I was able to make after two years of researching Rhetoric and Writing Studies social change and positive deviance, led to my primary research question: Is there a possibility for reciprocity between positive deviance and Rhetoric and Writing Studies theory and practice? If so, what does a theory of reciprocity look like? In order to answer this question, I devised a list of sub-questions, which I have refined and list by chapter:

**Chapter 2:** How might positive deviance be situated within Rhetoric and Writing Studies?

**Chapter 3:** What is positive deviance and what is its significance to Rhetoric and Writing Studies?

**Chapter 4:** How does the facilitation of positive deviance function in a real-life scenario?

**Chapter 5:** How does postmodern rhetoric mediate change in the process of positive deviance based on a real-life scenario? How is agency achieved rhetorically?

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11 These studies take the PD Inquiry as heuristic for studies that raise awareness about important issues in a different way, i.e., by inverting the problem-solution paradigm and looking for already existing solutions. The value and usefulness of adapting the “PD question” for research lies in awareness-raising, which I will discuss in greater detail in Chapter 7. So far, these studies are research-driven and hence are not participatory. Furthermore, most other research projects are “about” positive deviance, that is, they serve to document and/or evaluate impact.
Chapter 6: What does a theory of Rhetoric and Writing Studies-positive deviance look like?

Chapter 7: What are the implications of this research?

Engaging in Heuristic Search. Based on the above research questions, I initiated a heuristic search. My research design involved a literature review, the construction of a case, case analysis, and theory-building/heuristic development. The first step in my heuristic search was to situate positive deviance within Rhetoric and Writing Studies. In the process of conducting an extensive literature review covering the Rhetoric and Writing Studies sub-fields of literacy studies, service-learning, civic engagement, public writing, risk communication, professional writing, and critical studies, parallel to continued research in positive deviance as a methodology, I learned that positive deviance is potentially applicable in almost any Rhetoric and Writing Studies sub-field because almost any sub-field is concerned with change processes—even if change is not documented or is documented only implicitly in certain areas. As evidenced in Chapter 2, I found that framing social change within ideology helped to make clear the relationship between the ideological assumptions of the rhetorician and conceptualizations of what is possible within social change goals and processes. I was next left with the question of how to present positive deviance to a Rhetoric and Writing Studies audience. That question became, what is positive deviance and why is it significant to the discipline of Rhetoric and Writing Studies? In order to answer that question, I wrote a

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12 A heuristic is an analogy that helps one “go beyond the unknown” (Lauer & Asher, 1988, p. 5). I use “heuristic” here for two different purposes, first, in Lauer & Asher’s (2008) notion as an analogy for understanding. I use analogies for my analysis of positive deviance theory and practice. And, second, I use the term “heuristic” to describe my theory of a rhetorical disposition for the appropriation of positive deviance as an alternative action research methodology within Rhetoric and Writing Studies. I opt to call my theory a heuristic because of its value as phronesis in attempting to invite further action.
definitional chapter (Chapter 3) that covers the origins of positive deviance and its benefits and challenges through illustrative examples. To arrive at the “philosophical underpinnings” of positive deviance, in this definitional chapter, I used Sullivan and Porter’s (1997) theory of human relations as a heuristic, which helped me situate amongst existing approaches to social change within Rhetoric and Writing Studies and to make the primary ideological assumptions of the approach.

Motivated by Faber’s (2008) proposal that it is not enough to document that change happened, but that it is important to find ways to explain how change happens, particularly with respect to the ways agency is mediated within the process of change, my goal in constructing a case example in Chapter 4, using archival materials\(^\text{13}\) from my previous research in Northern Uganda, was to analyze how change was mediated in that case through the lens of postmodern rhetoric. This analysis accounts for the ideological assumptions made explicit in Chapter 2 and evaluates whether positive deviance principles were realized (or not) in practice during key points of the facilitation process. In discussing what the project was about, from the facilitation perspective—discursively, materially, and socially,—I “articulate the techniques by which change was accomplished – how change was used to initiate, introduce and ultimately stabilize social action” (Faber, 2007, p. 162). In a way similar to Salinas (2000), Grabill (2001), and Simmons (2007), my use of the case concept comes not from the traditional social science notion of the “case study” (See Yin, 2003, 2008, 2009) but rather from notions of case-based reasoning more commonly used in applied ethics (for example, legal, medical, business), known

\(^{13}\) The materials I used to construct this case included a project proposal, a feasibility survey report, six quarterly reports, a half year report, two end of year reports, and several reports that were not dated or titled but that pertained to the PD inquiry and to the mapping activities. I also used the monograph I co-authored (Singhal & Dura, 2009), and documents available on the Positive Deviance Initiative (PDI) website (www.positivedeviance.org), and others provided by the PDI during workshops or in e-mail correspondence.
as casuistry. While many cases (Lane, 2007) “describe particular situations in which people are engaged in complex issues and are forced to take actions on a dilemma,” occasionally they “are designed to provide references to different aspects related to the problem confronted. Often this type of case does not only describe a problem situation, but it also includes the chosen solution and the outcome of the solution.” The casuistic or case method has allowed me to draw on a concrete example for postmodern rhetorical analysis and theory-building:

Whereas case studies include scientific methods favored by traditional empirical research, cases include concrete or real-to-life scenarios of/for critical analysis (and sometimes response), which resonates with the casuistic legal tradition (Salinas, 2000, p. 59).

For Jonsen and Toulmin (1988), casuistry is a type of moral reasoning based on paradigms and analogies and not, in contrast, on universal maxims. Of importance in this definition are the paradigms and analogies upon which casuistic moral reasoning is based. These paradigms and analogies are cases: concrete, particular moral situations and decisions. Cases are important as reasoning tools because they encompass both the general (theory) and the specific (concrete experiences)” (Grabill, 2001, p. xiv).

The case method lends itself to reasoning practice to illustrate a process but with the clear limitation that such examples are not generalizable. Similarly to Grabill (2001), Salinas (2000), and Simmons (2007), I have used in Chapter 4 reasoning practice in my analysis of agency to make limited claims about the object of study.

I use Faber’s research orientation as a way to reason how agency was achieved, while recognizing that the reconstruction of the case in Chapter 3 bears the bias and limitation of my role as an outside observer, who has reconstructed a scenario with available materials that
although comprehensive are by no means exhaustive and that have been interpreted through my subjective lens. Furthermore, because my access to materials for this case is limited to reports that documented activities in the past tense as they were perceived by implementing staff, the discursive and material events I analyze have been extracted from existing structural elements and fail to account for the nuances of stochastic networks. Hence, while I use Faber’s orientation, I do so in a limited way. As a heuristic for analysis, I used postmodern rhetorical theory, utilizing elements of epistemic rhetoric that emerged as salient categories working together to inform the relationship between power and change. I conducted this analysis with the goal of arriving at a heuristic for the effective practice of positive deviance Rhetoric and Writing Studies action research.

**Creating a New Theory or Hypotheses and Justifying the Theory.** While Chapter 6 focuses on theory-building, it has a practical aim: to arrive at a heuristic that can be adapted and tested in the practice of positive deviance action research within Rhetoric and Writing Studies. This practical aim is rooted in political and ethical action with implications for practice, research, and pedagogy. In building a theory, I have found affinity with Sullivan and Porter’s (1997) postmodern empiricism, which merges empiricist and postmodern methodologies into a critical, reflective praxis. They (1997) articulated a notion of research as practical action, in contrast with the modernist view of research for knowledge generation:

> Good research, [they argued,] has a practical aim. It does something good for somebody. It helps people in a disadvantaged position (and that can be variously defined) achieve some improvement in their circumstances. Research enables that improvement to happen [...] to the degree that it attends to the particular situatedness
of its participants, to the degree that it is sensitive to human practices and does not subordinate them to Theory, Method, or to Disciplinary Rules. (p. xvi)

Sullivan and Porter (1997) have also made explicit that good research has immediate pedagogical relevance. This dissertation aims to create a methodological heuristic grounded in the disposition of postmodern rhetoric that can be adapted effectively by Rhetoric and Writing Studies scholars in both positive deviance implementation and research.¹⁴ In Chapter 7, I explore the research, pedagogical, and practical implications of this research project.

CHAPTER 2: CHANGE, THE DISCIPLINARY LANDSCAPE, AND POSITIVE DEVIANCE

Classically defined, change is not a technique, a tool nor a technology. It is not an object nor strategy. Instead, change is an opportunity/space. It is an objective space that is important for what it afforded or took away from power (the ruler).

¹⁴ Sullivan and Porter state that methodology is heuristic and as such generates situated knowledge or a kind of pragmatic know-how. That is, it produces practical knowledge (they see writing as practical); the research practices that lead to it are situated in a specific context and are guided by networked ethical and political assumptions, goals, motivations, constraints, etc.
With the fragmentation of what Foucault called ‘temporal succession’ [in the Archaeology of Knowledge], unifying tropes, narrative continuity and chronology, comes the possibility of change as a technology, as something specifically deployed to attain personal, political or organizational results.

—Brenton Faber

The search for more public forms of engagement has pushed many scholars and students in rhetoric and composition studies into unfamiliar territory.

—Linda Flower

Situating positive deviance within the discipline of Rhetoric and Writing Studies necessitates a basic sense of stasis with respect to my chosen terminology and the way I use it. To achieve this, first I address three basic yet complex questions, albeit briefly: What is Rhetoric? What is Composition? What are Writing Studies? Defining these terms establishes a point of departure for a literature review that addresses: What is social change? Why the pairing of rhetoric and social change? How is social change manifest in Rhetoric and Writing Studies today? What contributions and gaps exist in contemporary Rhetoric and Writing Studies social change scholarship?

15 (Faber, 2007, p. 153-154)  
16 (Flower, 2008, p.2)  
17 I can only address these questions in terms of my understanding of what they are as a doctoral student in my final year situated within a program that is focused on critical and intercultural dispositions and that calls itself Rhetoric and Composition for many different, including practical, reasons. It is from this point that my definitions part. Defining these commonplace but controversial terms takes on the risks of omission and over-determination. This process is necessary nonetheless.
In his exploration of change studies, Faber (2007) made a distinction between classical and contemporary conceptions of change by positing that change in classical times assumed a break within a sovereign continuity, whereas change today has a more strategic connotation as a deployable object, tool, or technology (p. 153-154). Faber’s distinction is important in our understanding of why and how change is enacted. It allows us to see change in two ways: (1) change as a break in the narrative of continuity (a narrative seeking to maintain certain values, power structures, hierarchical and taxonomized distinctions such as class, race, gender) as something to be addressed, evoking a reaction for preservation of the status quo, and (2) change as an opportunity for positive rupture, for the replacement of old paradigms and systems with new ones at many levels of society. I would not say that these two conceptions of change (classical and contemporary) are unique to the time periods with which they are associated, nor does Faber (2007, p. 154), as it is possible to find examples that prove otherwise, but what I do render true is that certain time periods are marked by a paradigmatic prevalence. Paradigmatic differences, such as those noted by Faber, I argue, are ideological. Thus, characterizing change in ideological terms helps us better understand its significance across historical periods, cultures, and contexts. For this reason, my discussion of change in this chapter is framed by ideology, based on the observation that notions of change inevitably conjure assumptions about reality, power, epistemology, and knowledge. Such ideological assumptions, I argue, bear weight on what we conceive of as stasis, or an agreed upon point of departure based on existence, quality, and/or possibility: “what is,” “what is good,” and/or “what is possible.” Ideological assumptions, then, affect the ways we conceptualize change and our adoption of positive deviance and other approaches and therefore should be considered.
This chapter focuses on ideology as a key differentiating factor amongst the theory and practice of social change from the *polis* to the present.

**Postmodern Rhetoric: Networked and Dynamic**

In the last section of this chapter, I situate positive deviance amongst Rhetoric and Writing Studies methodologies for social change. In doing so, I claim that positive deviance is ideologically a postmodern methodology for the ways it engages multiple truths, alterity, pluralism, difference, and power. In order to make this assertion and to expound on the ideological underpinnings of positive deviance in Chapters 5 and 6, I find it important to acknowledge my own ideological assumptions and perspectives on rhetoric and writing in this exploration of social change.

I approach language, reality, knowledge, and power with a rhetorically postmodern orientation. In the ideological continuum of **Figure 2.3**, I identify most with the descriptors in the postmodern column, which include skepticism, truths, alterity, subjectivity, power, the role of language, and motivation. These descriptors stand in stark contrast with positivist descriptors, which include objectivity, Truth, enlightenment, unity, authority, empirical evidence, and progress. An interpretive (also called modernist) orientation lies somewhere in between the positivist and the postmodern. It acknowledges social constructionism and some sense of subjectivity while holding on to values of culture and identity. My choice of the word continuum here is worth noting. Ideological orientations can be seen as discrete categories, and the tendency to taxonomize is natural, but their depiction within a (compressed) continuum is a
useful reminder that they are not absolute and that in a lived reality there is overlap. Further, my identification with “postmodern” does not align with ludic or deconstructionist interpretations; rather, I take a “committed postmodern” position (Sullivan & Porter, 1997, p. 42), which seeks a critically conscious awareness. Such awareness, I argue, is necessary because it allows us to delve into the tacit ways power is exerted rhetorically; it lends us, in Sullivan and Porter’s terms, a critical lens. This lens has a significant influence on my views of research, teaching, and service. It is the primary influence on my definition of rhetoric and writing.

A critical interpretation of rhetoric acknowledges that rhetoric is a situational and sophistic art in which general strategies are applied to a particular condition (Sullivan & Porter, 1997, p. 28). That particular condition exists within a given culture and within a particular point in time and in space; however, a postmodern view accepts that particulars are not “fixed matter” (Sullivan & Porter, 1997, p. 29). To some this may seem like a contradiction. Committed or not, postmodernism appears to dismantle the rhetorical techne necessary to write this very dissertation. Hence, I preface my definition of rhetoric in the paragraph that follows, by proposing that postmodern rhetoric is “networked” (Foster, 2007) and dynamic, but it is not elusive. After all, “in order for there to be any rhetoric, we must dare some descriptions of it” (Sullivan & Porter, 2007, p. 29). In other words, it is possible to encapsulate a “rhetorical situation,” but a postmodern perspective acknowledges that that situation, which exists within a particular intersection of time and space in history is also constantly changing.

18 See Faigley (1994), who states that in reality, “it is difficult to distinguish what is ‘modern’ from ‘postmodern’” (p. 19).
I define rhetoric as the discursive, material, and social practices that move people into action.\(^\text{19}\) Within this definition are the assumptions that all forms of human action (Burke, Berlin, Faber),\(^\text{20}\) whether discursive, material, or social are symbolic.\(^\text{21}\) For example, when a young girl in Northern Uganda elects to wear boots instead of going barefoot or wearing sandals, her physical actions are rhetorical. They are an embodied statement about her current reality. The objects she keeps in her home for visitors to see make a material statement and, in some cases, a social statement. She elects to buy a small table so that visitors do not have to eat off of the floor. She invests in a bicycle to maximize her travel time. Her economic values are made visible through rhetoric as social practice. Rhetoric then is as much epistemic and agentic as it is normalizing; it constitutes (a person’s) reality as she interacts with other realities around her. In other words, the construction and strength or staying power of her reality (rhetorical agency) is contingent upon (often competing) multiple ideologies and contexts, as within the realm of rhetoric is a “networked” (Foster, 2007) dynamic of power, symbols, ideologies, epistemologies, and subjectivities existing within the three-dimensional axes of history, time, and space. Rhetorical practices simultaneously define and are defined by the knowledge that they form (Foucault, 1972). This definition of rhetoric as networked and

\(^{19}\) Moving people into action assumes that the status quo is in need of disruption. Faber (2007) argued that Machiavelli’s depiction of change “contributed a necessity for human action as a response to partial breaks in the totality of predetermined narratives” (p. 154). It is worth noting that while current notions of change question the role of biology, in Classical times, fortune or luck was seen, at least by Machiavelli, as a 50% determinant, while free will constituted the other 50%. This notion, Faber noted (albeit cautiously in order not to impose “our own notions of change and agency on to Machiavelli”) signals a shift (even though still rooted in continuity and narrative) toward modernity and conceptualizations of human agency (p. 155).

\(^{20}\) To what extent is everything rhetorical? I argue that because rhetoric encompasses discursive, material, and social acts, what it has held true over time and across contexts is the notion of moving people into some sort of action. In that sense, rhetoric is strategic, and not everything (symbolic/communication) is strategic.

\(^{21}\) See Burke’s (1978, p. 810) discussion on (nonsymbolic) motion/(symbolic) action.
dynamic necessarily affects my views on composition and writing as it expands the scope of “what is,” “what is good,” and “what is possible”\textsuperscript{22} for the discipline.

I liken this notion of rhetoric as networked and dynamic to the expandable, movable sphere comprising nodes and connectors in Figure 2.1.

![Figure 2.1 Photo of Expanding Sphere, by artist Philip Vaughan\textsuperscript{23}](image)

Each node exists in relation to other nodes. The nodes, I contend, are the elements such as agency, ideology, epistemology, alterity, addressivity, interpellation, and heteroglossia that constitute rhetoric. There are also classical, enlightenment, renaissance, medieval, and contemporary elements: \textit{kairos, stasis, ethos, pathos, logos, phronesis}, the rhetorical situation, identification, and so on. While there is no hierarchy in this sphere, and while it is in constant motion, there is a resting point. For the purposes of this analogy, we can think of this resting

\textsuperscript{22} I assume expansion according to the three levels of \textit{stasis}.

\textsuperscript{23} Used with permission from the artist. See Vaughan (1999). The actual sphere grows from 4.5 feet to almost 20 feet and is housed in a retail center in Hokkaido, Japan.
point as the bottom (where the blue light is the brightest). When the sphere rests, it focuses on a particular element of rhetoric. That element becomes a primary lens, assuming that the “master” lens is rhetoric, and through the focus on a primary lens (or primary lenses), all other elements become, secondary, tertiary, quaternary, and so on.

In this chapter’s focus on rhetoric and social change, I find it crucial to address ideology. If social change, which is the alteration/disruption/re-organization of one reality for another, is possible, it is possible through rhetoric; the extent to which it is possible and how it is possible are contingent on ideology, as change is an interruption of a state that is seemingly continual, matter of fact. As explained by Berlin (2003):²⁴

> Ideology always brings with it strong social and cultural reinforcement, so that what we take to exist, to have value, and to be possible seems necessary, normal, and inevitable in the nature of things. This goes for power as well, since ideology naturalizes certain authority regimes—those of class, race, and gender, for example—and renders alternatives unthinkable. (p. 84)

This notion aligns with Faber’s (2007) idea of “change as an object (aim, purpose) of consciousness,” (p.153) which he argues is ultimately a matter of human agency. Examining ideology and power makes visible the epistemological and agentic inner-workings of rhetoric. A preliminary ideological exploration, then, lays some of the groundwork necessary for my examination of epistemic theory in Chapter 5.

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²⁴ Berlin’s work on ideology holds great value for our understanding of ideology. Nonetheless, it has been subject to critique (Scriven, Flower, and Schilb). Sanchez (2001) and Foster (2007, p. 42-69) have argued that in the statements where Berlin gives so much weight to ideology (or situates rhetoric within ideology), rhetoric’s agentic potential is undermined. For this reason, I want to clarify that I see ideology as situated within rhetoric and not the reverse around.
A Rationale for Rhetoric and Writing Studies with Composition as a Sub-Field

Despite that I am well aware of my situatedness in a Rhetoric and Composition program, I identify with the disciplinary descriptor of Rhetoric and Writing Studies. I do this as a deliberate, political statement that merits attention as it relates to my explanation of how social change (and later the positive deviance approach) is situated in the discipline.\(^{25}\) I argue that for social change to have an agenda within the discipline, it needs to be seen together with workplace (professional, technical) and cultural agendas, and not just with the composition classroom agenda.

Although composition is a broad term that focuses on many ways of composing, whether written or not, it carries the heteroglossia (Bahktin) of a classroom-focused, first-year writing curriculum. My intent in transitioning to the phrase Writing Studies, a term not without its fair share of textocentric weight and heteroglossic baggage,\(^ {26}\) is to transcend first-year writing as a singular research (and curricular) focus of the discipline to include other prevalent forms of writing such as technical and professional writing. This is not to say that the task of renaming is without problems:

Adopting an inclusive disciplinary name does not ensure that the privileging of a particular disciplinary aspect will not continue to occur and that we will not continue to lament the repercussions of such privileging, but it can serve to name a value we commonly share. (Foster, 2007, p. 193)

\(^{25}\)The purpose of this dissertation is not to propose a disciplinary name change. This conversation is one which I might take up more actively post-dissertation.

\(^{26}\) Even though a liberal conceptualization of Writing transcends textual manifestations.
Changing the name allows, as scholars such as Goggin (1997) and Foster (2007) have noted, for a curricular approach that emerges out of a discipline rather than a discipline that emerges out of an “ill-conceived and rotting pedagogical structure” (Goggin, 1997 “The Disciplinary”, quoted in Foster, 2007, p. 190). The pairing of Writing with Rhetoric today,\(^2\) allows for a richer, more expansive notion of the potential for what scholars and students do within the discipline.

Changing composition to a sub-field means that many other sub-fields come into play under equal status and can overlap with one another (See Figure 2.1). Recent disciplinary interpretations and established research paths allow for the field to encompass much more than written, oral, and visual discourse, i.e., all forms of human action (see for example Sullivan & Porter, 1997; Flower, 2008). A broad conception of discourse implies that the discipline is concerned not with: “a set of transparent signifiers that records an externally present thing-in-itself... [but] a pluralistic and complex system of signification that constructs realities rather than simply presenting or reflecting them” (Berlin, 2003, p. 61). Furthermore, discourse, along with the material that it constructs, is culturally coded and socially enacted. All human interaction, then, is within the realm of rhetoric, which expands the disciplinary (of rhetoric and writing) scope. For the purposes of this project, which entails locating positive deviance within the discipline, I propose that the naming of Rhetoric and Writing Studies instead of Rhetoric and Composition enables a more expansive view of our disciplinary potential, lending itself more seamlessly to the wide applicability of an approach such as positive deviance.

\(^2\) It may well be that we arrive at a better sense of identity and naming in the future.
The Good Man Speaking Well: Ideology in Ancient and Present Conceptualizations of Social Change

The common denominator of social change throughout history, within the context of rhetoric, is the concept of moving people into action. But what kind of action? And by what means? In our terms, who is the good man speaking well? I take the notion of “the good man speaking well” from classical rhetoric, recognizing that its literal meaning is exclusive in its representation of class and gender and narrow in its representation of orality as the discursive
vehicle. However, my intention in this section is to illuminate some of the changes and constants in our interpretations of the notion of who the “the good man” is and can be and what it means to “speak well.” I offer a definition of social change, highlighting its historical and present contingency on ideology. I frame this interrogation, in terms of ancient and present conceptualizations of the good man speaking well, within ideology. This discussion offers a basis for understanding how ideological parameters influence ongoing interpretations of social change within Rhetoric and Writing Studies and how those interpretations, in turn, affect the positioning of positive deviance in the discipline.

**Social Change**

Social change is an alteration in the structure, nature, relations, and behaviors of a given community. It is a secondary function of social organizing: re-organizing. Social (re)organizing is a discursive practice (Mumby & Clair, 1997; Alvesson & Karreman, 2000; Faber 2008); that is, stability and change within a community or an organization are constituted and made evident through discourse. However, I argue that social change is also symbolic practice, where the subject (as agent of change) resists and negotiates ideological intersections through discursive, material, and social acts. Social organizing at its most basic level can result in the formation (or re-formation) of a community or an organizational unit (or a community within an organization, a community within a community, etc).²⁸ Whether community or organization-based, “change

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²⁸ The basic distinction that I draw between communities and organizations is that communities are not necessarily bound legally or institutionally as is the case with organizations. The label “change studies” helps us conceptualize change broadly: including our notions of organizations (which we tend to associate with professional contexts) and communities (which we tend to associate with civic contexts).
studies,” or the study of the initiation, management, and stabilization of change (Faber, 2010), is within the domain of rhetoric and all or most of its sub-fields.29

My literature review indicates that social change is enacted and researched (change studies) primarily within the auspices of community-based work. Manifestations of community-based work today vary significantly by sub-field and foci. A more literal interpretation of community-based work (and by default social change) connotes literacy studies, service-learning, public writing, and civic engagement. However, depending on how “community” is constructed, community-based work can be pursued in almost any Rhetoric and Writing Studies sub-field and can be construed to include many types and degrees of interaction. This project is situated within community-based work concerned with social change that takes place in a wide variety of (constructed) communities, including settings within and outside of the university, in the public and private sectors.

Social Change Manifest within Rhetoric and Writing Studies

Rhetoric’s association with social change can be traced to sophistic, Platonic, and Aristotelian views of moral responsibility and societal involvement. The Platonic perspective centered on the dialectic search for objective Truth by an enlightened elite and was transmittable only to students capable of learning: “Access to true knowledge was limited to those of wealth and high birth, and those few born with these qualities were the only legitimate candidates to be counted among the philosophic ruling few” (McComiskey, 2002, p. 20). In Plato’s ethic, central to the search for Truth was the virtuous man, the philosopher king, who

29 In Rhetoric and Writing Studies today, social change is often associated with strategies for community change or organizational change. We tend to think of community change as activist or service-oriented and organizational change as professionally or business-oriented (organizing around a cause versus organizing around a task).
had in his hands the responsibility of the soul. In this view Truth would speak for itself. Plato’s work eschewed rhetoric as a mere (and often deceptive) knack.

However, sophists such as Cicero, Isocrates, and Gorgias, challenged notions of unitary Truth and elite containment by deferring to the moral responsibility of the individual rhetor. Their ethic was applied more broadly than Plato’s: “Just like any competitive skill, rhetoric should be used when morally appropriate” (Gorgias, p. 457b). The interpretation of “morally appropriate” was in the epistemological court of the orator, who, in sophistic terms, could be anybody (or any citizen of the polis) and was culturally contingent, i.e., Quintilian’s “good man speaking well.”

Moral appropriateness depended on interpretations of legitimacy of the word, the speaker, and the audience and were indicative of a relativistic epistemology and a “nascent social constructionism ....based on communal truths-as-probabilities rather than universal truth” (McComiskey, 2002, p.34 & 33). Almost bridging the Platonic and the sophistic, Aristotle’s work refuted Plato’s division of dialectic and rhetoric, arguing that while truth is preferable to probability, “all human actions, the subjects of rhetorical deliberation and judgment, are based on probability rather than truth” (paraphrased in McCommiskey, 2002, p. 33). “Aristotle did not appear to agonize over the good and bad uses of rhetoric, as his predecessors had done...” (Bizzell & Herzberg, 2000, p. 29). For Aristotle, rhetoric was a means to move the polis into action, but not without consideration of the word, the speaker, and the audience, or logos, ethos, and pathos.
While Plato, the sophists, and Aristotle represent early Western rhetorical history, their ideological lenses can be compared to contemporary manifestations of ideology: positivist, interpretive, and postmodern.\(^{30}\) Since ideology is laden with assumptions about what is, what is good, and what is possible—reality, knowledge, and power—it affects rhetoricians’ conceptions of social change and how that change is enacted. From a positivist perspective, objectivity yields a unified Truth possessed by experts. Similar to Platonic philosophy, change occurs from the top down; it is transferred from expert to non-expert. Under the interpretive category, which conjures Aristotelian views, truth is constructed socially and there is more room for varied interpretations based on persuasion. Change occurs through social vehicles—the best available means for persuasion at a given time. Postmodern assumptions of multiple truths (relativism),\(^{31}\) skepticism, and the consideration of language and motivation would be more aptly held by the sophists—even though they espoused some notions of social constructionism and culture as contextual. Sophistic thought would maintain that because discursive practices create realities, they can also be revised to change realities. Figure 2.3 depicts a continuum of the characteristics and assumptions prevalent in each of these ideological paradigms.

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\(^{30}\) I use these terms, generally, out of necessity. The term postmodern in particular “resists definition” (Faigley, 1992; Sullivan & Porter, 1997), and I use it here to mean not ludic interpretation, absurd relativity, or radical deconstruction but critically conscious awareness.

\(^{31}\) Not absurd relativism, but critically conscious, contingent, and situated differences.
Figure 2.3. Ideological Continuum Affecting Manifestations of Social Change

Ultimately, differentiated notions and actions of social change in the *polis* continue to influence notions and actions of social change today: 32 ideas about the extent and degree of deliberate change practices in terms of who is allowed or capable of making knowledge and how or by whom that knowledge is legitimized. Ideological assumptions about language, reality, knowledge, and power have an ethical and political dimension as they directly influence conceptions of ethical responsibility and civic involvement—the building blocks of social change.

Contributions and Gaps in Contemporary Rhetoric and Writing Studies Social Change

The question *what does it mean to be the good man speaking well?* which has been met through time with answers represented in different theories of change and forms of action, continues to be relevant. Since the 1990s, Rhetoric and Writing Studies scholars with primary research interests in community-based work (broadly construed) in various sub-fields (see for

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32 Although I argue that these notions have prevailed throughout history, covering social change in all historic periods is beyond the scope of this project.
example Cushman, Flower, Grabill, Simmons, Sullivan & Porter, Johnson, Johnson-Eilola, Goldblatt, George, Herzberg, Brice-Heath, Selfe & Hawisher, Scenters-Zapico, Brandt, Lankshear, Heller, Street, Coogan, Nardini, Blake Scott, Mathieu, Blythe, Hart-Davidson, Lather, Powell, Takayoshi & Powell) have advocated consistently and increasingly for methodologies that (1) value local knowledge and find meaningful ways to get partners involved and (2) are critical and recognize that knowledge is situated in ethical and political contexts. In this sense, reciprocal, reflexive community-based work increasingly values and understands the role of research as a transformational tool. Hence, community-based projects are becoming decidedly (3) inquiry-driven—research is a primary, not a neglected, component. A less prevalent, more recent call (Cushman, Grabill) within the field asserts that responsible partnerships also (4) aspire and work towards sustainability. When partnerships dissolve, partners have the capacity to continue to do some work on their own. Although there seems to be some semblance of agreement on what social change is and why it “is good,” i.e., we value local and critical practice as a whole, the ways social change can and should be enacted from a disciplinary standpoint continue to vary based on ethical and political views: ideological assumptions.

Local. Michel Foucault, in his discussion of the subject and power, draws attention to the power latent in everyday activities “which categorizes the individual...imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him” (1982, p. 212). Foster (2007) complicates this notion of the subject by adding the intricacies and simultaneous interactions of a contextual yet dynamic network of influences, institutions, and events. In the construction of the subject, valuing local, everyday knowledge entails, in our interpretations of subjectivity, ascribing, assigning, or mediating a greater sense of agency to the non-expert. In
conversations about social change, Ellen Cushman’s 1996 claim of the rhetorician as agent of social change has been profoundly influential. Interestingly, Cushman’s notion of the agent of change in reality begins to point not to the rhetorician, per se, but to everyday people who, through everyday practices, exercise agency. Drawing on Bordieu’s notion of habitus, Cushman (1996) argued that activism can lead to social change, but not when it’s solely measured on the scale of collective action, or sweeping social upheavals….Rather, we need to take into our accounts of social change the ways in which people use language and literacy to challenge and alter the circumstances of daily life. In these particulars of daily living, people can throw off the burdens placed upon them by someone else’s onerous behavior. In other words, social change can take place in daily interactions when the regular flow of events is objectified, reflected upon, and altered. (p. 13)

While parts of Cushman’s theory (1996, 1998, 1999) urge an exploration of the “ways people use language and literacy” in spite of institutions—granting them a certain level of agency—other scholars posit language and literacy as institutionally bound. This is not to say that agency beyond institutions is null or impossible. As explained by Grabill (2001),

Institutions, then, are local systems of decision-making within which people act rhetorically in ways that powerfully affect the lives of others, including decisions about the meaning and practice of literacy. Institutions, in other words, are written, and if they are written, they can be rewritten. (p. 8)
Both Grabill and Flower have made explicit that for everyday knowledge to be a powerful currency of social interaction, status, and well-being (Grabill, 2001, p. 104), we need to be attuned not only to the big gestures of public performance but to the more subtle, local indicators—to those moments in which writers and speakers attempt to create a community dialogue, in which they listen, respond, and draw others, in one way or another, toward a transformative understanding. This is not an easy form of rhetorical agency to achieve. It requires nurturing, no matter who you are. But if such acts of agency do not use the discourse moves we recognize from academic or professional talk, or if they are of necessity indirect or culturally coded, maybe the first step university partners must take is to become attuned to the acts of rhetorical agency already around us. (Flower, 2008, p. 209-210)

Furthermore, local knowledge, from local publics, has the potential to do more than grant agency to or empower the Other. If we are to take seriously the value of public knowledge—the idea that the everyday person’s lived experiences translate into epistemic currency, then there is also a need to validate that knowledge by actually putting it to use. Simmons (2007), within the context of a risk communication project, noted the value of local knowledge in preventing an environmental disaster through usability testing or public vetting: “Local knowledge from publics could have exposed the problems in the evacuation plan before that plan was printed up on calendars and flyers and distributed through the area” (p. 123). Not only did Simmons argue for the practical benefits of public information and vetting, she emphasized them as an
ethical stance in public decision-making. Examining ethics requires a certain level of reflexivity. Scholars have argued that reflexivity is made possible through critical practice.

**Critical.** In current interpretations of social change, three notable (widely cited, representative) influences make visible the connection between ideology and pragmatic choices: Ellen Cushman’s (1996) call for reciprocal, reflective practice; Sullivan and Porter’s call for critical research praxis; and Thomas Deans’ notion of writing about, for, and with communities (2000). Such conceptions of change acknowledge the ethical and political dimensions of change management and public decision-making.

Cushman problematized the expert-subject relationship, introducing a layer of skepticism for the status quo by proposing “a deeper consideration of the civic purpose of our positions in the academy, of what we do with our knowledge, for whom, and by what means” (1996, p.12). By proposing that we un-distance our selves from the populations we study, Cushman advocated for reflexivity and reciprocity, shifting the focus of social change from missionary activism (entering into a community to change ideology) to empowering activism (providing resources, facilitating actions, lending our power status). Her work (1996; 1998; 1999), which built on the work of other scholars (see, for example, Geisler, 1994; Gere, 1994; Herzberg, 1994; Lather, 1986; McLaren & Lankshear, 1994; Powell, 1995; Rose, 1989 & 1995; and Schiappa, 1995, among others), catalyzed and continues to inspire further exploration of what it means to do activist research, or, at minimum, what it means to enter into work outside of the university (with a community or organization) more meaningfully and responsibly.

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33 Based on the assumption that as scholars we create a distance in order to see our subjects as objects to be studied. See Powell, 1995, on the “un-seeing” of the American Indian.
Sullivan and Porter’s (1997) notion of critical research as situated practice (praxis) further problematized the neutrality of the researcher, of the research methods, and of the “researched.” In other words, Sullivan and Porter’s (1997) critical praxis acknowledges “the rhetorical situatedness of participants, writing technologies, and technology design, [recognizing] research as a form of political and ethical action” (p. 15). Critical praxis was a step into the postmodern in many ways as it introduced a layer of skepticism, acknowledging multiple truths and making visible power relations (which are traditionally invisible).

More than ten years later, Thomas Deans’ (2000) made the observation that most service-learning projects fall into one of three categories differentiated by what it means (both practically and ideologically) to write (1) about, (2) for, and (3) with communities. Even though Deans (2000) was writing specifically from a service-learning perspective, much social change scholarship, in general, has concerned itself in some sense with interpreting what it means to write about, for, and with communities—variances of positivist, interpretive, and postmodern ideological lenses—which essentially questions what it means to engage in reciprocal relations and to do so reflexively or critically. As Rhetoric and Writing Studies continues to interrogate notions of the good man speaking well, these studies explore, and ideally expand, the domain of our role as public intellectuals.

**Inquiry-Driven.** If we take Deans’ (2000) notion of writing about, writing for, and writing with the community and replace “writing” with “research,” the ambiguity of writing (which can mean so many things) is replaced with a heavy, serious science. Or, is research an art? Ideology

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34 Despite the relevance of change studies to almost any Rhetoric and Writing Studies sub-field, my review of literature indicates that its utilization is most explicitly theorized in community-based work, public writing/public discourse, action research, service learning, community engagement, literacy studies, critical theory, technology (activity theory), and risk communication. I acknowledge that this list may exclude related but differently-named sub-fields.
will no doubt influence our conceptions of research. It also influences the relationships surrounding research practices. Even though missionary activism is still prevalent (after all, it lends itself to our ideals for service in the university), as is evident in special interest journals such as *Reflections*\(^{35}\), a recent stream of Rhetoric and Writing Studies community-based work has turned to inquiry. I see two main reasons for this trend; both are tied in some way to disciplinary identity. The first reason, I speculate, has to do with the continued search for meaning in the missionary – empowering divide. I attribute this to the divide that exists *ipso facto* between “buying into” postmodern ideological concepts, such as critical awareness and valuing local knowledge, and putting them into practice. A noble cause is not always a useful or fruitful cause:

...a fundamental conflict remains unresolved when students (fired up with certainty for social change) confront the suddenly realized limitations of their own understanding.

They find their academic agendas for service and action failing to connect to the alternative expertise of the community and to its own resilient cultural agendas. They came prepared to act; they really needed to inquire. (Flower, 2008, p. 154)

Flower (2008), like Cushman (1999), has made the case that inquiry as a common goal with community partners can be the basis for reciprocity. The second reason for a trend in inquiry has more to do with a decisive effort to push the boundaries of what we conceive of as research in Rhetoric and Writing Studies (hence my argument on the importance of “Writing

\(^{35}\) This is not to say that *Reflections* does not publish pieces on “empowering activism.” It does. However, paradigm-challenging pieces are few and far between and are buttressed on all sides by articles on specific programs and their specific relational and logistical issues. Though I found useful information in many articles (and I enjoy reading the journal, not to mention that I see it as necessary as it fills a specific niche), I am skeptical about this venue’s ultimate value in terms of groundbreaking contributions.
Studies”) by engaging in research in non-classroom settings, i.e., outside of the university (whether in what we conceive of as an organization or a community formed around a specific project, issue, etc.).

The turn to inquiry as a transformational tool conjures Deans’ notions of about, for, and with; community-based research comes in many forms, depending on project goals. Community-based research happens under the auspices of literacy studies (Brandt, Brice-Heath, Selfe & Hawisher, Scenters-Zapico), cooperative inquiry (Ehn, 1988), intercultural inquiry (Flower, 2008), participatory design (Spinuzzi, 2005; Simmons, 2007; Grabill, 2001), as well as through action research (Grabill, 2001), participatory action research (Fals-Borda & Rahman 1991; Grabill, 2001), and critical action research (Blythe, Grabill, & Riley, 2008). Aside from the descriptive label assigned to a project, the differentiating factor in each project—broadly construed, that is, not accounting for local, contextual qualities—is the ratio of characteristics: the role of local knowledge, the level of critical practice, and the importance given to research. Aside from descriptive labels, a differentiating factor in community-based research projects or methodologies is the value ratio ascribed to local knowledge, critical practice, and priority status of research (over action or vice versa). Additionally, projects vary by researchers’ commitment to social justice as well as the relationship between researchers and participants (Blythe, Grabill, & Riley, 2008). All of these factors influence what is, what is good, and what is possible.

**Sustainable.** Sustainability is defined differently by different entities (i.e., ecology, urban planning, development). In community-based work, sustainability is, generally speaking, the productive capacity within a particular context beyond the scope of a given project. To say that
change is sustainable is to say that outcomes and/or processes of change are maintained by the community in question with little guidance beyond the scope of a change intervention; sustainability is most achievable if the change process (problem, process, and outcomes) is owned by the community.

Sustainability has also been linked to research; scholars (Cushman, 2002; Grabill, 2007; Simmons, 2007; Flower, 2008; Blythe, Grabill, & Riley, 2008) are increasingly not only recognizing but testing and asserting that what “we” as scholars are capable of contributing to a community, is inquiry or research practices. According to Cushman (2002) and Grabill (2007), research is a lever for capacity building: “Research-based service learning sustains itself through inquiry that’s spurred by community concerns, that’s guided in large part by the partner’s needs (Cushman, 2002, p. 61). Furthermore,

Regardless of the specifics, one principle is important for both community-based research and the creation of productive communities—research must be used to leverage activities that increase the capacity of a community to be productive. Research practices are an often hidden yet powerful mechanism for doing so. (Grabill, 2007, p. 335)

Hence, researchers doing community-based work, who genuinely value local knowledge, also acknowledge research as communal. A critical practice of communal research accounts for shared ownership as noted by Cushman (2002): “research-based service learning programs can be and should be structured in a way that does not rely on any one person but that allows for turnover as collaborators inevitably leave and new ones come on board” (p. 61). Additionally, if we assume Grabill’s proposition that we construct communities as we work (Grabill, 2001,
2007, 2011), inquiry practices learned around a constructed community can be applied to other, future issues by community participants.\(^{36}\) So, sustainability “beyond the scope of a given project” can mean that change achieved within a project is sustained over time (sustainability of outcomes). But it can also mean that a process (hence the value of heuristics) is sustained over time through replication. I claim that the issue of sustainability is less prevalent (it is less widely documented), perhaps, because of the logistical challenges inherent in community-based work and also because scholars have different purposes for entering into projects and different levels of commitment to social justice as noted by Blythe, Grabill, and Riley (2008).\(^{37}\)

Despite the availability of theories and methodologies that value local knowledge, critical practice, and a growing emphasis on inquiry and sustainability, scholars continue to seek alternative methodologies for change and different perspectives on change studies:

What is missing in the current approaches to risk communication, then, are heuristics that consider the power relations among the involved parties and strategies that work toward both creating a dialogue among those affected \textit{and} gathering knowledge about the risk from \textit{all} affected (Simmons, 2007, p. 108).

...studies of change need to examine how agency is achieved as a strategy and not simply what is argued from the position of agency. To accomplish such a study, Harvey [1996 in \textit{Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference}] suggested that ‘it is not

\(^{36}\) See the notion of horizontal scalability in Chapter 2.

\(^{37}\) In Chapter 5, I will posit the researcher’s involvement with policy and institutional change beyond the scope of a project.
change per se that has to be explained, but the forces that hold down change and/or which give it a certain directionality.’ (Faber, 2007, p. 159-160)

These specific calls from the discipline signal a need for (1) local methodologies that account for the global (geographic, social, institutional), (2) heuristics for foregrounding power relations with effective outcomes, and (3) studies that explain how an approach to change enables agency. Faber’s call resonates with Grabill’s in that it seeks to go beyond “specifics” or issues of logistics. In essence, disciplinary calls reflect a need for methodologies that can better account for issues of power, for example, how power is mediated to facilitate change within contemporary realities, based on the values of local/contingent knowledge, inquiry, reflexivity, and reciprocity.

**Situating Positive Deviance within Rhetoric and Writing Studies Social Change**

Positive deviance is an innovative approach that fits well within the calls for methodologies that value local knowledge and that are inquiry-driven, networked, sustainable, and globally situated (geographically, socially, and institutionally). However, positive deviance is different from current Rhetoric and Writing Studies approaches to change that are relationship or context specific (i.e. Flower’s intercultural inquiry and Simmons’ participatory design). What I mean by this is that even though all community projects are necessarily relationship- and context-specific, the process of positive deviance is systematized and *transferable or adaptable.* 38 Over the last 20 years, positive deviance has been applied in over 40 countries to issues as diverse as malnutrition, HIV prevention in transgendered communities, business

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38 A distinction can be made from project to project. Some projects interpret the process quite literally in an effort to replicate or scale ethically/effectively, while other projects are more flexible in their interpretation and are referred to as positive deviance-inspired. The process of positive deviance and its minimum specifications are described in Chapters 2 and 3, while distinctions are explained in Chapter 6.
productivity, and education. Thus, it is widely applicable, even with its limitations and challenges. Furthermore, past projects have shown that the involvement of local leaders and policymakers in positive deviance can have an influence on outcome sustainability and policy.

Because positive deviance is a systematized way of engaging the postmodern ideals of multiple truths, alterity, pluralism, difference, and power relations—notions that I will explore more extensively in Chapter 4—situating positive deviance within the field and amongst specific methodologies is based not only on novel appeal or even on addressing disciplinary gaps. I argue that the introduction of positive deviance to the field is better justified on the basis of ideological compatibility. I argue that ideological compatibility enables a more seamless dialectical reciprocity (or at minimum) interaction amongst methodologies as ideology accounts for the same or similar/negotiable assumptions. Table 2.1 makes apparent some of the patterns in assumptions based on ideology across sub-fields and across specific methodologies for community-based work and community-based research with different bases for existence. Making visible ideological differences, which are often invisible, makes it possible to see where positive deviance stands in relation to Rhetoric and Writing Studies sub-fields and methodologies that theorize and execute social change and change studies.

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39 Explained in detail in Chapters 2 and 3.
40 See example of positive deviance in Indonesia in Chapter 2.
41 Nonetheless, ideological compatibility is a starting point; I acknowledge that at some point ideological disruption might be necessary and productive.
Table 2.1 Situating Positive Deviance within Rhetoric and Writing Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Field</th>
<th>Primary Basis for Its Existence</th>
<th>Primary Ideological Lens</th>
<th>Values Local Knowledge / Primary Location of Epistemology</th>
<th>Relies on Critical / Reflexive Practice</th>
<th>Addresses Sustainability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service Learning Sub-Field</td>
<td>Development of students’ critical consciousness</td>
<td>Positivist *Interpretive</td>
<td>Sometimes: about, for, with / Outside expertise</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Expert dependent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic Engagement Sub-Field</td>
<td>Social, political awareness and participation</td>
<td>Positivist *Interpretive</td>
<td>Sometimes: about, for, with / Outside expertise</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Expert dependent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk Communication Sub-Field</td>
<td>Mediation of public risk</td>
<td>Positivist *Interpretive</td>
<td>Rarely: about, for/ Outside expertise</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Expert dependent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Studies Sub-Field</td>
<td>Research to raise awareness</td>
<td>Positivist *Interpretive</td>
<td>Sometimes: about, for, with / Outside expertise</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Out of research scope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flower et al: Intercultural Inquiry</td>
<td>Community-based change and development of students’ critical consciousness</td>
<td>Interpretive *Postmodern</td>
<td>Towards a shared epistemology</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>If key people are trained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cushman et al: Activist Ethnography</td>
<td>Research to raise awareness and aimed at affecting participants directly</td>
<td>Interpretive</td>
<td>Towards reciprocal relations</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Out of research scope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathieu et al: Public Writing</td>
<td>Tactical approach to community-academic partnerships towards greater community agency</td>
<td>Interpretive</td>
<td>Towards reciprocal relations/shared epistemology</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>If key people are trained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grabill &amp; Simmons: Participatory Design</td>
<td>Institutional and policy change through grassroots participation</td>
<td>Interpretive *Postmodern</td>
<td>Towards a shared epistemology</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Potentially</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Deviance</td>
<td>Social, organizational, and behavioral change</td>
<td>Postmodern</td>
<td>With / Always\textsuperscript{43}</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Built into method(ology)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I argue that positive deviance as a Rhetoric and Writing Studies action research methodology builds on Rhetoric and Writing Studies action research in general. I use the term “action research” to emphasize the distinction between community-based research that simply happens within and to a community and action research that happens with a community, for

\textsuperscript{42}I have attempted to make this table representative of sub-fields and methodologies; hence, my addition of “et al” after primary names associated with a methodology. As with any taxonomy, categories run the risk of being oversimplified or overdetermined, and while some may disagree with certain categorizations, it is important to see this table as a landscape as well.\textsuperscript{43}With the exception of Positive Deviance Inquiry as research, which is explained in Chapter 5.
the community and for the researcher (to advance some field of knowledge). I assume that “the goal of all forms of action research is to produce knowledge that benefits some nonscholarly community (or communities)” (Blythe, Grabill, & Riley, 2008, p. 273). But building on Ellen Cushman’s work in activist research, Linda Flower’s work with intercultural inquiry, Jeffrey Grabill’s work in participatory design in professional writing, Michele Simmons’ work in participatory design in risk communication, and Brenton Faber’s work in change management in professional and technical communication, the form of action research I propose is local/participatory, critical, and sustainable. Furthermore, I will use their work to substantiate my claims in the forthcoming chapters, as the gaps they identify can be addressed by reciprocity with characteristics and benefits of the positive deviance approach.

There are also several practical advantages of turning to positive deviance as an alternative Rhetoric and Writing Studies action research methodology. Because of its reliance on inquiry, I argue that in addition to being profoundly rhetorical, positive deviance is a latent action research methodology and as such is amenable and adaptable to Rhetoric and Writing Studies research. In Chapter 6, I explain in greater detail, using a definitional heuristic proposed by Altrichter, Kemmis, McTaggart, and Zuber-Skerritt (2002), how positive deviance fits the action research paradigm. Positive deviance is not exactly prescriptive, but as a systematized interventional methodology, it is bound by certain parameters: a set of minimum

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44 With the caveat, of course, that there are no guarantees.
45 In Chapter 6, I explain other applications, i.e., in pedagogical, administrative, and service-oriented initiatives.
46 Some might argue that positive deviance is, in and of itself, action research. However, I am not aware of any documented studies where positive deviance is conceptualized as action research.
specifications.\textsuperscript{47} These parameters act as a heuristic, while leaving room for project- and context-specific inventional practices.

Additionally, I posit throughout this project that Rhetoric and Writing Studies scholarship can inform positive deviance practice both within and outside of the discipline. The work of Cushman, Flower, Grabill, Simmons, and Faber represents important advances in social change within the discipline and is, along with Sullivan and Porter’s (1997) work on critical research, highly influential in the construction of the heuristic I propose in Chapter 6 for a more effective and ethical practice of positive deviance action research within Rhetoric and Writing Studies that accounts for both action and research goals. To arrive at how Rhetoric and Writing Studies might appropriate positive deviance action research with a rhetorical disposition, I will in Chapter 3 describe the positive deviance approach in terms of its significance to Rhetoric and Writing Studies social change. In Chapters 4 and 5, I will present and analyze a case example that illustrates how the positive deviance process is applied and how change, particularly in the form of agency, is mediated through the process.

\textsuperscript{47} See Minimum Specifications to classify a project as a positive deviance project in Chapter 2.
CHAPTER 3: SIGNIFICANT ATTRIBUTES OF POSITIVE DEVIANCE FOR RHETORIC AND WRITING STUDIES

*PD is about making ourselves irrelevant.*

—Monique Sternin, PDI co-founder

*If we approach research with a set of questions and theoretical presumptions that are based on notions of deficit... we will be hard pressed to adequately represent participants in honoring and respectful ways. As a rule of thumb, activist research demands we show how people can and do act instead of how they cannot and do not act.*

—Ellen Cushman in *The Struggle and the Tools*

A growing interest in positive deviance has led not only to the continued application and adaptation of the approach, but also to the collation of publications and resources and to the development of worldwide communities of practice. I begin this chapter by answering *What is positive deviance?* with a brief characterization of positive deviance and an explanation of its origins in the field of nutrition and its application in Vietnam. I then answer *What distinguishes positive deviance from traditional approaches to social change?* by explaining the significance and nuances of its attributes as an innovative problem-solving approach that is asset-based and community-driven. Then, in answering *What resources are available for the practice of positive deviance?*...
deviance? When should positive deviance be used? I discuss briefly the limitations and challenges that should be considered when undertaking a problem with this approach.

Positive Deviance

In its most basic characterization, positive deviance is an asset-based, problem-solving, community-driven approach to social change. It is premised on the observation that in every community there are individuals or groups whose uncommon behaviors and practices enable them to find better solutions to problems than their peers, while having access to the same resources and facing similar or worse challenges. As an approach to social change typically used in development or organizational settings, positive deviance relies on a facilitator or facilitation team (external to the community) so that internal change agents (stakeholders) at all levels are guided through a five-step process, typically over the course of several months. In and of themselves, “asset-based,” “problem-solving,” and “community-driven” as defining characteristics are not unique, nor are they unique to positive deviance. What is unique, however, is the interpretation of these characteristics in tandem and within the context of the positive deviance approach’s theoretical underpinnings and practice. This chapter, along with Chapters 4 and 5 the analysis and theory-building of, delves into the nuances of these characteristics as they function together and within varying community contexts.

Origins in Vietnam

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51 Positive deviance operates within the context of social change. Social change refers to an alteration or transformation of the mechanisms in life’s social communities (formal and informal organizations, institutions, etc.). As an approach to change, it considers individual and collective, as well as the behavioral and systemic, aspects of social organizing: discursive, material, and social (Faber, 2007). In Rhetoric and Writing Studies, social change is engaged specifically within the subfields of Organizational Change and Change Studies, but it overlaps with all areas interested in effecting or examining patterns of stability and change at the behavioral and systemic levels.

52 See “Define, Determine, Discover, Design, and Monitor” in Figure 2.1.
Positive deviance was piloted in Vietnam in 1990 by Jerry and Monique Sternin who at the time worked with the non-governmental organization (NGO) Save the Children. They faced a strict mandate from the Vietnamese government and were looking for a low-cost, sustainable methodology that could be implemented within a six-month timeframe to improve malnutrition. The Sternins learned about the concept of positive deviance through the research\textsuperscript{53} of Tufts’ nutritionist Marian Zeitlin, who co-authored a publication with Hossein Ghassemi and Mohamed Mansour (1990) through UNICEF and the WHO\textsuperscript{54} titled *Positive Deviance in Child Nutrition with Emphasis on Psychosocial and Behavioural Aspects and Implications for Development*.

Zeitlin, Ghassemi, and Mansour (1990) conducted a literature review and cited previous advocates of positive deviance dating back to 1967. Hegsted (1967), Wray (1972), Greaves (1979), and Mata (1980), in their studies, had emphasized the need for practicable and affordable solutions that focused on healthy instead of unhealthy families, on positive behaviors of mothers, and on nutritional success rather than malnutrition, while Alvarez et al., (1982) and Danforth (1983) focused more on isolating genetic factors affecting nutritional status. The research of Zeitlin, Ghassemi, and Mansour (1990) was significant, as it articulated a rationale indicating the value of positive deviance—practices that deviated from the norm in a positive way—through an example from the Burmese Department for Medical Research. The

\textsuperscript{53} The word “research” here is noteworthy because positive deviance is best known as a field-based approach. However, and perhaps ironically, it was theorized and proposed as a research method before it was applied. In fact, in addition to the growing work on positive deviance research today, there is a small body of literature on positive deviance as a research method that can be arrived at through Zeitlin, Ghassemi and Mansour’s work.

\textsuperscript{54} World Health Organization
positive-deviance-inspired\textsuperscript{55} study in Burma indicated that studying the behaviors of healthy versus malnourished babies and mothers produced different results than studies focusing purely on the causes and behaviors leading to malnutrition. Zeitlin, Ghassemi, and Mansour (1990) proposed looking for behaviors that were linked directly to health (positive-deviant status) but that had been overlooked, i.e., the critical factors that led to positive deviant behavior outside of the innate or biological: (psychosocial and behavioral) practices that were accessible to and replicable by others such as (1) adults feeding toddlers actively, as opposed to young children feeding toddlers, and (2) supplementing a child’s diet with porridge.

Drawing from this small but promising body of literature, the Sternins looked towards positive deviance as a resource that was low-cost, innovative, and capable of being implemented at once. The Save the Children positive deviance program was piloted in four villages south of Hanoi in the province of Thanh Hóa, where out of 2,000 children, 64% under the age of three were found to be malnourished (Sternin, Singhal, & Dura, 2009; Pascale, Sternin, & Sternin, 2010). The program began with a weigh-in and the facilitation of self-discovery, led by the Sternins; they shifted immediately the problem of malnutrition into a different (positive- or asset-based) rhetorical framework: Are there any children from very, very poor families who are healthy? The shift in thinking alone was a radical departure from traditional foci on deficits, and with this question (in the process of positive deviance this is

\textsuperscript{55} The first application of positive deviance in Vietnam did not follow the minimum specifications set forth in Figure 2.1; after the PD inquiry, PD behaviors were disseminated as best practices.
known as the PD question) as the basis, the following positive deviant behaviors (and positive deviants) were identified:

- inclusion of unusual but nutrient-rich foods in children’s daily meals such as crushed shrimp shells and sweet potato greens, which were thought to be inappropriate for young children (Sternin & Choo, 2000);
- feeding times increased from two to three times daily; and
- active feeding, where parents and caretakers fed children deliberately, looking them in the eyes.

These practices were then operationalized and applied by others; after a few months a follow-up weigh-in proved the success of the program and the Vietnamese government granted the Sternins extensions. By the end of two years, the children weighed in, and malnutrition had decreased in pilot villages by 85%.

**An Innovative Approach to Problem-Solving**

Positive deviance differs from traditional approaches to social change in its interpretation of the role of the expert, the location of knowledge-production, the focus on existing solutions, and the process of ownership. A comparison between the traditional approach to problem-solving and the positive deviance approach to problem-solving is summarized in Table 3.1.

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56 Had this question been posed differently, that is, in a traditional way, asking who was malnourished and why, the answers would have also been much different. Thus, the process of inquiry at the beginning of a positive deviance project is crucial to the outcomes.  
57 I am under the impression that the very first attempt to operationalize practices was in the form of a “best practices” attempt, and when it didn’t work, the Sternins saw first-hand the value of local ownership.
### Table 3.1. Traditional vs. positive deviance approaches to problem-solving

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRADITIONAL</th>
<th>POSITIVE DEVIANECE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deficit Based “What’s wrong here?”</td>
<td>Asset Based “What’s right here?” affects culture change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Externally Fueled (by “experts” or internal authority): Top-down, Outside-in</td>
<td>Internally Fueled (by “people like us”, same culture and resources): Down-up, Inside-out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Begins with analysis of underlying causes of PROBLEM ➔ Solution Space limited by perceived problem parameters (wanting to address root causes)</td>
<td>Begins with analysis of demonstrably successful SOLUTIONS ➔ Solution Space enlarged through discovery (through inquiry) of actual parameters (setting aside root causes for now)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parts from Knowledge changes Attitudes changes Practice paradigm (KAP): Triggers Immune System “defense response”</td>
<td>Sets KAP paradigm on its head by advocating that Practices change Attitudes creating Knowledge (PAK): Solution is possible through someone “just like me.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most notable differences between “traditional” approaches to social change and the positive deviance approach are two: the location and the vehicle of epistemology or knowledge-production and the likelihood of adoption due to the increased size of the solution space and the community’s willingness to act their way into new behaviors on the basis of social proof. These are not insignificant differences.

**The Significance of an Asset-Based Approach**

Asset-based approaches to social change (also known as asset-based community development [ABCD] models) arose in the early 1990s from the critique of needs-based or deficit-focused approaches to development—with these came positive deviance. Asset-based approaches focus on the discovery, mapping, and mobilization of a community’s already

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59 Users repel solutions garnered from sources “too different from me” to make a difference.

60 The word “development” as it is used here references social and economic contexts, although it can also apply to urban planning contexts.
existing assets rather than on its deficits; they focus on problem-solving at a local level; and they rely heavily on relationships among individuals, associations, and institutions (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Grabill, 2001; Mathie & Cunningham, 2003). Positive deviance is similar to other asset-based approaches in that it focuses on the discovery, mapping, and mobilization of a community’s already existing and potential assets rather than on its deficits.

Other asset-based approaches well-known within areas of development and organizational change include Appreciative Inquiry (AI), Trial of Improved Practices (TIPS), Designing by Dialogue, and Praxis Intervention. Each of these approaches is useful under different circumstances. Appreciative Inquiry, for example, is very similar to positive deviance but is generally used for “group building and strategic planning” instead of specific behavior change. Positive deviance is not a magic bullet or a one-size-fits-all approach. The section titled “When to use the Positive Deviance Approach” of this chapter, combined with the

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62. Critics of positive deviance have argued that, like similar approaches such as cultural resiliency, positive deviance runs the risk of isolating a problem to the individual level, tending to ignore social and institutional contexts. However,

...because of PD’s emphasis on amplifying local solutions, principally it makes sense for the PD discovery process to begin at a local [individual, family, community] level. On a practical level, starting small also makes sense because while [the problem at hand] can have local, district, regional or national drivers, the effects converge at the level of the community, family or an individual. (Singhal and Dura, 2009)

Positive deviance does not directly delve into root causes or systemic (institutional) causes; in some sense, you can say that it ignores these. It does not wait for those root or systemic causes to be addressed. When projects at the local level are supported by local leaders and government officials, social and institutional contexts can be addressed, as was the case of positive deviance applied to the trafficking of young girls in East Java, Indonesia. The anti-trafficking initiative in Indonesia was not only taken to scale, it was also situated within the context of strong social networks that included public institutions. The MRSA (a prevalent healthcare associated infection) prevention initiative in U.S. hospitals led to the system-wide adoption of an innovative “bundle” that included positive deviance as a community-building approach.

examples used to characterize positive deviance, are intended to give the reader a better sense
of when positive deviance is a good fit.\textsuperscript{64}

Once operationalized, all approaches to social change are a type of “stabilized
representation” (Bazerman, 1999, p. 308) that competes with and attempts to displace
(destabilize) current and accepted concepts, meanings, and interpretations (Faber, 2003, p.
393). Stabilized representations are enacted rhetorically and allow for a culture to transition
into a new paradigm. To create this disruption with an asset-based focus enables not only a re-
definition of a problem and the transition into change, but, in this case, displacement of a
deficit-based reality with an asset-based reality, which has an epistemological and behavioral
impact on culture. Grabill (2001) refers to this type of discursive and recurrent self-definition
activity as the symbolic community:

A community, then, is not best seen as a pre-existing, clearly coherent group of like
minded people occupying a discrete physical space. This can be the case, but more than
likely, community must be constructed, and when it is, community is usefully seen as
some connection of individuals, loose institutionalized associations, and stronger
institutionalized associations, all linked by some idea, issue, or vision. Community
building must encompass asset mapping of individuals, associations, and institutions. (p.
98)

Within the context of social change, a community that exists around a specific “idea, issue, or
vision”—or in Foulcaudian (1972) terms, that is based on a certain origin and bound by

\textsuperscript{64} Rather than comparing positive deviance to each asset-based approach (there are many), the goal of this section
is to make the traits of positive deviance more apparent and to make apparent their fit with the discipline of
Rhetoric and Writing Studies.
conventions perpetuated by repetition—can be disrupted and reconceptualized around a new paradigm.

To build a community, people must (1) map the relationships among assets; (2) build new relationships; (3) mobilize assets (new and already known); (4) convene as broad as possible a group to build a vision and a plan; and (5) leverage assets and relationships to solve problems (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993, p. 345). In other words, community building names strengths, names problems, builds a collectivity, and acts collectively. (Grabill, 2001, p. 98)

Grabill’s definition of the symbolic (2001) or “constructed” (2007, 2011) community necessarily involves an asset-based model. As Grabill insists, while a community can exist without naming its strengths, that is, without going the asset-based route, “stabilizing” it as asset-based enables the type of community-naming and community-building that supports community-owned social change (Cushman, 1998; Grabill, 2001; Grabill, 2007; Simmons, 2007).

I will draw attention, in particular, to the shifts in notions of assets versus deficits and changes in the location of epistemology as they necessarily affect the role of the expert and the issue of community ownership. The focal shift from deficits to assets is a development trend that arose in the 1990s. This shift is evidenced in Rhetoric and Writing Studies, though in different words, in Cushman’s arguments. In advocating reciprocity, Cushman (1998)

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65 Albeit temporarily as stabilization is grounding but not permanent.
66 These variances will be discussed in greater detail in Chapters 3, 4, and 5.
67 Foucault (1984) would say that on the basis of power as it functions in society, “there are only reciprocal relations, and perpetual gaps in relation to one another” (emphasis added, p. 247).
advocated honoring “the knowledge, lived experiences, and linguistic sophistication of participants” (p. 238). She noted that

because they assume subversive ideologies do not exist...[(Marxist oriented) critical theorists] gain too little access to human beings’ subversive self-understandings. Looking at cultural reproduction from a distance, they can only see apparently complacent behaviors and “erroneous” self-perceptions in the public transcript of daily life. (1998, p. 25)

and

because activist research eschews a notion of false consciousness in favor of more respectful ideas of individual agency and intelligence, we can safely assume that community residents know what’s best for them and will be quick to let researchers know when and how to help. (1998, p. 29)

In these assertions Cushman reframed some ideological assumptions about the researcher-researched relationship. For Cushman, the distance between the researcher and the “researched” exists because of the assumption that the researcher is the expert. When this distance is narrowed, “the solution space” referenced in Table 3.1 is expanded; it is possible to see that there is value in local, everyday knowledge where cultural reproduction takes place. Beyond the researcher, an asset-based perspective legitimizes local epistemologies, enabling the type of community-building called for by Grabill (2001, 2007): one that enables collective action and sustainability.

The Significance of a Community-Driven Problem-Solving Approach
That it is asset-based does not mean that positive deviance does not focus on a problem to solve; however, community participation and ownership make it a community-driven problem-solving approach. To say that positive deviance is community-driven is to say that it is not just participatory, which connotes some level of community involvement. Positive deviance aims to be a grassroots approach, so the community’s active participation and ownership is crucial at all levels of the process. Simmons (2007) argues that public participation in the decision-making process  allows for a more (1) ethical and (2) democratic strategy for risk communication:

- People in the community know what makes sense for them, and they know about events invisible to technical experts. Thus, they have useful knowledge to contribute.
- “Under current models, publics, outraged because they have not been included in the decision-making process, find ways to delay or overturn environmental decisions, resulting in high costs for agencies” (p. 107).
- “Not unlike the advantages of including users in the design of computer systems, including publics in the design of policies will often increase the “customer satisfaction” of the policy” (p.108).
- “By including nontechnical users in the design or decision-making phase of technology, participatory design approaches grant users epistemological status” (p. 110).

While there are contradictions as to what “participatory” means in Simmons’ research (Spinuzzi, 2007), i.e., whether it should involve every last person or whether it should be

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68 Her work (2007) is situated within the context of environmental risk communication.
representative, what is significant about public participation is that local ownership of decision-making is likely to translate into responsibility and accountability.

**Minimum Specifications for a Positive Deviance Project.** Over the last seven years, 20 years of practice have been culled in a list of minimum specifications (Figure 3.1) to classify a project as one of positive deviance. When one or more elements in the list are not in place, a project may still be successful and achieve desirable outcomes, but its sustainability and replicability (due to haphazardness) are in jeopardy. Most of the minimum specifications for a positive deviance project make specific mention of community involvement and ownership at all levels of the process, because if the community owns the process, it is more likely to sustain project impacts. Additionally, having a process in place and naming its minimum specifications allow for a clearer practice, (processual) replication, and scaling.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. All stakeholders/a diverse group of community members are involved in the five steps:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. <strong>Define</strong> the problem, currently perceived causes, challenges and constraints, common practices, and desired outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. <strong>Determine</strong> the presence of positive deviant individuals or groups in the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. <strong>Discover</strong> uncommon but successful practices and strategies (of positive deviants) through inquiry and observation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. <strong>Design</strong> activities to allow community members to practice the discovered behaviors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. <strong>Monitor</strong> and evaluate the resulting project or initiative that further fuels change by documenting and sharing improvements as they occur and by helping the community discern the effectiveness of the initiative.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. The community carries out the five iterative steps (see above).

3. The facilitator(s) do not make the discovery of findings nor do they control the process.

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69 I came to this realization through a conversation with international business guru, Henri Lipmanowicz, who adapts positive deviance as a Liberating Structure (See [http://socialinvention.net/liberatingstructures.aspx](http://socialinvention.net/liberatingstructures.aspx)) for more engaging meetings.

70 Diversity of stakeholders has an important meaning here. When a community is defined, it generally consists of individuals who are committed to working together on the issue at hand. One of the questions the facilitator asks stakeholders to answer is if there are any others who should be part of the group—individuals from all levels in the hierarchy, unusual suspects such as janitors, students, or family members, depending on the context.

71 Although PD is intentionally not interested in solving “root causes” (systemic or institutional) of problems, the community uses what it perceives as causes to arrive at a better sense of problem-definition. In rhetorical *stasis*, the history of a problem is germane to its definition.
4. The PD inquiry is carried out by community members and vetted by community members.
5. The inquiry findings are explicit and behavior based (not value-based or dependent on the individual [or biological] traits of positive deviants). The findings should not focus so much on WHAT the positive deviant practices are, but about HOW the behavior of the positive deviants (individuals or groups) enables them to overcome or prevent the problem at hand.
6. The plan of action is developed by the community and is based on each of the inquiry findings.
7. The initiative is practice-oriented, multi-channeled and multi-targeted and utilizes existing human resources and networks.
8. The community develops its own monitoring and evaluation plan, including the creation of its own tools for doing so.\(^{72}\)
9. Feedback loops are developed to keep the community informed and to enable members to participate and innovate.
10. The community members are able to explain how they have been able to solve the problem and provide specific examples of behavior and social change directly linked to the PD inquiry and the inquiry-informed initiative.

**Figure 3.1. Minimum Specifications to Classify a Project as a Positive Deviance Project\(^ {73} \)**

The trajectory of relational dynamics, from start to finish, of a positive deviance project and the assumptions that inform them clearly demonstrate that positive deviance is not merely participatory,\(^ {74} \) it actually relies on *grassroots ownership and execution* for the effective mediation of agency. This can be noted in **Table 3.2** below.\(^ {75} \)

**Table 3.2 Positive Deviance Theory of Human Relations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary Statements from Organization’s Identity Documents (PDI’s Minimum Specifications)</th>
<th>Assumptions about Human Relations Derived from Minimum Specifications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All stakeholders are involved in the five steps of the PD process; they must be able to explain how they solved the problem and explain the process.</td>
<td>Therefore, stakeholder participation is valued. All stakeholders are accountable.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{72}\) Because funding and implementing organizations are usually involved, there may be multiple monitoring and evaluation plans for a specific project. Nonetheless, it is essential for the community to develop its own benchmarks for success.

\(^{73}\) Obtained as an e-mail attachment sent after a PDI workshop in Boston in July of 2010.

\(^{74}\) With the term “participatory,” it is often difficult to gauge the level of community involvement. Instead, the term “grassroots” indicates a necessarily local, necessarily highly engaged degree of community involvement.

\(^{75}\) In Chapter 5, I propose a theory of human relations (Sullivan & Porter, 1997) as a sub-heuristic for my heuristic of a rhetorical disposition for positive deviance action research within Rhetoric and Writing Studies.
| **The community carries out the steps, and the community vets the steps. The facilitators do not discover the solutions, nor do they control the process.** | Therefore, the community\(^\text{76}\) has the knowledge and tools necessary to carry out those five steps. Community knowledge trumps facilitating and funding individuals'/organizations' knowledge. Facilitators play a mediational role. |
| **Solutions identified are behavioral, non-biological and must be accessible to all members of a community. The initiative utilizes existing human resources and networks.** | Therefore, behaviors that are based on special privileges are discarded. Behaviors requiring external resources are discarded. |
| **Once successful behaviors and practices are identified collectively, the implementation relies on practice-based learning.** | Knowledge-making does not happen in the traditional fashion. Awareness about behaviors comes from peers (social proof) and is internalized as knowledge through practice. |
| **The initiative is multi-channeled and multi-targeted. Feedback loops are developed to keep the community informed and to enable members to participate and innovate.** | Therefore, the facilitator is involved in creating avenues (both maps and roads) for communication amongst community members—avenues that will enable mobilization and execution at a grassroots level. |

Positive deviance’s theory of human relations, based on a heuristic developed by Sullivan and Porter (1997) who asserted that every methodology has a theory of human relations, is premised on three main values: grassroots knowledge-production, immediate accessibility of solutions, and practice-based learning. The theory of human relations depicted in Table 3.2 indicates that facilitator or research partner should be attuned to these values and be prepared to substitute subject matter expertise with rhetorical expertise\(^\text{77}\) to enable the flow of relationships and conversations that yield the identification and mobilization of assets and the operationalization of practices.

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\(^{76}\) The words “stakeholders” and “the community” seem to be used interchangeably by the positive deviance initiative in this iteration of minimum specifications. I understand the community to be composed of stakeholders. I also understand the community to exist as a community based on symbolic agreement or interest in a particular issue, practice, or way of life.

\(^{77}\) This is another unstated assumption of the positive deviance approach, one that will be addressed in greater detail towards the end of this chapter.
Inquiry, KAP versus PAK, and Social Change. In positive deviance the novel proposition is that solutions exist and are identified and expanded upon through inquiry at the grassroots level. Positive deviance shifts the traditional role of the expert to knowledge-manager. Similarly, it shifts the role of the community (individuals and collectively) to knowledge-makers. Solutions are made available through this initial process. However, they are “learned” or internalized when they are put into practice. The determination and acceptance of social proof, within the context of an active search for solutions to a common problem, prompts voluntary adoption of desired behaviors. From the peer perspective, solutions are evident in those “just like me” and are therefore accessible and immediately actionable. Thus, awareness of social proof becomes embodied proof.

Furthermore, positive deviance operates under the assumption that it is easier to act one’s way into a new way of thinking than it is to think one’s way into a new way of acting. This notion suspends the idea that awareness, typically achieved in our terms by stasis, is the primary vehicle towards behavior change (knowledge→attitudes→practice [KAP]) by proposing that practice itself\(^7^9\) can catalyze a change in attitude and become internalized as knowledge (practice→attitudes→knowledge [PAK]). Once behaviors are embodied, they are internalized and articulated as new knowledge rather than the other way around; traditionally, behavior

\(^{78}\) I find it worth noting that grassroots solutions are often vetted not only by the immediate community. In the case of hospital acquired infections, for example, content experts participate in parts of the vetting process to ensure that practices are indeed safe and likely to contribute to disease prevention (whether those practices are part of the institutionally sanctioned prevention repertoire or not).

\(^{79}\) This is not to say that there is no incidence of awareness before practice; the goal of mapping activities and the PD inquiry is to create awareness of positive deviant individuals, groups and behaviors. However, in the positive deviance process, the fact that behaviors are accessible to all members of a community means that they are immediately actionable and can be put into practice. Social proof becomes embodied proof immediately.
change is expected to come as a result of awareness-raising, which generally is a top-down, outside-inside approach.

**Sustainability.** A simultaneous occurrence of asset-based, problem-solving that is community-driven makes possible the grassroots inquiry and practice-based learning that leads to sustainability. Sustainability—the capacity for continuation beyond a single intervention—can be achieved in positive deviance in several ways: (1) sustainability of outcomes; (2) sustainability in replication of the process; (3) horizontal scalability, the spread of the process across communities and networks. I describe these three modes of sustainability in the paragraphs that follow, using the examples of nutritional initiatives in Vietnam, trafficking prevention in Indonesia, and hospital acquired infection prevention in the U.S. I have selected these examples to illustrate that sustainability varies by context and scope, and that, furthermore, the infusion of an innovative process, accepted and adopted at the grassroots level in a community, can bring about outcomes beyond those initially projected, resulting in unanticipated culture change.

The PD project in Vietnam scaled\(^80\) from 1,000 children in four pilot communities to 60,000 children throughout the Thanh Hóa province three years later. Not only were nutritional practices sustained by families and caregivers years later (Sternin, Sternin, Marsh, 1999; Mackintosh, Marsh, Schroeder, 2002), but a subsequent randomized control trial also indicated significant improvements in health outcomes of children fed in this way (Marsh, Pachon, Schroeder, Ha, Dearden, Lang, Hien, Tuan, Thach, Clausenius, 2002; Marsh, Schroeder,

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\(^80\) Replication and scale are of particular interest for agencies and funders with pressure to produce projects that will extend beyond a single instantiation. See Chapter 3’s heuristic for considerations for PD beyond the local.
Dearden, Sternin, Sternin, 2004). Positive deviant practices and their improvements in health outcomes carried over to siblings; thus, in addition to replication from village to village and scaling from pilot to multiple sites, positive deviance indicated promise of horizontal scalability, as well. The term horizontal scalability, based on the concept of diffusion of innovations (Rogers, 2003), refers to the spread of change across social networks, i.e., from person to person through key opinion leaders, within the same community from one aspect of life to another, between partner organizations who learn the process and adapt it for other projects, or as a political or policy influence.81

Building on the success in Vietnam, Save the Children in Indonesia applied positive deviance to malnutrition, establishing a growing network of positive deviance practitioners and creating the infrastructure to address other issues rooted in social causes, namely HIV/AIDS prevention amongst waria (transgendered commercial sex workers) and the curbing of child trafficking. In 2002, Save the Children, with support from the Oak Foundation, piloted an initiative to address a complex social problem: the trafficking of young girls in three villages of East Java, Indonesia.82 From its inception, the project established a basis for replication and scale by (1) partnering with a local NGO whose staff would learn the positive deviance process along with staff from Save the Children; (2) forming a cadre of committed, local volunteers; and (3) involving local leaders and government officials. In addition to extending the network of resources, these steps ensured a greater chance of project maintenance and sustainability by creating a safety net that pooled human capital and potential sources of funding from more

81 For more on horizontal scalability in positive deviance projects see Singhal & Dura 2009.
82 It is worth noting that a positive deviance nutritional initiative implemented by Save the Children had been successful in Indonesia years prior. Thus, Save the Children had established a basic infrastructure and know-how of positive deviance, including advisors.
than one place. Furthermore, the involvement of local leaders and government officials enabled (1) co-shared responsibility, (2) a bridge between government resources (such as small-business subsidies) and citizens, and (3) the basis for policy development.

One of the primary villages in the East Java pilot project, Gadungsari, went from having 140 missing people, 90 percent of whom were girls between 14 and 17 years of age, in 2002, to having no new girls entering the sex trade by the end of the project in 2005. Participating partners, local volunteers, and local leaders played an active role to avert trafficking by enforcing the use of travel papers to leave the village, by forming a community watch group, and by creating a girls’ club for support. It is also noteworthy that project activities were supported formally by local government officials (Singhal & Dura, 2009). Outcomes of the pilot were sustained through 2008, three years after the Save the Children project had ended.

The momentum of success with positive deviance projects in public health and child protection, combined with local and district government support, led to the design of a scaled intervention in East Java. New projects targeted 100 communities and 19,500 at-risk children. These projects, labeled ENABLE (Enabling Communities to Combat Child Trafficking through Education), retained Save the Children as an implementing partner but were funded by the International Organization on Migration and the U.S. Department of Labor. Methodologically, they used most elements of the positive deviance approach but combined them with a program called ENACT (Enabling Community Action), which was committed to children’s education and

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83 In Indonesia, partnerships (in the name of positive deviance projects) with the government were so effective that an anti-trafficking policy was effected at the local level. The local government also financed an anti-trafficking poster design contest comprising 30 hamlets.

84 Of these 100 communities, 23 communities, where the population migration rate was over 30 percent and which were identified as being “sending” villages, were selected to employ the deeper and more labor- and time-intensive positive deviance approach to reduce girl trafficking.
the prevention of exploitative labor. After year one of implementation, which included training of a local NGO and community volunteers, outcomes in 23 villages were similar to those in Gadungsari a few years prior (Singhal & Dura, 2009, p. 85-86):

1. The number of girls trafficked in the PD intervention villages decreased to zero.
2. Each village developed rules to regulate the legal movement of people, especially of children and girls.
3. Each village established community watch groups to monitor movement of girls and brokers in and to their villages.
4. A network of formal village leaders was established to raise awareness of other village leaders; the network actively participated in district government meetings to discuss the issue of trafficking.
5. Three villages worked with local police to document cases of trafficking and brought one broker to court.
6. Girls, families, and volunteers worked together to identify alternative forms of income-generation.
7. Approximately 5,000 families (20,000 individuals) indirectly benefitted from the project during the first year.

While we are unaware of changes beyond the scope of our assessment\textsuperscript{85} of these projects in 2008, the trafficking prevention in Indonesia indicates both outcome sustainability and process sustainability via replication, even if that replication combined positive deviance with another

\textsuperscript{85} See Singhal & Dura, 2009 and Dura & Singhal, 2010.
approach. The limits of this data make evident the need for longitudinal studies that better measure sustainability.

However, akin to Albert Einstein’s observation that not everything that counts can be counted, sometimes beyond project outcomes, outcomes in culture change merit attention. This can be the case in many projects where innovation in discursive practices disrupts the “spatialization of knowledge” (Foucault) with a positive “stabilized representation” (Bazerman), as evidenced in the prevention of healthcare acquired infections (HAIs) in U.S. hospitals. Even though hand-washing is not overly complicated or inaccessible, many health practitioners and caregivers who are aware of hand-washing protocols do not practice them. The Centers for Disease Control reported that approximately one of every 20 patients in U.S. hospitals contracts a healthcare associated infection (HAI); that is roughly two million people per year.\(^86\) About 5% of people affected by HAIs die. Additionally, HAIs cost U.S. hospitals between $35 and $45 billion a year (Buscell, 2010). Amongst HAIs, Methicillin-Resistant \textit{Staphylococcus Aureus} (MRSA) is one of the most difficult to treat due to its resistance to antibiotics. The ironic upside is that these infections are preventable through proper hand-washing and hand sanitizing.

The positive deviance pilot program in two Veterans Affairs Pittsburgh Hospital System (VAPHS) began in 2005: “Many at the VAPHS were skeptical that an approach that was effective to combat childhood malnutrition in Vietnam would hold relevance for MRSA control in a U.S. healthcare system,” (Dr. Jon Lloyd quoted in Singhal & Greiner, 2010). Led by MRSA Prevention Coordinators Rajiv Jain and Jon Lloyd, 500 staff from all system levels, including cleaning staff, doctors, nurses, administrators, van drivers, and technicians engaged in a series of more than

\(^{86}\) [http://www.cdc.gov/HAI/burden.html](http://www.cdc.gov/HAI/burden.html)
50 dialogues to identify positively deviant behaviors and hospitals. These dialogues unleashed creativity, and hundreds of solutions were generated and tested. These included the use of holster antibacterial dispensers for easy access; Glo Germ demonstrations, using a powder that can be sprinkled on items such as pens and that when put under ultraviolet light makes germs glow; and Discovery and Action Dialogues, a Liberating Structure\(^\text{87}\) that encourages conversation through improvisational performance. The adopted solutions at the unit level were also adopted and supported at all system levels. After a year, MRSA infection rates declined by 50 percent, and after four years, in 2009, infections had dropped up to 60 percent (Singhal & Greiner, 2010).

MRSA Prevention Coordinators at the VAPHS attributed the infection drop to *the generation and ownership of solutions at a local level*. And while there are challenges in establishing formally a direct correlation between positive deviance and infection drops, many participants pointed to increases in staff morale and engagement (staff members saw their roles change and perceived a rising importance in levels of individual and collective responsibility), which can be said to count significantly to MRSA reduction (Singhal & Greiner, 2009). In this sense, the horizontal scalability discussed previously in the example of Vietnam has an added dimension. Horizontal scalability is important not only in the diffusion of positive deviant practices, it is also a visible sign that the processes used in positive deviance, such as an asset-based discourse and creative methods for group dynamics (such as Liberating Structures), can enable the collective cultural change necessary at the organizational or institutional level to

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\(^{87}\) Liberating Structures are “methods used to liberate their [individuals’] energy, tap into their collective intelligence, be creative, adaptable, build on each other’s ideas, and get results” (See Lipmanowicz & McCandless, [http://socialinvention.net/liberatingstructures.aspx](http://socialinvention.net/liberatingstructures.aspx)).
affect individual behavior. Positive deviance became part of the VAPHS “bundle” of MRSA prevention, an initiative which under the leadership of MRSA Prevention Coordinator, Rajiv Jain, spread to 153 VA hospitals in 2006, and to all VA hospitals in 2007.

Current Resources and Parameters for the Practice of Positive Deviance

Locally relevant; Globally Networked. The Sternins founded the Positive Deviance Initiative (PDI) in 2006, with funding from the Rockefeller Foundation. Housed at the Tufts School of Nutrition in Boston, the PDI has been dedicated to documenting and disseminating known experiences on positive deviance-informed projects worldwide. Amongst the resources offered by the PDI are publications in traditional and multimedia formats, tools for research on evaluation, and information on news and events as well as projects. While a formal toolkit would make the positive deviance approach rigid, and conceivably unattainable, the PDI website contains tips, cheat sheets, and presentations for successful implementation (see, for example, Figure 3.1 for the Positive Deviance Minimum Specifications).\(^8^8\) Even with the existence of written resources, however, it is clear that “PD is best understood by doing it” (PDI, 2009), hence the need for the existence of human networks and resources for positive deviance projects. In Vietnam, where positive deviance was first piloted by the Sternins, a “Living University” was created for trainers of trainers. A similar community exists in Jakarta, Indonesia, for the training of trainers and for the continued expansion of positive deviance projects. The PDI keeps track of the work of PD Champions and PD Practitioners and houses several communities of practice through its web infrastructure.

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\(^8^8\) Some of the resources are available in Spanish, Arabic, French, Chinese, and Bahasa Indonesian. Furthermore, some of the resources are content specific, i.e., HIV/AIDS, nutrition, education.
Prior to the existence of the Positive Deviance Initiative (PDI), the Sternins were positive deviance’s main ambassadors. They traveled to positive deviance project sites and helped with the launch and troubleshooting of projects. Through these experiences, they also trained positive deviance-implementing staff all over the world. Many of these staff became known as “PD Champions,” training staff both formally and informally all over the world. Today, the PDI counts with a network of board members, staff, champions, experts, and practitioners who serve as resources for new and ongoing projects.

In addition to the PDI, the Plexus Institute (www.plexusinstitute.org) is a resource for positive deviance implementation. The Plexus Institute promotes health through the Science of Complexity, which studies the self-organization of physical and biological systems. The positive deviance approach, because of its emphasis on invitation and ownership, fits closely with principles of intuitive organization. Thus, many positive deviance projects in healthcare systems across the world have combined Complexity Science and positive deviance. Complexity-inspired projects draw on resources such as Liberating Structures, a set of 27 methods designed to liberate energy and creativity within a group setting. It is also common for support networks connected by the PDI and the Plexus Institute to emerge around issues, practices, and projects.

The Positive Deviance Initiative, the Plexus Institute, and emerging practitioners support the practice of positive deviance through the following venues:

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89 See http://socialinvention.net/liberatingstructures.aspx
90 There is a small group of existing and emerging positive deviance practitioners in addition to the Positive Deviance Initiative and the Plexus Institute. At the University of Texas at El Paso, for example, more and more we are doing local workshops for NGOs interested in implementing positive deviance.
1. Resources such as the minimum specifications outlined above, videos, presentations, case studies of previous projects in multiple sectors and countries, and field guides developed by PD champions or seasoned facilitators;

2. Online communities of practice moderated by seasoned facilitators with the goal of assisting new facilitators;

3. Workshops hosted in different cities throughout the world, where those new to positive deviance or wanting to learn more can get feedback on anything from design to documentation in groups and individually, and where they can practice methods for the management of group dynamics developed by seasoned facilitators, i.e., active listening (Pascale) and Liberating Structures (McCandless & Lipmanowicz).

4. Consultations on an informal and formal basis.

**Determining When Positive Deviance is a Good Fit.** The positive deviance approach has wide applicability. It has been utilized in more than 40 countries over the last two decades to address issues in areas as diverse as business, agriculture, education, nutrition, public health, mental health, and maternal and child health. A growing interest in positive deviance has led not only to its continued application and adaptation, but also to the collation of publications and resources and to the development of worldwide communities of practice. While its wide applicability is alluring, it is important to recognize that as a problem-solving approach, positive deviance is not an appropriate choice for every problem. It is best used when

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91 In Chapter 5, I describe what some of these adaptations look like.
• A problem requires behavioral or/and social change (adaptive challenges versus technical challenges).

• The problem is seemingly “intractable” and sufficiently compelling to require a new approach.

• A project can be framed with data in a way that is measurable, i.e., baseline data is provided at the beginning of a project and outcomes are judged against it.

• There is some sense that positive deviants are present (individuals/groups exhibiting desired outcome).

• There is leadership commitment to address the issue.

• Skilled facilitation is possible, as the implementers will be responsible for negotiating the project at multiple levels and through a plethora of issues.

In addition to these guidelines, it is important to consider the challenges that the approach presents:93

1. A paradigm shift for practitioners, i.e., from expert to facilitator (comfort with power sharing and a lack of control).

2. The significant time and human capital/labor investment.

3. A comfort with uncertainty of all outcomes and consequences, especially considering a mix of donors, planners, implementers with a spectrum of ideologies and exigencies.

4. The difficulty in scaling as a necessarily local process.

5. The need to ignore institutional and societal forces (root causes).

93 Challenges listed are adapted from a PowerPoint slide presented at a positive deviance workshop: Kimball, L. (2010). Big Problems + Small Interventions = Big Change. Plexus Summit, El Paso, University of Texas at El Paso. Challenge number 5 is one I have added based on questions to a presentation I conducted at the PAHO offices in Washington D.C. in February 2011.
Some of these challenges are logistical, i.e., factors of time, labor, and scaling. But others are actually rooted in matters of ideology. For example, it is one thing to say or think one values local knowledge, but making the shift from content expert to facilitator can be more difficult. In a similar way, comfort with uncertainty and reliance on non-traditional forms of expertise can also be challenging.

In this chapter, I have provided an overview with examples of the significant aspects of positive deviance, i.e., an asset-based, grassroots methodology with a substantial success rate but also with limitations and challenges. I see this as a necessary and important step in explaining the process from a philosophical perspective or what should, can, and has been possible with the approach across sectors and contexts. What I conclude from this exploration is that, indeed, positive deviance is a critical approach, in and of itself, as it questions traditional approaches to change, is widely applicable and is ideologically congruent or compatible with calls in Rhetoric and Writing Studies for social change that value local knowledge, inquiry, and a commitment to sustainability. In principle, the approach mediates agency through grassroots participation in every part of the process. In Chapters 3 and 4, I explain in greater detail how the process of positive deviance is enacted and how change works from the perspective of the role that discursive and material practices have in mediating agency. This will make evident how the benefits and challenges described in this chapter happen.

\[94\] Temporarily.
CHAPTER 4: A CASE EXAMPLE OF POSITIVE DEVIANCE FACILITATION:

REINTEGRATION IN NORTHERN UGANDA

We are happy to see you’ve come back, but we’re not sure it’s you.

—Save the Children in Uganda member of administrative staff on community attitudes towards returning abductees

I can’t estimate the exact number of returnees with gunshot wounds and injuries from bomb fragments. They are there, suffering quietly. But there are some returnees with identified psychological problems in the form of nightmares and flashbacks, especially those that were long in the bush. You can’t understand them. They are quiet, isolated, and don’t talk.

—Quote from a community mapping participant in Northern Uganda

In his articulation of “a research orientation for studying the process, implications and politics of social change as discursive forms/events,” Brenton Faber (2007) argued that “change has become a technology and a tool, a means for achieving human agency” (p. 158). He contrasted Classical and modern reliance on narrative as a means of understanding change with (post)modern notions of change as a technology for which there are “few ways to document, conceptualize or articulate emergent forms of change and their implications for social experience and community” (p. 159). Referring to the examination of change projects, Faber

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95 P. N., personal communication, August 18, 2008.
echoed Harvey’s (1996) call for not just “denoting the position from which agency is enacted” but also for articulating *how* agency is achieved through change processes.

Since there are a number of forces at play in a single instantiation of change, the researcher is faced with the task of foregrounding how such forces initiate and sustain change (Faber, 2007). Using his proposed research orientation, Faber analyzed the campaign for adoption of an integrated e-mail software by a small technical university. He proposed the following research orientation (2007), scaffolding his study based on four specific tensions:

[1] the material and the discursive constitution of change; [2] the constitution of discourse multilayered, constructive, and empirical; [3] the study of social systems as stochastic networks (the study of singularities and the expectation of generalities); and [4] the necessity of power in the limitations of ethics....(sic, p. 162)

Faber’s research orientation offers a feasible framework for comprehensive studies of change. The tensions he proposes are descriptive enough to propel serious studies and are sufficiently open to interpretation and to layering with other theories to arrive at more robust and useful understandings of the explicit and tacit forces behind social change.

The case of positive deviance (PD) in Northern Uganda, in this chapter and in Chapter 5, recounts the application of the positive deviance approach, based on Faber’s first tension: the material and discursive (rhetorical) constitution of change. I use the second and fourth tensions in a partial way, and I acknowledge but neglect to use the third tension. My use of Faber’s orientation is partial because the case construction in this chapter and my analysis, presented in Chapter 4, are limited to the archival information at hand. That is, this case example
describing positive deviance project conceptualization, design, implementation, and evaluation comprises information from archives provided by Save the Children,97 including the published monograph documenting project impacts (See Singhal and Dura, 2009).98 Other documents used to write this case have been captured through web and library research or have been facilitated through the Positive Deviance Initiative. While it aims to be accurate, this case has the limitations of reconstruction and of my biased perspective as a researcher once involved in the evaluation process. Also, I have reexamined the materials based on my cumulative knowledge of positive deviance and of Rhetoric and Writing Studies scholarship.

This chapter answers the question how does the facilitation of positive deviance function in a real-life scenario? with the goal of establishing the basis for rhetorical analysis in Chapter 4. The information in this chapter is presented following the positive deviance project chronology of conceptualization, implementation, and evaluation from the perspective of project facilitation. Within each section, the positive deviance process is articulated based on the five steps typically followed in its application. Borrowing from Faber’s (2007, p. 168) notion that in studies of change it is important to articulate how change happens, in this chapter, and incrementally, through my analysis in Chapter 5, I propose this case as the first step to understanding (1) how positive deviance appeared/a community was constructed; (2) how

97 These were approved for use beyond our initial assessment.
98 The report and published monograph we produced offers insights relevant to the task of assessment: “The study sought to give insight related to community engagement in finding solutions to child protection problems, planning and implementing related actions, and accounting for unanticipated consequences in these projects. It also aimed to strengthen understanding of how the PD approach can connect to programming at scale and the human resource investment needed to use the approach effectively” (Singhal and Dura, 2009). While some information in this case overlaps with published information (as can be noted in citations), the case as such presents new perspectives along with opportunities for new synthesis and new analyses.
positive deviance achieved legitimacy; (3) how positive deviance became implemented; and (4) how change processes were mediated rhetorically to enable sustainability.  

Positive Deviance Project Conceptualization

Establishment of Project Need and Fit

The project titled Life after the LRA: Piloting Positive Deviance with the Child Mothers and Vulnerable Girl Survivors in Northern Uganda was approved in 2006 for implementation by Save the Children in Uganda (SCiU), with funding from the Oak Foundation. The positive deviance project was conceptualized as a response to the ebbing civil conflict brought about by the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) upon the Acholi people of Northern Uganda. Conceptualization of the project began in January of 2007, while implementation began in March of 2007.

The LRA was formed in Northern Uganda in 1987 by Alice Lakwena as a religious, military group that would undertake civil purification through violence. Alice Lakwena believed that the Acholi people could defeat Yoweri Museveni’s government through spirituality and witchcraft. A man in his mid twenties at the time, Joseph Kony, ran a parallel rebel movement that took Lakwena’s beliefs and values to a more horrific level. Under Kony’s rule, actions of torture, murder, rape, and mutilation against the Acholi people became commonplace. This is when, allegedly, Lakwena distanced herself from the LRA and Kony took over in 1992. Kony is

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99 This fourth function varies from Faber’s framework for understanding how change came to be in which he states that change studies should account for how a project is sustained over time. In this case, the sustainability of the project has only been measured over the course of the project’s life, that is, throughout the duration of Save the Children’s involvement. Longitudinal data is not available.

100 The Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) conflict started in 1987. Peace talks were broached between the Ugandan government and the LRA in 2006. In the spring of 2008, a peace treaty was to have been signed (the Juba peace talks). In the late summer of 2008 (the time of our visit to Northern Uganda), it had yet to be signed.
said to have abducted between 40,000 and 100,000\textsuperscript{101} children from the region. While today the LRA operates in parts of Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo, it continues to have a presence of several thousand in Northern Uganda.

For more than twenty years\textsuperscript{102} the people of the rural North lived in fear of being displaced, abducted, maimed, and murdered by the LRA. Children were abducted every night\textsuperscript{103} and many were traumatized, tortured, raped, and killed. Those who survived were kept as labor slaves, sex slaves, or soldiers. At gunpoint and fearing for their lives, many of the captured children committed atrocities themselves, at times being forced to kill or torture family members and neighbors to show allegiance to the LRA commanders. Their only way out, even at the end of the conflict, was to escape or be rescued.

As the conflict ebbed, some former abductees returned to their communities after passing through reception centers\textsuperscript{104} where they received specialized care and counseling. Others went directly to the internally displaced people (IDP) camps to find their families or previous communities. They were not met with open arms, as they were no longer trusted, and, to make matters worse, many of them had borne children while in captivity and others were pregnant with the enemy’s children. Physically and psychologically rejected by their families and communities, many former female abductees resorted to transactional sex for survival.\textsuperscript{105}

\textsuperscript{101} Different sources state different figures. See, for example, \url{http://iwpr.net/report-news/new-study-gives-huge-figure-lra-abductions}
\textsuperscript{102} The war began in 1987. By 1992, Kony had replaced LRA head Alice Lakwena and instituted targeted abduction. Some children escaped within a week; others were in captivity for years.
\textsuperscript{103} Records show between 40,000 and 100,000.
\textsuperscript{104} The first center in Gulu was established in 1995 and was called “Children of War.” According to a Senior Community Development Officer of Pader District, “Thomas,” “the closing of the reception centers [was] relaxing to the minds of community members” (“Thomas,” personal communication, August 19, 2008).
\textsuperscript{105} Transactional sex is the trading of sexual favors for material goods such as clothing, food, or even a mat on which to sleep.
Formerly abducted children often returned in groups of 48 or 75, and their reintegration depended on multiple factors, including their own resilience and the ability of community members and relatives to forgive them. However, forgiveness was a challenge as abductees were perceived as “changed” and often reacted defensively to the point of exerting violence. The return of children and young adults into an already impoverished, survivalist society, therefore, was a problem.

According to SCiU administrative staff, positive deviance was selected as a possible approach for three main reasons: First, current SCiU administrative staff had some prior experience with the approach in other countries; second, Save the Children in Indonesia’s child protection unit had reported recent success with a positive deviance child trafficking initiative; and, finally, the case of reintegration was perceived as an intractable issue for which traditional approaches seemed inadequate. According to Save the Children archives, the purpose of the PD pilot program was to

create an enabling reintegration process for child mothers and vulnerable girl survivors returning from LRA captivity and to reduce their engagement in transactional/commercial sex as a means of survival by strengthening peer support networks, identifying effective and sustainable local solutions for social and economic reintegration, and facilitating access to social services.

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107 P.N., Support Services Director for SCiU, mentioned working with Monique Sternin on a positive deviance project in Mozambique. He had witnessed firsthand its application and success. L. V., SCiU’s Design, Monitoring, and Evaluation Manager, came across positive deviance in Haiti through the nutrition/hearth model. The Oak Foundation also funded the positive deviance trafficking prevention initiative in Indonesia.
108 This purpose statement was extracted directly from grant application and project reports.
Selecting and Training the Facilitation Team

The first and greatest challenge of implementing positive deviance, according to P.N., Support Services Director of SCiU, would be recruiting a lead facilitator with the “appropriate skills set and/or someone with the potential to be trained” (P. N., personal communication, August 18, 2008). When P.N. spoke about an “appropriate skills set,” he referred to the skills set described in the Positive Deviance Field Guide (Sternin, Sternin, & Marsh, 1998) as “Criteria for selection of staff to participate in the [positive deviance inquiry]”:

- Experience in working with communities
- Good communication skills
- Fluency in the local language
- Flexibility and open-mindedness
- Willingness to learn from non-specialists
- Demonstrated respect for local people
- Interested in child mothers and vulnerable girl programmes and issues at the community level109 (p. 35)

These were the skills expected of the main facilitator and of co-facilitators.

P.A., a native of Gulu, one of the larger villages in Northern Uganda, was selected by SCiU to undergo training to be the lead facilitator for the PD project. P.N. explained that P.A. was selected because of (1) her native knowledge of the Acholi language and culture, (2) her sufficient maturity to provide guidance to vulnerable girls, and (3) her ability to obtain support from other community members. Aside from being given all of the available reading

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109 This particular skills set comes from a nutrition-focused field guide. The last skill originally read: Interested in child feeding, caring and health-seeking issues at the community level
materials,\textsuperscript{110} P.A.’s training involved a visit to Indonesia to learn from a sustainable child protection project.\textsuperscript{111} P.A. visited first-hand the site (Gadungsari, East Java) in which positive deviance was piloted and where outcomes had been sustained for four years in Indonesia. She was also able to witness the development of newer PD projects in other villages. P.A. formed relationships with Save the Children staff in Indonesia and felt comfortable calling them for advice.

In interviews during our 2008 assessment, P.A. explained that at first she did not understand exactly what PD was or how to “do it.” But she said she was determined to figure it out. The implementing team who worked with P.A. were all local residents. In this case, they were all, in some form, survivors of the conflict. During the initial phase of the project (see section on definition of the problem below), P.A. was in training. It is not clear from the documentation if she was part of the initial meetings with officials, but what is clear is that she was part of the meetings with community members. Hence, the positive deviance process was already at least somewhat in place upon her entry into it. Similarly, her team members were hired and volunteers were recruited as they were needed for different points of the implementation.

**Positive Deviance Project Implementation**

\textsuperscript{110} Included in this resource pool were two field guides for the practice of PD. However, these field guides were specific to nutrition models and incorporated the hearth approach. The hearth nutrition model has been used with great success in conjunction with positive deviance. It involves a “nesting” approach involving direct caretakers (i.e. mothers) with caretakers at the neighborhood level and with caretakers at the community level. See Sternin, Sternin, & Marsh (1998). This was the first printed manual (85 pages) for the practice of positive deviance. When the PD approach was used for the first time in Northern Uganda, the Positive Deviance Initiative (PDI) was in its initial stages. However, the project relied on various resources: networks (a Living University in Vietnam and a resource center in Indonesia) and collective experience from previous facilitators and “PD champions.” There was also direct communication with Jerry and Monique Sternin, positive deviance pioneers and PDI co-founders.

\textsuperscript{111} See Singhal & Dura, 2009.
Over the last several years, the six Ds\textsuperscript{112} of positive deviance, which were found in the 1998 and 2003 field guides, have evolved into five steps:

1. Define the problem, currently perceived causes, challenges and constraints, common practices, and desired outcomes.
2. Determine the presence of PD individuals or groups.
3. Discover uncommon but successful behaviors and strategies through inquiry and observation.
4. Design activities to allow community members to practice the discovered behaviors.
5. Monitor and evaluate the resulting project or initiative which further fuels change by documenting and sharing improvements as they occur, and help the community discern the effectiveness of the initiative. (PDI, 2010, p.6)

The sections that follow discuss project implementation and assessment and are framed by these five basic steps and are presented chronologically.

**Step One: Define the Problem**

*Definition of the Problem (January 2007).* The phrase “formerly abducted” as a label for former child soldiers was not an easy one to utter for anyone in the community.\textsuperscript{113} “Transactional sex” was not easy either. So, how did the Save the Children district staff (a local group different from the Kampala office staff) enter into conversations with community members? Before project implementation could actually begin, an office was set up in the Pader district and a series of meetings were carried out (led by SCiU Director T.C. and Child Protection Coordinator B.B.)

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{112} Which have also been at times four Ds.
\textsuperscript{113} The community was constructed around the issue of reintegration and positive deviance as an approach to change.
\end{footnotesize}
from February 9-21. The first (February 9-12) was a half-day orientation at sub-county offices with sub-county officials to “create a firm community entry point...establish the implementation process...and involve the community in the monitoring process” (P.A., First Quarter Report, 2007, p. 4). Members in attendance included the following:

- Community development officers (CDO)
- Local council III
- Sub county chief
- Child protection Police
- Women counselors
- Child protection committees
- Parish development committees
- Secretary for children’s affairs (P.A., First Quarter Report, 2007, p. 4)

A total of 81 community members attended. Project documentation indicates that reintegration was deemed a problem by community members, though specifics as to how the issue was phrased and how agreement was reached is not clear.\(^\text{114}\) The following perceived needs and recommendations were gathered by SCiU staff:\(^\text{115}\)

1. Inclusion of satellite camps\(^\text{116}\) should be considered, as there can be more needs in satellite camps.

\(^{114}\) For a facilitation dialogue that includes problem definition and identification of practices, see Dura and Singhal (2010).

\(^{115}\) Summarized from SCiU, First Quarter Report, 2007, p. 7. At this point, it is not clear if P.A. participated in this part of the process. It seems she joined the process during or after the feasibility study.

\(^{116}\) A result of the Juba peace talks, these were smaller camps in proximity to the main IDP camps through which people planned to transition to their original settlements.
2. Incidences of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in the form of aggressive tendencies, fighting, and isolation were noted to have increased amongst formerly abducted girls and child mothers.

3. Selection criteria for income generating activities (IGAs) and livelihoods should be guided by family members and community leaders to avoid misuse and loss.

4. Movement in and out of main camps to newly created satellite camp sites (noted since Juba Peace talks in September 2006) is a challenge to selection of beneficiaries.

5. Lack of market opportunities for local products and low income level of camp communities should be noted along with the provision of (new) IGAs to beneficiaries.

6. Domestic tension between married formerly abducted child mothers and their husbands over child mother’s involvement in community development initiatives should be considered in the planning phase so that awareness creation can help avoid such tendencies.

7. Other challenges identified by community leaders and government officials should be noted for effective intervention.

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117 The phrase “income-generating activities” covers a diverse group of productive enterprises/initiatives. Often these activities are associated with a bank, organization, or community subsidy. In this part of the positive deviance process, the goal was to identify unsubsidized income-generating activities that were already in place, activities that were considered by the community as productive and morally acceptable.

118 Geographical movement makes it difficult to track possible project participants.

119 Different from the above mention of IGAs, in this case, residents referred to any IGAs facilitated as a result of the positive deviance project.

120 Domestic tension over involvement is not necessarily linked to former abduction. Here, it refers to the husband’s approval over his wife’s involvement in a community activity.
On February 21st, 2007 a meeting was held with county officials at the SCiU community office. This meeting targeted key officials responsible for community projects. The intention was to provide officials with information and details about the intervention, as well as to learn about district requirements and get officials’ perspectives on the project goals and objectives. The meeting also served to introduce SCiU’s new Child Protection coordinator and to establish lines of communication.

District officials gave suggestions and inputs relevant to targeting volunteers: “a caution on use of redundant volunteers who are usually easily available in the community due to various reasons at the expense of the intervention” (P.A., 2007, First Quarter Report, p. 5). This assertion alludes to the existence of opportunistic volunteers and speaks to the importance of a screening process. Additionally, doubts and queries about site selection were addressed and the following information about the target population was provided:

**Table 4.1 Population Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Sub county</th>
<th>Camp</th>
<th>No. Households</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aruu</td>
<td>Atanga</td>
<td>Atanga</td>
<td>5,042</td>
<td>9,515</td>
<td>9,961</td>
<td>19,479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Laguti</td>
<td>Laguti</td>
<td>9,23</td>
<td>1,588</td>
<td>1,727</td>
<td>33,15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laguti</td>
<td>Laguti</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,706</td>
<td>5,841</td>
<td>6,530</td>
<td>12,371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>1,413</td>
<td>3,024</td>
<td>3,269</td>
<td>6,293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wol</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3,602</td>
<td>6,773</td>
<td>7,333</td>
<td>14,106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13,686</td>
<td>26,741</td>
<td>28,820</td>
<td>55,561</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Feasibility Study (February 2007).** Prior to positive deviance implementation (either before, concurrently, or after initial meetings) a feasibility assessment is recommended to “realize the full benefit” of a program (Sternin, Sternin & Marsh, 1998, p. 20). Such an assessment allows for the establishment of initial data by which to compare outcomes. For example, in nutrition programs, there should be a malnutrition rate amongst young children of 30% or higher.

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121 Source: Population data from WFP revalidation- 2006. It does not show age brackets for each population group, extracted from (P.A., 2007, First Quarter Report, p. 5).
availability of local foods, “availability of mothers as potential volunteers in the community, and the presence of committed leadership in the community” (Sternin, Sternin, & Marsh, 1998, p. 20). Initial data can be generated empirically or can be borrowed from existing data pools.

In the case of Northern Uganda, most of the existing data available to SCiU was linked to food security and health. Indicators specific to reintegration would have had to be developed, and this would have required more time and resources. Design, Monitoring, and Evaluation Manager for SCiU, L. V. (L. V., commented in an interview that if he could have changed anything about the project from his point of view, it would have been “to establish a baseline for reintegration outcomes. By design, there was a missing link, and the staff worked with the initiative under a very truncated baseline” (personal communication, August 18, 2008). When projects deal with concrete, measurable outcomes such as nutrition, measurement is relatively straightforward. But when outcomes are relational, dealing with levels of socialization, self-confidence, and acceptance, measurement can be more challenging and often controversial. In a personal interview, P.N. explained, “sometimes it is difficult to assess impacts. You need to spend time with women; you need time to let them get comfortable with the issues, settle down, and talk. You can see where they were before and where they are now” (P. N., personal communication, August 18, 2008). Initial data then is the gauge by which to assess change at different points in a positive deviance project.

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122 L.V. explained (L.V., personal communication, August 18, 2008) that it was a challenge to measure change on the basis of reintegration outcomes. They had to focus on pregnancy prevention and income generation as the main indicators. Much of their existing data at the time was focused on commercial trade, food security, and health. Hence, making (valid/acceptable) connections was difficult: “The survey was too short to be able to explore positive deviance in a recommended manner” (L.V. & P.A., 2007). The survey linked parental support and income generation to better quality of life. This is important to note in terms of possible faulty correlation, as one of the outcomes of the project linked parental/mentor support and income generation to better quality of life.

123 There is a need for tools to measure relational outcomes in a systematic way, which was one of our reasons for employing participatory sketching and narration activities instead of traditional surveys or focus groups.
Step Two: Determine the Presence of PD Individuals or Groups

**Mapping (April 2007).** Mapping is a characteristic activity of the positive deviance approach. It helps community members articulate their perceived situations. In the case of Northern Uganda, mapping helped the community take ownership of the issue of reintegration. Girl survivors themselves helped to identify peers and other survivors.

The mapping activity in Northern Uganda was conducted in five-sub counties (population 55,561) over five days (from April 24 to April 28) from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Five maps were created by a group of community members including local government officials, representatives of the project target population, local female counselors, women concerned with children’s issues, and volunteers. Characteristics of mapping participants were adapted from those desirable in facilitation staff as described in the PD Field Guide (1998):

- Experience in working with communities
- Good communication skills
- Fluency in the local language
- Flexibility and open-mindedness
- Willingness to learn from non-specialists
- Demonstrated respect for local people
- Interest in child mothers and vulnerable girl programmes and issues at the community level (p.35)

The mapping teams, comprising a total of 100 participants, were briefed ahead of time through letters and meetings. The objectives of the activity were the following.\(^{124}\)

1. To identify and locate the primary communal structural features: means of livelihood
distribution, local community groups, health services distribution, education, etc. of the
project areas.

2. To gather factual information and identify the structural settings of the target
population: environmental, governmental, social, and service-based.

3. To identify contextual features related to risk: social gathering points such as night
clubs, bars, shops, and video halls.

4. To document the underlying causes, effects, and preventive measures to address
transactional sex practices and aggressions.

Mapping teams were asked to draw on the ground with sticks and ash, using paper cut-outs for
symbols. The ground maps would later be transferred to paper (P.A., 2007, Mapping Guides).

They then analyzed and summarized/documented their findings.

The mapping activities yielded the following insights:125

1. Structural features

   a. Health center services are generalized but not specialized for certain vulnerable
groups, such as child mothers or former abductees. They are usually ill-equipped
and workers are not well trained to handle complicated issues requiring
counseling.

   b. Most operational schools around IDP camps are considered safe zones.

      Education-oriented agencies such as Caritas, SCiU, and UNICEF have built
temporary learning centers around them.

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c. The physical mapping of schools gave way to conversations about affordability. Despite the availability of programs in support of free education, mapping participants expressed difficulties in parents’ abilities to afford other school requirements such as uniforms, textbooks, and extra charges. Additionally, schools lack adequate support systems for girls, such as wash-rooms and first-aid kits, so that most girls stay home during menstruation. Lastly, they mentioned the cultural custom of girls’ domestic responsibilities as another strong factor deterring girls from going to school.

2. Principal characteristics and locations of vulnerable girls

a. Mapping activities revealed significant movement from IDP camps to satellite camps in light of peace talks. It was noted that life in IDP camps makes communities vulnerable to chronic poverty because of distance from commercial sites. Moral degeneration in IDP camps was cited as one of the causes for unwanted pregnancies. There are few youth groups because most groups are phased out at the end of a funding cycle.

b. Three distinct categories of child mothers were discovered: (1) formerly abducted, (2) non-formerly abducted, out of school, and (3) non-formerly abducted school drop-out. Additionally, vulnerable girls were selected if they were heads of household, caring for young children left behind by their parents or elderly individuals.

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126 Girls who were formerly abducted or who were at high risk of engaging in transactional sex.
127 “Vulnerable” had to be narrowed to girls who had been formerly abducted, who were heads of household, or who had dropped out of school. Paternal abandonment did not qualify, but maternal loss did.
c. 190 out of the expected 300 beneficiaries were identified. Their physical locations were well-marked.

d. The reasons cited for vulnerable girls’ engagement in transactional and commercial sex included rejection by parents and family members; severe economic breakdown amongst parents, along with their inability to support their children; peer pressure; and pressure from parents.

3. Positive deviants

a. Despite extreme poverty and undesirable circumstances resulting from the long insurgency, mapping participants identified girls who deviated from the norm in a positive way. These were girls who “work in the local market places selling food items and small kiosks selling items such as soap, sugar, clothes, salt, and sodas.

b. Availability of women and child mothers as potential volunteers was also noted.

4. Other causes for concern

a. Rural-urban movement by people in search for employment.

b. Sexual abuse of girls.

c. STDs and HIV/AIDS epidemic, especially amongst young men.

d. Tendencies among boys to imitate pornographic films through sexual harassment and sexual violence.

The community issues documented during the mapping activities were “overwhelming” (P.A., 2007, Report on Community Mapping, p. 20). According to the Report on Community Mapping,
it was important to remind mapping participants to constrain their focus to the target population.

**Verification of Project Participants (April – June 2007).** Meetings in the five selected sub-counties were held to verify that beneficiaries identified in the mapping activities met the qualifications designated at previous meetings, i.e. age, young mother, head of household or living with elderly/disabled family members, formerly abducted, school drop-out. In these meetings the design for group discussions was approved around common interests, background, geography, and parish. The meetings were led by the local chairperson of each sub-county. Two-hundred and fifty beneficiaries were verified as meeting the requirements for the project. Since there were girls who did not qualify for the project, others were suggested. Additionally, 15 peer groups were formed (3 groups per sub-county). Finally, 20 potential mentors were selected based on the following criteria:

- Willingness to work as a volunteer mentor
- Married or widowed woman living in the same community as beneficiaries
- Respected and trusted by the community
- Ability to read and write or not, but active in community development
- Eager to learn, open to new ideas, and portrayal of credibility (based on types of livelihood activities they were engaged in) (P.A., 2007, Second Quarter Report, p. 3)

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128 This is the word used by Save the Children at the time to describe the primary stakeholders.
In addition to the selection of mentors at these meetings, there was an open discussion on the selection of peer volunteers to undergo positive deviance methodology training. Selection criteria included the following:

- Aged 18-21 years and female
- Ability to speak Acholi fluently
- Attainment of at least 7 years of schooling
- Willingness to work as a volunteer with minimal support
- Acceptance by the community
- Married or not and from a disadvantaged group, i.e., child mother or vulnerable girl

(P.A., 2007, Second Quarter Report, p. 4)

The Second Quarterly Report indicated that 40 peers were selected for positive deviance methodology training, and five contact persons were assigned to each beneficiary for the mobilization phase of the project. In addition, SCiU facilitated the recruitment of a male Project Officer to assist with activity coordination and to document learnings on child protection issues as well as communication with other organizations (P.A., 2007, Second Quarter Report, p. 5).

**Step Three: Discover Uncommon but Successful Behaviors and Strategies**

**PD Inquiry A (July 2007 - September 2007).** The PD Inquiry is meant to be a rapid, qualitative, participatory study conducted by means of individual interviews, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and observation. The purpose of the PD Inquiry in Northern Uganda was the vetting of “PD girls,” girls exhibiting PD behaviors, and the vetting of behaviors, practices, and

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129 Vulnerable to transactional sex as a means of survival.
coping strategies of girls who reintegrated successfully. One of the first activities reported in PD Inquiry A was to visit with beneficiaries\textsuperscript{130} “who are proactive in their own development through access to gardens, different suitable livelihood/IGA and whether the livelihood/IGAs are healthy and legal activities accepted by the community” (P.A., 2007, Third Quarterly Report, p. 2-3). Open group discussions amongst beneficiaries, mentors, and sub-county indicated that there was a high interest in crop-growing. Three hundred (300) beneficiaries chose to grow a variety of crops: sesame, beans, g-nuts (peanuts), peas, fresh greens, tomatoes, cabbages, and onions. They chose these crops based on two values: nutrition and marketability. Two hundred and fifty (250) out of three hundred beneficiaries had their plots ready for planting within a month and a business plan\textsuperscript{131} was created by each group (P.A., 2007, Third Quarterly Report, p. 3-4).\textsuperscript{132}

In addition to the identification of productive beneficiaries and their practices, seven debates were conducted in the five project areas. Debates surrounded difficult issues (P.A., 2007, Third Quarterly Report, p. 6): factors contributing to unwanted/early pregnancies, relationships with parents, alcoholism, desire for material things, indecent dress, laziness, bad peers, judgmental attitudes of parents, lack of role modeling and exemplary people, negative attitudes of parents on education, and forced marriage during abduction. The following coping strategies were deemed desirable: being assertive in saying “no” to early sex; avoiding receiving

\textsuperscript{130} Beneficiary is the term used by Save the Children to denote project participant. In this case, they were the girls with exceptional ability to succeed despite the odds. After replication, all girls in the project were grouped into this category, becoming role models whether they were pioneers or adopters of positively deviant behaviors.

\textsuperscript{131} Forty-eight beneficiaries received a small grant for their business enterprise of interest (P.A., 2007, Third Quarterly Report, p. 8). It is likely that the business plan was kept as an oral account or documented by project staff. In the documents I had access to, there is no record of these business plans.

\textsuperscript{132} In one part of P.A.’s Third Quarterly Report, she says that six out of the 15 groups received monetary (grant) support for the purchase of seeds. In another part, she says that 300 beneficiaries received seeds and other gardening inputs. Mentors also received gardening inputs.
gifts from men/boys; continuing school; seeking counseling and guidance; engaging in recreational activities; being obedient, god-fearing, and loving; working hard; and following traditional values of chastity, as well as exercising self control and avoiding bad influences (P.A., 2007, Third Quarterly Report, p. 6).

It is not clear how these debates yielded specific, replicable practices, though they had positive outcomes as the girls established for themselves the following knowledge:

1. Breaking the silence on essential and sensitive issues was important.
2. Behavior change could come from better communication practices.
3. They could learn from one another and were creating social ties.
4. They had a sense of ownership in this project and were learning leadership and problem-solving, along with knowledge regarding their sense of dignity and rights.
5. Through each other they could find sources of recreation to reduce redundancy and boredom.
6. They were rebuilding their self-esteem and assertiveness to speak out. (P.A., 2007, Third Quarterly Report, p. 7)

Above all, the debates highlighted the relevance of the intervention in reducing engagement in transactional sex and early/unwanted pregnancies: “Does a self reliant girl also fall a victim of transactional sex or early/unwanted pregnancy?” Mentors and sub-county contact persons began close follow-up and monitoring, looking for attitudinal changes, signs of self-reliance, and signs of community acceptance (P.A., 2007, Third Quarterly Report, p. 7).

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133 The available reports are vague regarding matters of facilitation. However, I attempt to shed some light on this process in Chapter 4.
**PD Inquiry B (December 2007).** The initial PD Inquiry was conducted during the fourth quarter: September 2007 – December 2007. Up to December of 2007, the implementation team had begun to successfully address issues of income generation and school attendance. In December 2007, PDI co-founder Jerry Sternin and board member Richard Pascale offered a week-long workshop with SCiU staff to (1) further hone the skills of the implementing team, and (2) find existing solutions to the issue of unwanted pregnancies. According to an unpublished PDI document reporting the activities of the workshop (J. Sternin, January 30, 2008):

> the staff met with a wide cross-section of the camp community (mothers, fathers, youth, local leaders, grandparents, aunts, and uncles) to define the problem. With unusual frankness, the community identified the problem of unwanted pregnancies as a major concern. It was clear at the first community meeting that the PD framing of the session as an opportunity to discover existing solutions rather than focusing on problems, served as a catalyst for open and enthusiastic participation.

After the problem was identified by community members as one they wished to address, the [SCiU] members met with stakeholders to articulate the key issues which impacted on unwanted pregnancies. These included peer pressure, (both from teen aged girls as well as boys), economic need, condom use, disintegration of traditional parental and familial child-rearing roles, and ineffectual community leadership.
The [Save the Children] SC team then interviewed a wide range of stakeholders to ascertain their common practices around these key issues. These included, for example, girls’ acquiescence to unprotected sex demands by their boy-friends, parental resignation to their loss of power and influence relating to their children’s behavior, leadership’s negation of responsibility on issues of sexual mores, etc.

Next the SC staff asked the community to identify individuals who had overcome the barriers and obstacles facing their neighbors in the context of the above issues; for example, girls who were able to successfully negotiate condom use, boys who routinely accessed and used condoms, parents with exceptional counseling skills, who maintained a strong influence over their adolescent children, and local leaders who exhibited uncommonly active roles in sexual mores and practices in their communities.

The SC staff then conducted in-depth interviews with the identified “positive deviants” to discover their uncommon practices. After the PD interviews, the group reassembled to create a matrix of uncommon but successful practices used by PD girls, boys, parents, and leaders. An illustrative example of these includes the following practices:

1. girls' use of specific negotiating strategies around condom use;
2. fathers’ use of examples of dire consequence facing unwed mothers in the camp;
3. girls entrusted to the care of grandmothers for guidance regarding behavior at the time of menstrual cycles;
4. boys’ use of sports and exercise as an outlet for excess sexual energy;
5. boys avoiding sexually active cliques as principal peer groups;
6. mothers providing daughters with small allowance to buy things they need, resulting in their daughters avoiding the temptation to participate in transactional sex; and
7. leaders creating support groups of girls to discuss risks and strategies to avoid unwanted pregnancy.

While the first iteration of the PD Inquiry (PD Inquiry A) was helpful in getting the project started, the iteration of the PD Inquiry (PD Inquiry B) helped the staff hone their inquiry skills.

Step Four: Design Activities to put Discovered Behaviors into Practice

Concrete, Routine Group Activities (September 2007 – December 2007; January 2008 – June 2008). In addition to group discussions and meetings (peer to peer, with mentors, with counselors, and with local officials) that were established parallel to the initial (attempted) PD Inquiry activities, agreements for the continuity and frequency of discussions and meetings were reached. Youth sensitization clubs for education and recreation were created, as well as training activities for the development of business and group management skills (facilitated by a private entity contracted to conduct training with three separate groups). Sensitization groups aimed to sensitize fellow peers on the dangers of transactional sex and the need for behavioral
change through engagement of replicable activities. Two hundred and seventy-five (275)\textsuperscript{134} t-shirts were printed and distributed with the message, “Girls, the answers to our problems are within us. Work for your life: Be a role model; stop early pregnancy; and no give and take (transactional sex),” and were worn by program participants to help sensitize the general public regarding positive deviance as a contrast to unacceptable practices (P.A., 2008, Mid Year Report, p. 7). Training activities allowed for girls to support mentors in recording the progress of livelihood activities; to engage in recreational dance; and to learn about marketing, recordkeeping, costing, credit sales, savings and loan management, and group dynamics. (P.A., 2008, Mid Year Report, p. 15-16).

As a result of the workshop held in December 2007 with Jerry Sternin and Richard Pascale,

the SC staff began to design, in collaboration with community members, opportunities to actually access and practice the identified PD behaviors. These included role-playing opportunities around advocacy skills, creation of peer support groups, identification of PD grandmothers willing to counsel girls without their own grandmothers, etc. (J. Sternin, January 30, 2008)

**Step Five: Monitor and Evaluate**

Monitoring and evaluation in most projects are guided by organizational and funding goals and objectives. Positive deviance also advocates for community-based monitoring and evaluation, allowing community members to set standards for success and track their progress

\textsuperscript{134} There are variances in the number of participants cited in reports. The initial report cites 300 girl participants, here 275 are referenced, and the first report of 2008 states that the project would from 330 to 550 participants.
using locally and culturally derived values (which may or may not coincide with organizational and funding benchmarks).

**Self-Monitoring and Evaluation.** In the case of Northern Uganda, by the fourth quarter of the project, mentors and community leaders as well as peer leaders had already noticed a positive response overall: attendance at weekly meetings, appropriate utilization of livelihood support, commitment to the project. Visible signs of change included crop production and yield, an increase in garden sizes, continual weeding, and the creation of unexpected group formations. Some girls and their mentors had also initiated child care initiatives and relayed appropriate feeding/nutrition information with each other.

**Inter-Organizational Monitoring and Evaluation.** In the same timeframe, the organization noted quantifiable changes as well (P.A., 2007, Fourth Quarter Report, p. 3-6):

- Most beneficiaries had one to seven bags of ground nuts (peanuts), one bag of sesame, a hectare of cassava, and three bags of sorghum, all stored for their consumption or for sale at the right time.
- One child mother bought an ox plow and planned to buy bulls that the community would be able to rent from her.
- Another young mother bought a bicycle with her earnings to care for her family and go to school at the same time (cutting down on walking time).
- Active business ventures included sales of crops and animals, operation of restaurants and kiosks, and strategic savings (in bags of different crops).
- Cash savings were reported to range from 50,000 shillings to 500,000 shillings.
In addition to the quarterly and mid-year reports produced by P.A., a consolidated report was written in the spring of 2008.

Based on the project’s success and the staff’s experience, a second community mapping activity was conducted with the intent of tracking movement from main IDP camps to satellite camps and identifying new potential beneficiaries as a means of scaling up the project from 330 in 2007, to 550 in 2008 (P.A., 2008, First Quarter Report, p. 8). Seventy-five (75) community members participated in the mapping activity.

According to the First Quarter Report of 2008 (P.A., First Quarter Report, 2008), similar qualification criteria were used to verify the eligibility of nominated girls. Two hundred (200) beneficiaries were identified. They, too, established discussion groups based on their own criteria, which were common interests and accessibility. And the beneficiaries selected 20 women to become volunteer mentors based on the same criteria as the prior groups. What is not clear from this fourth quarter report, again, is (from the core Uganda facilitators’ perspective) what value, if any, the second round of the PD Inquiry had on agreed-upon behaviors and practices.

**External Monitoring and Evaluation.** When Save the Children was looking for an external evaluator for this project, Jerry Sternin suggested Arvind Singhal,\(^\text{135}\) among a few others, for his expertise in social change and participatory evaluation methods and for his sensitivity to the nuances of the positive deviance approach. Because of the scope of the evaluation and the

\(^\text{135}\) Arvind Singhal is a world-renowned social change expert. He is currently an endowed professor of Communication at the University of Texas at El Paso and a fellow at the William J. Clinton School of Public Service based at the University of Arkansas in Little Rock.
relatively short turnaround time, Singhal required a research associate, and I was UTEP student selected for this position.\(^{136}\)

At the time of our acceptance to participate in the comparative assessment of the two positive deviance projects, Singhal had written about positive deviance as a concept (See Papa, Singhal, and Papa, 2006) and about its application in the Pittsburgh VA Hospital to reduce the spread of methcillin-resistant *staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), a hospital acquired infection that kills thousands of people daily within hospitals (see Greiner and Singhal, 2007). My experience and knowledge with positive deviance was more limited, as I had merely read these pieces and a short article in the *Harvard Business Review* about PD as a successful strategy for organizational change (see Pascale and Sternin, 2005). Thus, to familiarize ourselves more in depth with positive deviance and with the projects at hand, Singhal and I were granted access to the Save the Children (USA, Uganda, and Indonesia) project archives.

Save the Children staff e-mailed us between 500 and 750 pages in proposals, reports, articles, and internal documents prior to our travels to Uganda and Indonesia for field research. On the field, over the course of 17 days in both countries, we conducted in-depth interviews with key informants at all levels: Save the Children administrating staff, implementing staff, and local government officials. With assistance from on-the-ground Save the Children staff and local translators, we also conducted participatory focus groups utilizing sketching and narration activities. We met with key informants and 71 project participants. Archival analysis and data

\(^{136}\) My last course as a PhD student was Singhal’s Communication and Healthy Communities class. At the end of that course, I asked him to be on my dissertation committee, which was geared towards rhetoric and health advocacy. We continued to be in conversation, and he asked me to participate in the assessment of a health advocacy project in the Peruvian Amazon. Although Singhal’s and my interest in social change overlaps, we are working from different disciplines and, therefore, from different theoretical/practical frameworks. It is because of these similarities and differences that our research yielded a space of fruitful interdisciplinary collaboration and mentorship (and it continues to do so).
collection yielded (over a dozen key interviews, 145 sketches and accompanying narrations) two studies, which we compiled into a 139-page comparative report, documenting and analyzing the impact of positive deviance in both Uganda and Indonesia. A year later, this report was published as a monograph for wider circulation.137

During the August 2008, data collection activities, we asked SCiU to articulate lessons from the positive deviance implementation. Following are points from their response:

• We need stronger documentation. We could have done more and let the world know what is going on if we had done more before and after profiles [of the girls] (P. N., personal communication, August 18, 2008).

• The greatest challenge was establishing a baseline for outcomes. Most PD resources are in health and food security, so existing indicators don’t necessarily apply. Given that PD is a process-oriented methodology, in this social setting processes and outcomes are probably better measured if they are monitored as they happen (L. V., personal communication, August 18, 2008).

• It is difficult to track progress. Prior to Jerry’s visit in December of 2007, the staff worked under a very truncated baseline. There were some interesting changes after Jerry’s visit (T. C., personal communication, August 18, 2008).

In addition, on behalf of her team, P.A. reported lessons learned about the facilitation process to Oak Foundation:

• The PD approach through participatory approaches provide (sic) a good ground for successful project intervention based on experiences in 2007 implementation period as

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sustainability in this case can be clear (sic) seen in the actions of peers and mentors (P.A., 2008, Mid-Year Report, p. 13)

• PD approach does not only benefit the beneficiaries but implementers as well by changing the perception and analytical approach to many issues in life (P.A., 2008, Mid-Year Report, p. 13).

Through the example of positive deviance as it was used to address reintegration in Northern Uganda, from the facilitation perspective, it is possible to begin to understand how positive deviance is facilitated in a real-life scenario where planned action and real circumstances are in constant negotiation. It is important to note that this is but one case, reconstructed chronologically and based on reports and field notes; it cannot be generalized. However, it serves to illuminate the way positive deviance works as a rhetorically enacted mechanism for change. The problem and existing solutions are communicated discursively through guided exercises and enacted through discursive, material, and social practices selected and vetted by the community. The larger community is then re-organized around assets and action. In Chapter 5, I will explore the rhetorical nuances of this case in greater depth by examining the ways that language, ideology, epistemology, and, especially, agency\textsuperscript{138} are manifest in positive deviance as a process of change.

\textsuperscript{138} Although I will also discuss other rhetorically significant elements, these are my primary categories for analysis. At the beginning of Chapter 5 I explain the rationale behind my focus on these categories.
CHAPTER 5: A POSTMODERN RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF POSITIVE DEVIANCE AS A PROCESS OF CHANGE AND AGENCY MEDIATION IN THE CASE EXAMPLE OF REINTEGRATION NORTHERN UGANDA

In this chapter, I aim to answer the question how does (postmodern) rhetoric mediate change in the process of positive deviance based on a real-life scenario? and the sub-question, How is agency achieved rhetorically? These questions are motivated by Faber’s (2007) call for studies of change that explain how change works beyond principle, techne, and impact outcomes. Building on Harvey’s (1996) problematizing studies of change “beyond articulating the residual” (quoted in Faber, 2007, p. 159), Faber emphasized the need for theories of change
that “examine how agency is achieved as a strategy [as opposed to] simply what is argued from the position of agency” (p. 159). Such an examination entails “opening up the metaphorical black box [Bazerman, 1999, p. 345] and explaining how the technology works” (Faber, 2007, p. 162).

Positive deviance, as a systematized process of social change, is deployable as a technology and can be analyzed on many levels. In Chapter 2, for example, I examined significant attributes and principles of the positive deviance process. In this chapter, with the information on the technical aspects of facilitation presented in the case example of Northern Uganda, I maintain that the most useful way to analyze how positive deviance works (in the way called for by Harvey and Faber) is within a framework of postmodern rhetoric using epistemic theory as heuristic. A postmodern rhetorical analysis of positive deviance enables a more “accurate and robust description” of how rhetoric works tacitly to mediate change, particularly from the perspective of agency. The focus on agency assumes that the change that happened was primarily a change in agency. In this chapter, I aim to make explicit tacit manifestations of epistemology, power relations, ideology, subjectivity, alterity, ethics, stasis, kairos, inquiry, and invention and their connection to how change happens, how agency is made possible or, in some cases, how potential agency is undermined by institutional and systemic exigencies.

My analysis in this chapter is partial, limited, and contingent. In my construction of a case example in Chapter 3, I abstracted rhetorical events (discursive, material, and social practices) from “structural elements of the social world.” My analysis in this chapter is also abstracted, for the most part, from networked social structures, but not with the intention of
ignoring these important realities—in fact, I examine these social elements at the micro-level. There is no doubt, however, as is evidenced in the preface and as I note in Chapter 6 in my discussion of networked subjectivity, that the context in which positive deviance was applied in Northern Uganda was bound by social, economic, political, and cultural realities at both the individual and collective levels. There is no doubt that non-governmental organizations and government entities were networked into these realities in ways that reproduced power relations. And, I acknowledge that in not accounting for the pre-existing structures that play a constructive role within the human experience (Faber, 2007, p. 168), my abstraction constitutes a limited view. It does, however, serve as a point of departure for further studies, since my case analysis is by no means exhaustive.

**About the Analytical Framework for this Chapter**

In Chapter 2, I characterized rhetoric as networked and dynamic, so although I framed my analysis around agency, as I analyzed the case of Northern Uganda I realized that agency was possible insofar as it related to other rhetorical elements. As I analyzed discursive, material, and social practices within the case example, a set of consistently relevant elements emerged in relation to agency and in relation to one another: epistemology, power relations, ideology, subjectivity, alterity, ethics, *stasis, kairos*, inquiry, and invention. Here, I present a brief explanation of how I see these elements working together based on my assumptions and understanding of rhetoric.

First and foremost is rhetoric. My analysis in this chapter focuses not only on rhetorical practices at the discursive level but also at the material (embodied, systemic) and social (economic, relational) levels. This definition of rhetoric assumes that all *symbolic* (Burke) forms
of human action are rhetorical. Further, I subscribe to a postmodern view of rhetoric, which contends that rhetoric is epistemic and constitutive of power relations. Within this view is the notion that reality is contingent and context-specific, accounting for multiple subjectivities for a single subject. In this sense, I believe that the self is in constant negotiation with ideology: “Language constitutes arenas in which ideological battles are continually fought” (Berlin, 2003, p. 92-93). The self as subject is networked (Foster), addressed (Bahktin) and interpellated (Althusser) by multiple ideologies, subjectivities, epistemologies, literacies, and Others with similarly networked subjectivities through which and through whom power is exerted. At the same time, the self as subject through symbols/language/literacies answers to, interacts with, resists, negotiates, and acts upon these forces.139

In this view of rhetoric, which is social-epistemic, the self as (fragmented) subject engages in knowledge production rhetorically, through symbolic interaction. In contrast to a social constructivist view, in which knowledge is a function of agreed-upon linguistic conventions, in a social-epistemic view of rhetoric “not only does rhetoric construct the reality of the subject, but it also constructs the relations among subjects, relations that nominate the conventions that constitute and legitimize systems of knowledge” (Foster, 2007, p.89). Rhetoric then, is intrinsically tied to power. Ideology reinforces power structures and systems into matter-of-fact realities. The credibility of the self is in constant negotiation with the credibility of Others, institutions, and systems. Discursive (and non-discursive) relationships are contingent on a certain sense of rhetorical ethics (alterity), which more than rules or codes entail critical engagement of subject and Other. Ethics account for “the ways roles are

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139 Foster Used Bakhtin’s notions of language, answerability, and the political and social effort/risk involved in making one’s intentions understood to open up and broaden her conception of the subject and power here.
constituted and reconstituted for individuals, for researchers and for researched, as well as for
the communities of researchers that collect themselves around certain themes, topics, and
problems, and thus define themselves” (Sullivan & Porter, 1997, p. 103) in relation to those
themes, topics, and problems.

Rather than relying on the notion of identity, which suggests an intrinsic essence and a
continual permanence, the postmodern self comes to terms organizes its multiple
subjectivities. This is not to say that all sense of identity is fleeting. The postmodern subject
understands and comes to terms with the comfort and discomfort of the inevitability of his/her
multiple subjectivities and thus relinquishes the notion of the possibility of a unified identity. As
Foster (2007) explains, “Maintaining some degree of the unique for the self is not tantamount
to claiming for it transcendence, unification, or autonomy. It is, however, to claim for it a space
of agency, for acting with and upon the world” (p. 99). In her explanation of networked
subjectivity, Foster (2007) draws on Bakhtin’s philosophy of language, particularly on notions of
addressivity, answerability, and heteroglossia. “We are addressed by the world and we are
responsible for answering or authoring the space of the physical place we occupy in it” (Foster,
2007, p. 108). Knowledge of ourselves also comes through our interaction with Others.¹⁴⁰ The
mediation between the inner and outer self creates an awareness of a certain uniqueness:

Initially, it is the language of others that provides the subject with consciousness, while
subsequent to consciousness, it is necessary for the subject to continually struggle to
appropriate the language from the other, as it is this action that insures mediation
between both inner/outer self and subject/other. (Foster, 2007, p. 100)

¹⁴⁰ I liken this notion of alterity as described by Foster to the African concept of ubuntu: I am because you are.
By mediating the self and the other, it is possible to assume an alternative viewpoint. It is that third space in which the potential for agency resides.

Our abilities and capabilities to author might be situationally (institutionally, circumstantially) constrained. But “intrinsic in this act of authoring is always the struggle to make meaning and to make ourselves understood” (Foster, 2007, p. 109). Flower (2008) depicted rhetorical agency

as the outward indications of an activated inner life. [Agency] evidence of the deliberative consciousness, the heightened awareness, and the deep interiority we attribute to ourselves. And on the basis of these signs, we attribute this same sort of complex, valuing, decision-making inner life to others (p. 200).

This notion of agency underscores that while the full extent of agency is often difficult to quantify, as there are numerous factors at play (Faber, 2007), there is some room, as most of us have experienced, for valuing, decision-making, and acting. The case of Northern Uganda presented in Chapter 4 presents the facilitator’s perspective. Flower’s and Foster’s interpretations of agency position the facilitator as rhetorical mediator, who, foregrounding rhetorical inquiry and invention subsumes content expertise during a given intervention with the goal of enabling community (individual and collective) agency.

The (technical) rhetorical elements of kairos, stasis, and invention also worked together in the execution of positive deviance in the case example of Northern Uganda. “The term invention has historically encompassed strategic acts that provide the discoursers with direction, multiple ideas, subject matter, arguments, insights or probable judgments, and understanding
of the rhetorical situation” (Lauer, 2004, p. 2). I see invention broadly as an act of exploration and creation (LeFevre) of knowledge; in other words, as both a heuristic and interpretive exercise. Inquiry then, is an inventional act. Although often inventional acts are carried out by individuals, I maintain that invention occurs as a social act as the dialogic interaction of the individual and heteroglossia (Bahktin) make it impossible to divorce one idea from another. As strategy in positive deviance, invention considers kairos, “the right moment; the right place” (and of course other rhetorical elements such as ethos) and stasis “a strategy to determine the starting point of discourse,” (Lauer, 2004, p. 7) which assumes that the fruit of invention i.e., issue, must be communicated at a particular kairotic level, determined by whether the issue involves a question of essence/definition, quality/value, or future action. Foster (2007) has aligned the three levels of stasis with Berlin’s description of ideology as “what is,” “what is good,” and “what is possible.”

In the chapter sections that follow, I have organized my analysis, using positive deviance according to levels of stasis. During the process of analysis it became apparent that the chronology of events in Chapter 4 corresponds with the three levels of stasis: definition, quality, and possibility.

**Stasis in Positive Deviance: Definition**

**Selecting and Training a Facilitator**

Prior to implementation of the positive deviance process in Northern Uganda, Save the Children in Uganda (SCiU) faced the arduous task of finding a lead facilitator and implementation team. And throughout the course of the implementation process, volunteers
were recruited to fill facilitative roles. Based on the Positive Deviance Field Guides (1998; 2003), facilitators of positive deviance would have the following skills set:

1. Have experience in working with communities
2. Possess good communication skills
3. Have fluency in the local language
4. Be flexible and open-minded
5. Have a willingness to learn from non-specialists
6. Demonstrate respect for local people

In the case of Northern Uganda, an Acholi woman named P.A. fit this profile because aside from her proficiency in the local language and knowledge of the local culture, she exhibited an ethos of what SCIU administrative staff called “maturity.” Upon meeting and getting to know P.A., I too recognized this trait in her. She had an air of wisdom, knowing when to speak and when to listen. I would also say that there was a certain grace to her leadership; she was quick thinking and had the ability to mobilize people swiftly but gently.

P.A. fit the facilitator’s profile well. She embodied the skills necessary for the practice of positive deviance under the general description or predominant quality of “maturity.” In that sense, not every facilitator will be described in the same way. But personality traits aside, a closer look at the skills set presented in the Field Guides for positive deviance facilitation shows that each of the skills holds deeper meaning, and delving into this deeper meaning has

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141 There are more recent field guides (2009, 2010), but these were published after the project in Northern Uganda. These include updated resources for question-asking and critical reflection on the process itself.
implications for the identification and selection of a facilitator. Implicit in this skills set are notions of ideology, rhetorical aptitude, and relational ability:

- Experience in working with communities → ethos, ideology

  “Communities” in this context refers particularly to the notion of community associated with development settings. Experience working with communities grants the facilitator credibility, ethos, on two levels: (1) the way he/she is perceived by the implementing organization, and (2) the way he/she is perceived by the community in question. Furthermore, as part of the facilitator’s “maturity” is her ability to understand and identify with multiple ideological frameworks.

- Good communication skills → kairos, stasis, invention, ethics

  The ability to communicate clearly and effectively is foundational. But that ability depends on a person’s capacity to assess the situation and the audience, deploying rhetorical strategies and practices such as kairos, essential in the discernment of when to speak or when to listen (as P.A. did notably well); stasis, important in establishing common ground and carrying on negotiations; and invention heuristics appropriate to the situation. In positive deviance, good communication skills also entail a sense of ethics for the facilitation of grassroots ownership.

- Fluency in the local language → ethos, subjectivity, alterity, invention

  Beyond the ability to understand and make sense of what others are saying, a person who speaks the local language will likely have a stronger ethos with the community. Implicit in the notion of a “local” language is the idea of knowing more

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142 I see relational ability simply as social ability or social skills, a person’s capacity and degree of comfort with social interaction.
than one language, or even one code. A person who is able to switch from one language to another or from one code to another knows (albeit tacitly) that there is not only fragmentation in the notion of multiple subjectivities, there is also value. Hence, fluency in the local language can add value to ethos and awareness of multiple subjectivities can help maximize inventional strategies and practices.

- Flexibility and open-mindedness \(\rightarrow\) invention, ideology, subjectivity, alterity, ethics
  
The terms “flexible” and “open-minded,” because they are so frequently used in daily conversation about pop culture and taboo topics, may have become too commonplace, so that we over-simplify the complexity involved. The ability to be flexible and open-minded is akin to the ability to think and act quickly, to adapt to change. Knowledge and skills in invention, combined with the knowledge and acceptance of multiple ideologies and world views, are the backbone of these seemingly simple terms.

- Willingness to learn from non-specialists \(\rightarrow\) ideology, alterity, ethics
  
Placing trust in local knowledge and agency and the acceptance that people know what is best for themselves may require an ideological leap. Additionally, stepping out of the expert role and into the facilitator role, two roles which are so often conflated, can be one of the greatest challenges in the practice of positive deviance. This is necessary for acts of alterity, i.e., for an ethical practice of positive deviance.

- Demonstrated respect for local people \(\rightarrow\) ideology, ethics of alterity
Treating people with respect is not synonymous with appreciation for and trust in local knowledge. Respect here goes beyond tolerance and into valuing the Other as one values the self, which may require an ideological leap.

- Interested in issue at hand: child mothers and vulnerable girl programmes and issues at the community level → ethics, inquiry

A commitment to the issue at hand foregrounds the importance of inquiry in the positive deviance process. Interest often generates inquisitiveness. The positive deviance facilitator has an ethical responsibility to guide the inquiry process in a way that is true to grassroots sensibilities, thus, in some sense, channeling his/her own passions for the sake of the project.

In essence, the skills set of the positive deviance facilitator, while seemingly simple, is rife with unstated complexity. Under the guise of good communication skills, the positive deviance facilitator is expected to be ideologically flexible, perceptive, inventive, ethical according to the specific context, and committed.143 Interpreting this seemingly straight-forward skills set through a rhetorical lens holds implications for the types of questions asked during the hiring or screening process, as a skilled facilitator is crucial in the effective implementation of each step of the positive deviance process.

**Initial Meetings**

The first step in the application of positive deviance aims to arrive at a definitional point of *stasis* (what is) by “Defining the Problem.” According to the Minimum Specifications for a

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143 In the sections that follow, I will explain the need for an additional skill—research ability—based on the process of definition and inquiry employed in the case of Northern Uganda.
positive deviance project,\footnote{See Chapter 2, page 56.} a diverse group of stakeholders should be involved in the five steps of the process. Rather than imposing a problem on a community, the positive deviance approach, in principle, relies on invitation. At face value, invitation is a rather simple process. In principle, the process of positive deviance should be invited by the community.\footnote{In other words, it is not to be imposed upon the community.} This is typically accomplished when there is already some awareness about and desire for positive deviance. In most cases, however, this awareness and desire do not exist and need to be fostered by interested parties during an exploratory, preliminary stage through which the process is introduced to key people.

In practice, SCIU had learned of success with positive deviance to address other issues in different parts of the world. The organization had made an informed decision to address reintegration using positive deviance and had obtained funding from the Oak Foundation in Geneva for this specific purpose.\footnote{The Oak Foundation had funded other positive deviance and child protection projects concurrently.} My understanding, however, is that the specific communities in which the project was to be implemented were not identified until funding was obtained and the project was underway.

The process of invitation in Uganda unfolded in the same way it does in many other settings where institutions determine the exigency. While I am unsure of the details of the meetings in Uganda, in general, when a meeting is called for the introduction of positive deviance, a variety of problems are discussed and the concept of positive deviance is introduced as an “available” resource. Those who are interested in learning more are asked to engage in a second meeting.
To accomplish the first step of “invitation,” SCiU held a series of orientation meetings, one with 81 stakeholders from the selected sub-counties and one with district officials. The selection of leaders and officials is significant. In this case, the demographic breakdown is somewhat diverse in terms of gender, occupation, level of community involvement, and interest. Even though the individual identification process is unclear, it can be inferred from the First Quarter Report (P.A., 2007) that the process for “invitation” relied on building relationships with key community leaders and officials. This process was carried out initially (during the time of P.A.’s hire) by SCiU director T.C. and SCiU Local Coordinator B.B.. While it is not explicitly stated, it is possible that by listening to, valuing, and addressing their suggestions, the project was heavily dependent on their support. From this we can glean that the notion of “community-driven” problem-solving relied, in its initial interpretation, on representative participation. This case example illustrates that the principle of invitation in positive deviance can very quickly be trumped by the reality of an outside exigency and the dominance of economics in asymmetrical power relations. Some might deem that if such a negotiation is necessary, the community-driven nature of the process is compromised. I would acknowledge that at this stage it is, and it would be naïve to think that negotiations of this sort cease once the project is underway. However, I would also argue that positive deviance, like other approaches to change, relies on facilitation, which does not always originate at a grassroots level.147

147 In this case the project got underway through community and organizational negotiations, but from the PD Inquiry forward, project ownership shifted increasingly and significantly to the community.
The construction\(^{148}\) of what would be the positive deviance community began around the rhetorical practice of defining the problem. Although the information rendered in SCiU reports and archival documentation does not detail the problem definition process extensively, reports state that reintegration was one of various issues noted by community members. On a discursive level, this resulted from an agreement reached between SCiU and local leaders/officials regarding acceptance of the intervention and recognition that reintegration was indeed a problem. As positive deviance implementation progressed and more direct stakeholders were increasingly included in meetings, the notion of “reintegration of child mothers and vulnerable girl survivors” was refined from a more expansive list of variously noted issues as the problem to address.

Problem definition in this context was enacted discursively through a Socratic process, with considerations for organizational, funding, and contextual exigencies for prioritizing problems. The first step towards stasis was achieved through negotiation between institutions and leaders/officials regardless of the evident dominance of power relations and the role of hierarchies, because the interested parties identified common values that would serve as the foundation of this particular positive deviance project.

**Feasibility Study**

Refining the problem is key to a more efficient and effective practice of positive deviance.\(^{149}\) Beyond the issue of being pre-determined or not, similar to any serious inquiry/research undertaking, on a technical level, problem definition in the positive deviance process relies on the focusing of questions and isolation of variables. The next step in problem

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\(^{149}\) Refer to problem-definition dialogue in Dura & Singhal (2010).
definition was to determine who counted as a child mother and who counted as a vulnerable
girl survivor in order to delineate a target group with specific characteristics. As a general rule,
the more specific the problem, the more specific the criteria must be for identifying exceptions.

In Uganda, an empirical aid to the Socratic process of problem definition in positive
deviance was making the issue tangible through data. Aside from initial meetings, a parallel
attempt to achieve definitional stasis was enacted through the feasibility study. Because
reintegration data was largely unavailable, SCIU staff relied on an initial survey, which they
described as a “very truncated baseline” (T.C., personal communication, August 18, 2008). In
many cases, as is the case with issues of malnutrition, for example, baseline data (initial data
used to determine the conditions of a community prior to an intervention) is more concrete as
it reveals quantifiably measurable indicators. In the case of social issues, especially issues that
are psychosocial and taboo in nature, such data (concrete, quantitative, generalizable) tends to
be more challenging to obtain. Nonetheless, a survey, termed “feasibility study” in the reports,
was conducted in six different IDP camps. Fifteen (15) volunteers interviewed a total of 101 girls
over the course of three days. The survey yielded information with respect to demographics
such as age, relationship/marital status, number of pregnancies, number of children, and home
situation (living with parents, relatives, grandparents, head of household); it also established
types of income generating activities, involvement in education, and experience with or
knowledge of transactional sex.

Even with its limitations, the survey\textsuperscript{150} helped to verify that (1) there was indeed a
“vulnerable” population consisting of a combination of child mothers, formerly abducted girls,

\textsuperscript{150} Source: L.V. & P.A. (2007).
and girls at-risk of engaging in transactional sex; (2) all of the survey participants knew someone or knew of someone who had been involved in transactional sex; (3) acceptance into the community was deemed an issue by 50% of girls and 24% of community members; (4) access to education was desired but difficult to obtain; (5) there was great variance in the girls who took care of their hygiene and health and the hygiene and health of their children; and (6) while girls were involved in a variety of income-generating activities, it was evident that none of the work was dependable, as 80% of girls depended on World Food Program rations for food and expressed a desire to learn about ways they could engage in small business.

The involvement of stakeholders, the establishment of statistical proof, and the dissemination of data at a community level, which I speculate occurred through meetings and small group gatherings, made it possible for stakeholders and implementers alike to achieve the first level of *stasis*. The first level of *stasis*, achieved more fully through empirical evidence, is said to be crucial to the positive deviance process: “positive deviance is bathed in data.” Data is the proof that “leads” people to concretize that indeed there is a problem. However, if data is already available or it is collected by the implementing organization without the help of stakeholders, the “community-driven” process is null.

Inevitably, however, the community-driven aspects of positive deviance, in this and most any other project contingent on funding and administrative exigencies begins with the next series of steps. Mapping activities are a way for the community to not only reach a point of *stasis* regarding the definition of the problem, they also bring to the fore the existence of positive deviants and their practices and behaviors.

**Stasis in Positive Deviance: Quality**
Mapping Activities

Once the existence of a problem has been corroborated, step two in the positive deviance approach involves “determining the presence of PD individuals or groups.” There are two sub-steps to this second step: community mapping and a PD Inquiry. In the application of positive deviance in Northern Uganda, mapping activities were conducted in each of the five sub-counties selected for intervention by SCiU. By locating structural features first (schools, gathering points, garden plots, health centers), mapping participants were able to determine not only the location of child mothers and vulnerable girls but also some of their demographic and behavioral characteristics. Participants were able to determine the location of some positively deviant girls, mentors, and volunteers.\(^{151}\)

The mapping activities in the case example of Northern Uganda assume that the facilitating team was able to value and respect local knowledge and to facilitate instead of impose idea-generation, so that problem and solution areas were located and agreed upon by the community. Nonetheless, facilitation necessarily implies that participants were “led” through a series of questions, which would inevitably determine the outcomes though not necessarily the quality of those outcomes.

Asset-mapping was a step to establish a second level of stasis (determining what is good) that involved community construction around the concept of positive deviance and the first rhetorical (discursive, material, and social) step towards the recognition of agency—already existing agency—through the replacement of deficit-based discourse with asset-based

\(^{151}\) Positively deviant girls were identified on the surface based on what the community perceived at this point were productive signs such as farming, business, positive relationship management. It is possible that some volunteers were recruited prior to this activity, but other volunteers and mentors were found as a result of the mapping activity.
discourse. Because of its physicality, mapping is a way of writing, and “writing enables [groups] to initiate, manage, and stabilize sociocultural change” (Faber, 2008, p. 269). Mapping represents a change in ideology and speaks to the creation of new knowledge, or at minimum, the vetted (by peers) naming of latent knowledge. Followed by a PD Inquiry to further define the immediately accessible practices and strategies that make these assets possible, mapping activities held the potential to catalyze immediate actionable change.

**PD Inquiry**

The PD Inquiry is the point at which what the late Jerry Sternin called the 180 degree shift happens. It is where an agreed-upon problem is “flipped” by means of the PD question. It is also the point at which members of the community genuinely become legitimate inquirers/researchers and assume a large degree of epistemological agency through discursive practice. If the problem in Northern Uganda was the unsuccessful reintegration of child mothers and vulnerable girls into communities, the PD question would ask: *Are there any girls who, despite their condition as a child mother or vulnerable girl survivor have been able to integrate successfully? Furthermore, what does successful reintegration look like?*

The answers to these questions helped inquiry participants hone in on the desired behaviors and practices that enable successful reintegration. Generally, the positive deviance inquiry (PD Inquiry) is conducted early in a positive deviance project (immediately following problem definition and mapping), which in this case should have been in early summer of 2007, ideally. However, it is my understanding that due to the hardships imposed by the floods in the summer time, PD inquiry activities were conducted somewhat loosely. There were two factors that contribute to my use of the term “loose.” I use this term to mean that, ideally, activities
could have been more focused across time. The PD Inquiry is meant to be a rapid assessment to identify practices and behaviors that are replicable immediately by all members of a target population. A rapid assessment process uses intensive team interaction in both the collection and analysis of data instead of prolonged fieldwork and iterative data analysis and additional data collection to quickly develop a preliminary understanding of a situation from the insider's perspective.¹⁵²

Speed in the PD Inquiry is tied to momentum; it also limits potential disagreements. While I cannot confirm that speed would have enabled a more productive PD Inquiry, in principle, continual momentum is desirable for several reasons as it helps to capitalize on the occurring culture change and facilitates the practice-based behavior adoption process, which is a defining characteristic of positive deviance. Furthermore, the successful adoption of behaviors and practices by the larger group is dependent on the level of specificity yielded by the PD Inquiry. Similar to other elements of the process, inquiry is seemingly straightforward, but in reality, skilled facilitation is crucial. The facilitating team has the ethical and invention responsibility of mediating grassroots epistemologies. Behaviors and practices must be concrete, immediately accessible for replication, and derived from members of the immediate community so that best practices pitfalls are avoided. Best practices are successful practices identified from an external perspective and are prone to being deemed by stakeholders as irrelevant or foreign and are therefore rejected if they are externally imposed rather than communally identified and legitimized. A positive deviance inquiry is carried out at the local level to yield community-owned practices accessible to “people just like me.”

¹⁵² See http://www.rapidassessment.net/
The second attribute determining “adoptability” of successful practices and behaviors is the replicability of practices. For example, when a sentiment was conveyed during the PD Inquiry, such as “avoid negative attitudes,” that sentiment had to be refined by means of asking, by what means do you/they avoid negative attitudes? The practice of regular meetings with a counselor would be an acceptable and specific practice. Then, this practice would be passed through an “accessibility sieve” to determine if the practice required special resources, such as financial inputs. If there was a program for free counseling in place in the community and a few vulnerable girls used it as a source of support, then the practice would be deemed a PD practice. On the other hand, if counseling required financial inputs or involvement in a special program, the practice would be deemed “true but useless,” or not accessible to all on an equal basis.

During the first PD Inquiry in the Fall of 2007, the implementation team in Uganda facilitated the compilation of an extensive list of desirable attitudes and practices via group discussions. These included

- being assertive in saying “no” to early sex; avoiding receiving gifts from men/boys;
- continuing school; seeking counseling and guidance; engaging in recreational activities;
- being obedient, god-fearing, and loving; working hard; and following traditional values of chastity, as well as exercising self control and avoiding bad influences. (P.A., 2007, Third Quarterly Report, p. 6)

Some practices and behaviors were immediately actionable and others, such as the sentiment to avoid bad influences, required further probing, i.e., asking questions such as What are some of the specific things you do in your daily life to avoid bad influences? It is my understanding
based on the available documentation and the respectful execution, as evidenced in the tone of Sternin’s report, post-training, that the second PD Inquiry carried out after training in the positive deviance methodology helped the implementation team further hone in on specific and replicable practices and behaviors.

During the training workshop conducted by Jerry Sternin and Richard Pascale in December of 2007, the team focused on the issue of unwanted pregnancies, which was presumably the weaker area in the original PD Inquiry. Hence, the “loose” construction of positively deviant behaviors and practices was “tightened” over the course of several months. The added layer of PD Inquiry B enabled the community to identify the lens, at a grassroots level, through which to view and resolve the issue of reintegration. They decided to focus on averting unwanted pregnancies as the most pressing issue within the problem of reintegration. This step is illustrative of the inquiry process as uncertain and messy but also as crucial to grassroots (not just participatory) knowledge production. The imperfection of this situation speaks to the value of understanding how change happens as a deployable technology, which in this case indicates that the project was well-served by recursion and by the availability of resources at a global level. Working with a systematized process practiced worldwide, the positive deviance facilitator (and implementing team), who is often in daunting and difficult situations, can draw on the collective and individual wisdom of seasoned, expert facilitators. Even with such resources, however, perfect execution may be near impossible, which is why recursion, revision, and of course, invention, are necessarily part of the process.

Ultimately, the process of mapping combined with the PD Inquiry was crucial in achieving the second level (value or what is good) of stasis and therefore enabling swift
movement to the third level of *stasis*, immediate action. Beyond “what is,” inquiry activities helped to establish “what is good,” and to lead into “what is possible.” Once *stasis* regarding problem-definition was achieved, the more efficient was the process of naming undesirable versus desirable states and the more quickly behaviors and practices could be operationalized.

Efficiency in naming is achieved through careful listening and probing. Similar to a research investigation, it is important for facilitators to know how to ask the right types of questions to narrow the focus of the inquiry. In this case, the Positive Deviance Initiative (PDI) resource served the facilitating team well. The PDI as a resource served as an invention mechanism to sharpen the team’s (staff and volunteers) inquiry skills, which led to more efficient mobilization from that point forward. What this case most notably illustrates is that for optimal stakeholder agency, the positive deviance process, and in particular the PD Inquiry, is well served by a facilitating team capable of formulating research questions that enable a highly-focused, grassroots inquiry. In addition to the *outcomes* of an effective inquiry, the *process* of inquiry makes visible that questions are meant to stimulate dialogue, which can have an effect on community culture.

The extent to which this initial segment of a positive deviance implementation is participatory or grassroots, as is evidenced in the case of Northern Uganda, is quite often determined by the exigencies of the institutions and systems involved. This case illustrates that the community problem was, admittedly, pre-determined by the politically- and socially-interested funding and implementing agencies that gained entry into the community through appeals to authorities with power over the community. Nonetheless, even without further intervention, the mapping and PD Inquiry activities served as a participatory, novel approach to
problem-solving (the 180 degree flip) that through an asset-based dialogue couched in social proof encouraged an increased perception of self-efficacy. The effectiveness of the process, despite temporal and containment challenges, is evidenced by the actionable, concrete behaviors and practices that were generated from the inquiry process. Ideologically, the community internalized and organized new discursive and material practices into a new (contingent) stabilized notions\(^\text{153}\) of reality and channeled into decisions for implementation. Although the distinction can be drawn between participatory and community-driven action up to this point, this case indicates that stakeholders created new knowledge for themselves, an act of agency, especially insofar as this new knowledge was related to self-efficacy, and the internalization of the new epistemology holds the potential for both vertical and horizontal scalability.

*Stasis in Positive Deviance: Possibility*

**Group Decisions on Implementation\(^\text{154}\)**

It is highly likely that successful project outcomes can be attributed to commitments made in the smaller groups, which formed at each of the sub-counties.\(^\text{155}\) This is evidenced by the observations collected from project participants after group discussions and debates.\(^\text{156}\)

1. Breaking the silence on essential and sensitive issues is important.

\(^{153}\) I use the word “contingent” in parentheses to signal that denotatively, I understand the concept of “stabilized” is temporal and space-contingent. It is stabilized for now and does not assume continuity for perpetuity. However, I understand that a postmodern understanding of language would problematize this term’s connotation of permanence.

\(^{154}\) Although in this case, decisions on group formation were made earlier in the process, they would generally happen after the PD Inquiry. The PD Inquiry is a key participatory element; it is also crucial in the identification of specific, replicable behaviors. My assessment is that at an inquiry level, this temporal reversal may “muddle” all desirable behaviors, making vetted PD behaviors indistinguishable from those that might ultimately be deemed “true but useless.”

\(^{155}\) I am unsure of the actual process by which these groups were formed. Based on my interaction with project participants, I *speculate* that group formation was geographically- and relationally-based.

2. Behavior change can come from better communication practices.
3. They can learn from one another and create social ties.
4. They have a sense of ownership in this project and are learning leadership and problem-solving skills, as well as developing a sense of dignity and perception of rights.
5. Through each other, they can find sources of recreation that reduce redundancy and boredom.
6. They are rebuilding their self-esteem and developing the assertiveness to speak out.

While these points are important on an affective, relational level, the articulation of one point in particular stands out on a practical level; their expressed sense of ownership in the project means that they had enough agency, in Flower’s (2008) terms of “a complex, valuing, decision-making inner life” (p. 200) to be accountable (follow through)—a sign that self-monitoring was present at this point. Their commitment to meeting with each other, counselors, mentors, and peers on a regular basis indicates that resilience, in addition to being intrinsic, can be learned and activated through coming to know more about the subjective self and the self’s capabilities through the eyes of others (Foster, 2007). In a postmodern notion of rhetoric, this aligns with the concept of alterity. In the construction and re-construction of subjectivity, \[^{157}\]

[the subject] finds itself, as well as others, through the dialogic quality of language.

Initially, it is the language of others that provides the subject with consciousness, while subsequent to consciousness, it is necessary for the subject to continually struggle to appropriate language from the other, as it is this action that insures mediation between both inner/outer self and subject/other. (Foster, 2007, p. 100)

\[^{157}\] Although the connection was not made explicit in the case documentation or in my research experience, it is interesting to note that this stance reflects the African philosophical concept of ubuntu (I am because you are).
Enactment of alterity through mapping and inquiry practices, allows each participating subject to ethically mediate self-perceived subjectivities and Other-perceived subjectivities through discursive, material, and social acts. When this is done in an asset-based context, it enables the replacement\textsuperscript{158} of negative self-perception, and Other-perceptions of the self with more positive perceptions, thus challenging the status quo of ideology with new knowledge (epistemology) arrived at by a peer—somebody “just like me.”

**PAK vs. KAP**

The positive deviance process could have ended at inquiry; as with other approaches to change, after defining the problem and pooling best practices, an awareness campaign could have been launched. As suggested in Chapter 2, practice-based learning in positive deviance attempts to turn the awareness paradigm on its head: practice $\rightarrow$ attitudes $\rightarrow$ knowledge instead of knowledge $\rightarrow$ attitudes $\rightarrow$ practice (PAK instead of KAP). The argument embedded within this paradigm shift is that it is easier to act one’s way into a new way of thinking than it is to think one’s way into a new way of acting. Awareness through stasis is still a necessary precursor; however, it is not the basis for change. Awareness simply assumes that there is an identifiable problem, while practicing new behaviors (a rhetorical act at the material and social levels) is the mechanism that alters the assimilation and thinking structures as epistemology becomes embodied. Practice is the mechanism within positive deviance whereby agency is developed through internalized knowledge production. Once “acted” out, social proof becomes embodied proof, and, if effective, an altered epistemology can be articulated.

\textsuperscript{158}At minimum the overlap.
The design of practice or action-based implementation, based on the documentation available about implementation in Northern Uganda, included a variety of group meetings (enactments of alterity amongst peers, with mentors, with counselors). Project reports indicate that in and following these meetings, practice strategies were discussed, enacted, and monitored at the grassroots level. We know from impact data\textsuperscript{159} that practices were put into action, but what we do not know, is how it was exactly that practices were put into action. In the case of Vietnam, for example, the “ticket” to group meeting attendance was the gathering of the unique nutritional inputs (such as small shrimps and sweet potato greens) for cooking demonstrations. This ensured that participants were “acting their way into a new way of thinking.” It can be inferred that in Uganda, practices were simply discussed and implemented by individuals and small groups who reported back to their peers, mentors, and facilitating staff or volunteers. However, based on the data from the mapping, inquiry, and group formation exercises, the rhetorical mechanisms of relationship-building, mapping, and inquiry served to alter project participants’ perceptions of others, of the self, and of the self through others. Hence, it is also possible that these ethical instantiations of alterity might have motivated participants to act as self-efficacious agents rather than as passive victims.

So while other cases may illustrate more fully, based on available information, how the PAK behavioral-cognitive loop works, it is worth noting that this mechanism is a major differentiating factor in the positive deviance approach. It is what enables immediate action—it is possible to do something about “this” now. And in that sense, the PAK paradigm helps to justify why positive deviance does not address institutional and systemic root causes for

\textsuperscript{159} See Singhal & Dura (2009).
problem. It is not that positive deviance practitioners do not acknowledge that institutional and systemic issues are important. But, it is precisely this avoidance of root causes that accounts for the success of positive deviance as an approach that aims to improve local situations immediately, cost-effectively, and sustainably. This notion is complex in terms of agency because while positive deviance enables individual and collective change and agency through action (inquiry and practice-based knowledge production inquiry), it does not account for institutional and systemic issues—at least not directly.\textsuperscript{160} It is helpful to recall Cushman’s (1996) assertion:

activism can lead to social change, but not when it’s solely measured on the scale of collective action, or sweeping social upheavals….Rather, we need to take into our accounts of social change the ways in which people use language and literacy to challenge and alter the circumstances of daily life. In these particulars of daily living, people can throw off the burdens placed upon them by someone else’s onerous behavior. (p. 13)

Attention to local issues apart from institutional and systemic factors places a certain level of accountability on local actors. In that sense, self-monitoring becomes agentic as it establishes local standards couched in local ideologies, epistemologies, and desired outcomes.

\textbf{Self-Monitoring and Evaluation}

Progress, or success, in any organizationally-implemented intervention is necessarily subjected to evaluation based on the comparison of baseline indicators and outcome

\textsuperscript{160} The case of trafficking prevention in Indonesia, for example, indicates that it is possible to address root causes at the institutional level as the involvement of public officials at all stages of the project led to financial support of income generating activities by the government and to policy development.
indicators, which can be collected both quantitatively and qualitatively. Positive deviance allows for self-monitoring and evaluation, which enables the articulation of locally-derived, culturally-relevant baseline indicators and outcome indicators. While self-monitoring and evaluation were built into the case of reintegration in Northern Uganda from the first group activities that verified the existence of positively deviant girls and their practices, SCiU staff articulated, as a lesson learned, that self-monitoring and evaluation could have been better documented. In this sense, agency in terms of sustainability is difficult to ascertain without a longitudinal study.

Beyond the timeframe within which this case is situated, what remains unknown is how long processes and/or outcomes were sustained or if they scaled horizontally. In part, due to that reason, it was our attempt as external evaluators\textsuperscript{161} to elicit concrete, visible signs of change over the course of the intervention up to that point (a year and a half) using a before and after paradigm by employing participatory sketching and narration activities.\textsuperscript{162} During the August 2008, data collection activities, we conducted one-on-one interviews over two days. We also conducted two day-long workshops with a total of 71 respondents, which yielded 145 sketches and narrations (Singhal & Dura, 2009, p. 26). At the end of each day, we invited both respondents and SCiU staff (separately) to give feedback on the days’ activities.

The tools and technologies used in participatory data-gathering (See Davies & Dart, 2005; Boal, 1979; Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991; Singhal & Devi, 2003; Parks, Felder, Hunt & Byrne, 2005; Davies & Dart, 2005; Carr, 2001; Singhal, Harter, Chitnis, & Sharma, 2007) will\textsuperscript{161}\textsuperscript{,\textsuperscript{162}}
necessarily vary by context. For this process, we used simple A4 (size) computer paper and colored pencils.\textsuperscript{163} We asked respondents questions such as \textit{What was life like before PD came into your community?} and \textit{Can you draw five visible signs of change?}\textsuperscript{164} In addition to the process of internal reflection and artistic expression, the act of narrating their sketch in front of a group, that is, of being “on stage,” addressing a “captive” audience, and receiving validation that their experience matters was empowering from an agentic perspective. As with other group activities, participatory sketching and narration also allowed participants to learn from each others’ sketches and narratives, providing the opportunity for the social/political epistemic construction of epistemologies at the level of the self, at the level of the other, and at the level of the collective.

The activities described above highlight the value of a certain degree of reciprocity in the evaluation process. In addition to yielding rich data, we found that the sketching and narration exercises had epistemic effects expressed as instances of meta-transformation by respondents,\textsuperscript{165} which are a sign of the agentic potential in participatory data collection. We obtained the following noteworthy insights over two debriefing sessions.\textsuperscript{166} Anna, an 18-year-old respondent from Atanga sub-county, noted:

\begin{quote}
I’ve never in my life held a pen or used this thing called paper. This gathering encouraged me to sit in a classroom, which I’ve never done. In my family, I’m not
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{163} Originally we had also requested disposable cameras from SCiU, but these were not available. Contemporary social change literature in Rhetoric and Writing Studies, since it is focused on different forms of “writing” within the United States, speaks matter-of-factly of GPS and social networking platforms. In this project, all of these activities were carried out using the materials on hand and face to face. Even pencils and paper were a non-standard literacy for a majority of respondents.

\textsuperscript{164} See Singhal & Dura (2009).

\textsuperscript{165} Self-transformation within a larger/collective process of change.

\textsuperscript{166} Source of quotes in this section: Notes from data collection activities in August of 2008.
educated. I listened carefully to the instructions and held the pencils. These activities have given us the strength and confidence to address people without fear.

A female village mentor, an abayo, said: “I didn’t know we were in darkness. It is holding and using a pencil and paper that you can come out of darkness.”

While these powerful statements indicate positive engagement, in some cases both participants and data collection facilitators resisted its initial implementation. Several members of the SCiU implementing team made the observation that it was not easy to convince participants to use colored pencils. Another observation from one of the SCiU team members referenced the time commitment (the data collection activities lasted the equivalent of a work day):

I had a particularly difficult group with this method. It was a challenge to get them involved in the most natural way possible. But when they discovered what they could really do, they were inspired. Seven out of the 14 held on to their pencils or put them in their hair. The research method was very fitting to the project. It brought them together as much as it was time-consuming.

Similarly, an auntie/mentor noted: “Even though it was time-consuming and I had to learn to draw, having to draw made me search for deeper insights.”

A lesson from our implementation of participatory evaluation activities is that it is feasible to include systematic participatory evaluation techniques within participatory design early in the process of an intervention. Such activities can have positive effects on participant-staff relationships as well by helping to reduce the hierarchical distance between interviewer
and interviewee, giving respondents more say and control in determining salient information. Joint reflection on the sketching-narrating experience can open a space for ethical acts of alterity as respondents and facilitators identify processual insights together.

Conclusions from this Analysis

I conclude this analysis by revisiting my chapter research questions: How does (postmodern) rhetoric mediate change in the process of positive deviance based on a real-life scenario? and the sub-question, How is agency achieved rhetorically?

Change is mediated in positive deviance most clearly at an invention level. First, there is the function of kairos; archival documentation does not indicate much resistance to the project. The adoption of positive deviance (the right words) in Acholi land at a particular point in time (civil conflict; physical, geographic, political, economic devastation palpable at a local level) was kairotic. Although the initial meetings between SCiU and local officials indicate that the process began as participatory before it became community-driven, the adoption of positive deviance in this setting is ultimately not surprising. Positive deviance is said to work best in settings and for problems where other approaches have been tried and have failed, where there is little hope for change, and where problems are seemingly intractable.

Chapter 4 described chronologically the (rhetorical) activities used to mediate change. My organizational framework based on levels of stasis indicates that the rhetorical mechanisms of positive deviance mediate change in a significant way by means of stasis. Positive deviance functions as an invention, inquiry mechanism that enabled, in this case:

167 Participatory connotes some level of community involvement, while community-driven connotes grassroots involvement or initiation from the inside-out.
• *Focused* problem-definition through initial meetings and the execution of a feasibility study (*stasis level one: existence/definition*);

• Community vetting of the problem based on the results of the feasibility study, and to a greater extent, the community mapping activities (*stasis level one and two: existence/definition and quality/value*);

• Identification of existing solutions through the community mapping activities and the PD Inquiry (*stasis level two: quality/value*);

• Mobilization based on the results of the mapping and inquiry activities as well as the groups established for implementation and local support, which included a variety of people: peers, volunteers, mentors, local officials and leaders, and SCiU implementing staff (*stasis level three: action*).

Inquiry activities combined with relationship-building and maintenance were crucial constants for mediating change in the positive deviance process. Determining “what is,” “what is good,” and “what is possible,” in that order, served the development of new individual and collective epistemologies, especially through acts of alterity, which in turn, had an effect on the perception of self, the perception of the community, and the perception of available alternatives within a seemingly intractable ideology/reality.

Positive deviance’s potential to promote agency can be contrasted with actual levels of agency through the effects of the intervention on power relations; this can be gleaned from impact data (see Singhal & Dura, 2009). But in terms of *how* agency was mediated through facilitation, this analysis illustrates that inventional mechanisms employed (*stasis* achieved through various forms of social inquiry) in a particular order, and taking into account recursion
and reliance on available resources (seasoned facilitators), yielded actions of alterity and knowledge production, which had an impact on perceived self- and collective-efficacy as an asset-based discourse replaced the deficit-based discourse that had, for some time, maintained a particular reality/ideology.

There are two key points at which a notable change in levels of agency (awareness of agency and agency in action) occurred in this case example. The first occurred through the mapping and inquiry activities when the problem was re-framed (the 180 degree shift) on the basis of existing solutions, which were then vetted as accessible through social proof. At that point, project participants began to recognize their ability to challenge prevailing ideologies.168 Furthermore, the enactment of an ethic of alterity (knowledge of the self through the self and the Other) brought to the fore awareness of agency, as participants began to recognize for themselves their individual and collective efficacy even in the midst of the most difficult circumstances.

A second key agentic moment came when the vetted, accessible behaviors were put into practice. At the point of awareness after definition, mapping, and inquiry, the validity of the Practice, Attitudes, Knowledge (PAK) paradigm may seem challenged. However, awareness of an issue or behavior by itself does not constitute internalized knowledge. Nonetheless, it is impossible to internalize anything without some level of awareness, so some sense of awareness necessarily precedes PAK. Yet, in the absence of PAK, ownership (and therefore sustainability) of solutions is hazy; at this juncture, mobilization can become a best practices

168 In other cases in which problem-definition is more community-driven from the beginning, this agentic moment might come earlier.
scenario depending on an individual’s level of identification with the group-discovered and

group-vetted solutions. The embodiment of social proof as a material practice enabled learning

through adoption, “making the practice my own,” and the embodiment of social proof as a

social practice enabled continuity in commitment to the newfound collective epistemology. In

this sense returning to the notion of timing (kairos) articulated in my discussion of group

formations, momentum is an essential part of the positive deviance process as it enables the
different layers--individual change, collective change, and overall culture change--to work
under constant reinforcement.

We know from Chapter 3 that positive deviance has the potential to mediate agency
because it aims to be grassroots or community-driven. We also know that it aims to accomplish
this kind of participation through a systematized inquiry and implementation model. What we

know now, based on the information in Chapters 3 and 4, is that in practice every iteration of
positive deviance contends with the intersection of exigency, time, and place, which entails
accounting for myriad contextual features along with issues of power, including the political
and practical reasons for adopting the process, i.e., to gain entry and achieve legitimacy within
a community. We can also affirm that community agency can be maximized by a skilled
facilitator (or facilitating team), who in addition to possessing the positive deviance skills-set is
comfortable with inquiry, uncertainty, and recursion. Despite the overarching problem to be
solved, the facilitator of positive deviance has a rhetorical goal: to move people into action. In
positive deviance this entails the negotiation of realities, ideologies, and epistemologies.

Positive deviance is an innovative alternative to traditional problem-solving that is
profoundly rhetorical. The documented effectiveness of positive deviance in myriad projects
worldwide indicates that the invention processes embedded within positive deviance are
effective mechanisms for change and agency mediation. This rhetorical analysis is a first step
towards making visible the tacit influence and interplay of power, ideology, epistemology,
alterity, ethics, *kairos*, *stasis*, and invention as they influence the process of change within
positive deviance. It is also a first step towards indicating the value of potential reciprocity
between positive deviance and rhetorical studies.

Up to this point, positive deviance has been conceived of as an interventional approach,
and while it is possible to adapt certain elements from positive deviance for smaller-scale or
research purposes, as I will explain in Chapter 7, I propose in Chapter 6 its adoption as an action
research methodology within Rhetoric and Writing Studies. In proposing that positive deviance
be adopted as an alternative action research methodology, I do not intend to offer a
prescriptive account of how it should be adopted. What I do propose is that for an effective and
ethical practice of positive deviance action research within Rhetoric and Writing Studies,
positive deviance be adopted and practiced with a rhetorical disposition. This, in summary,
entails a critical, recursive, and perceptive practice. I explain my rationale for action research
and this orientation in Chapter 6.
CHAPTER 6: MAKING HABITUAL A RHETORICAL DISPOSITION FOR THE PRACTICE OF POSITIVE

DEVIANCE ACTION RESEARCH WITHIN RHETORIC AND WRITING STUDIES

...In a general way we might say that the artist works with the general tribal equipment by bringing outlying matter within the informing pattern of the occupational psychosis. He builds and manipulates the intellectual superstructure which furthers the appropriate habit-patterns useful to his appropriate economic system. To equip themselves for their kinds of work, people develop emphases, discriminations, attitudes, etc.

—Kenneth Burke in Permanence and Change: An Anatomy of Purpose

A key finding in my analysis of the case example of positive deviance as it was applied in Northern Uganda is that the positive deviance process relies on skilled facilitation. I noted the additional need for inquiry or research experience/capacity. This, I argue, indicates a space for reciprocity between research and facilitation of positive deviance. Based on her study of risk communication in environmental decision-making, Michele Simmons (2007) made the assertion that

Technical communicators [and rhetoricians] possess the critical research skills to identify the ethical and political issues present in risk communication/environmental policy situations and to consider approaches that grant more power to citizens. While the technical communicator/rhetorician may not fill the facilitator’s role—I am not certain there is a space for us there yet—technical communicators and rhetoricians can find

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169 See Burke (1984).
spaces for these investigations and activities through their community-based research work. (p. 117)

I agree with Simmons’ notion that community-based research work is a readily available vehicle for our engagement with work such as positive deviance. However, I disagree with her statement that the technical communicator may not fill the facilitator’s role. In addition to serving as a useful methodology for Rhetoric and Writing Studies social change, our role as co-researchers or co-facilitators can contribute to a more effective and ethical practice of positive deviance. I argue that the rhetorician can add both rhetorical and research value to positive deviance implementation, and since positive deviance is an inquiry-based methodology, I propose that the positioning of participants as co-researchers is essential. Hence, throughout this chapter I reference both the facilitator or research partner with the aim of leaving open the possibility of multiple collaboration combinations. Such a partnership, I argue, is possible in action research. To arrive at a framework for action research and a heuristic of rhetorical dispositions, in this chapter I answer the question: what does a theory of Rhetoric and Writing Studies positive deviance look like? I begin with a rationale for action research, and then I move on to describe my proposed heuristic of positive deviance action research for Rhetoric and Writing Studies. The heuristic I propose is intended to function as theory derived from an empirical example and as subject to further exploration. I conceive of this theory as phronesis—practical wisdom for the continued praxis of both positive deviance and Rhetoric and Writing Studies social change.
Rationale for Positive Deviance as Action Research

Action research is defined in many ways, as I discussed in Chapter 3, and its varieties are often determined by the weight given to local knowledge, critical practice, research practice and the relationship between participants and researchers as well as the researchers’ commitments to issues of social justice. In order to frame my conceptualization of positive deviance as action research, I base my assumptions about action research primarily on the work of Alrichter, Kemmis, McTaggart, and Zuber-Skerritt (2002) and Huang (2010). In their working definition of action research, Alrichter, et al. (2002) propose a heuristic for the definition of action research (See Table 6.1). I argue that based on its focus on community ownership, reflection, public value, inquiry, and power-sharing, positive deviance fits the definitional structure of action research without much additional modification.

Table 6.1 Alrichter et al. Heuristic for the Definition of Action Research\textsuperscript{170}

\begin{verbatim}
\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{l}

If yours is a situation in which

- people reflect on and improve (or develop) their own work and their own situations
- by tightly inter-linking their reflection and action; and
- also making their experience public not only to other participants but also to other persons interested in and concerned about the work and the situation, i.e. their (public) theories and practices of the work and the situation;

and if yours is a situation in which there is increasingly

- data-gathering by participants themselves (or with the help of others) in relation to their own questions;
- participation (in problem-posing and in answering questions) in decision-making;
- power-sharing and the relative suspension of hierarchical ways of working towards industrial democracy;
- collaboration among members of the group as a “critical community”;
- self-reflection, self-evaluation and self-management by autonomous and responsible persons and groups;
- learning progressively (and publicly) by doing and by making mistakes in a "self-reflective spiral" of planning, acting, observing, reflecting, replanning, etc.;
- reflection which supports the idea of the "(self-)reflective practitioner";

then

yours is a situation in which action research is occurring

\end{tabular}
\end{center}
\end{verbatim}

In its adoption as an action research methodology, I also propose that positive deviance action researchers within Rhetoric and Writing Studies should consider Huang’s (2010) criteria and descriptions for what constitutes “good” action research. Huang (2010) maintains that

The action researcher must develop facility in communicating with two audiences: [1] the ‘local’ practitioners; and [2] the ‘cosmopolitan’ community of scholars. The latter is motivated by the question of what, if anything, can be contributed to what scholars already know. (p. 99)

Table 6.2, is an adaptation\textsuperscript{171} of Huang’s seven criteria for projects that meet the expectations of both the “local practitioners” and the “community of scholars.”

Table 6.2 Huang’s Seven Criteria for “Good Action Research”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Articulation of objectives</td>
<td><em>The extent to which authors explicitly address the objectives they believe relevant to their work and the choices they have made in meeting those.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership and participation</td>
<td><em>The extent to and means by which the project reflects or enacts participative values and concern for the relational component of research. By the extent of participation we are referring to a continuum from consultation with stakeholders to stakeholders as full co-researchers.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribution to action research</td>
<td><em>The extent to which the project builds on (creates explicit links with) or contributes to a wider body of practice, knowledge and/or theory and that theory/practice contributes to the action research literature.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods and process</td>
<td><em>The extent to which the action research methods and process are articulated and clarified.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actionability</td>
<td><em>The extent to which the project provides new ideas that guide action in response to need.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflexivity</td>
<td><em>The extent to which the authors explicitly locate themselves as change agents.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance</td>
<td><em>The extent to which the insights in the manuscript are significant in content and process. By significant we mean...</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{171} The table in the original article contains examples under the descriptions of each criterion.
Having meaning and relevance beyond their immediate context in support of the flourishing of persons, communities, and the wider ecology.

Huang (2010) explains that a single project may not fit all seven criteria, and she uses examples from several different projects to depict how each project met a set of criteria. Because positive deviance is already well positioned to be an action research methodology in its consideration of community needs, grassroots inquiry, and practice-based orientation, Huang’s criteria for “good action research” is helpful also in prompting attention towards research practices and goals.

**Toward a Rhetorical Disposition for the Practice of Positive Deviance Action Research within Rhetoric and Writing Studies**

In his dissertation, which traces disciplinary un/commonplaces of writing and knowledge production, Brian McNely (2009), drawing primarily on Bordieu (1977), Emig (1982), Faber (2002; 2006), and Grabill (2008), posits a theory of *rhetorical dispositions* for curricular and pedagogical reform that would equip undergraduate students with the “theories of rhetoric essential to effective communication in the contemporary workplace and the opportunity to become participant *researchers* in our field” (p. 136). McNely (2009) defines a rhetorical disposition as “a continual metacognitive approach to communicative practices that assembles relevant stakeholders, displays an acute awareness of organizational infrastructures and agency/structure dynamics, and seeks real time indicators of rhetorical effectiveness” (p. 142). McNely utilized this notion of a rhetorical disposition to communicate an expectation: students in his workplace writing courses\(^\text{172}\) were to conceive of themselves as knowledge workers

\(^{172}\) McNely’s syllabus was adopted program-wide.
focusing on complex thinking tasks and as researchers conducting true inquiry, that is, focusing more on questions than answers.

The principles of McNely’s rhetorical disposition align well with positive deviance, which is a profoundly rhetorical process. A Rhetoric and Writing Studies research partner or facilitator\textsuperscript{173} of positive deviance, in addition to being well-positioned as a strong rhetor in a technical sense,\textsuperscript{174} should be ethically compelled to engage in the (critical) process of “continual metacognition,”\textsuperscript{175} of “assembling relevant stakeholders,”\textsuperscript{176} of “displaying an acute awareness of organizational infrastructures and agency/structure dynamics,”\textsuperscript{177} and of “seeking real time indicators of rhetorical effectiveness.” McNely’s descriptions of these principles relate directly to the disciplinary, pedagogical aims of his project.\textsuperscript{178}

In this chapter, I propose that positive deviance be adopted as an alternative action research methodology for Rhetoric and Writing Studies, and that its adoption and implementation should be undertaken with a rhetorical disposition.\textsuperscript{179} I set forth a heuristic that will result in a more effective practice of positive deviance as it will help to address challenges noted in Chapters 3, 4, and 5. Therefore, an effective practice of positive deviance action research, in terms of process and outcomes, is one that is fundamentally grassroots-based, grassroots-driven, and consequently grassroots-owned and is sustainable and replicable.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{173} My intention in using these terms together throughout this chapter is to leave the space open for a positive deviance facilitator who co-researches or for a research partner who co-facilitates.
\item \textsuperscript{174} That is, considering \textit{techne} in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century. See Johnson-Eiola (1998) and Spinuzzi (2006).
\item \textsuperscript{175} The ability to be self-reflexive with the added layer of being alert and engaging in complex thinking tasks (Tishman, Jay & Perkins, 1993 cited in McNely, 2009).
\item \textsuperscript{176} See also the work of Flower (2002, 2003, 2008); Flower & Brice-Heath (2000); Flower, Long & Higgins (2000).
\item \textsuperscript{177} Even though in Positive deviance the focus is on local, immediate (existing) change—not on root or institutional causes—I argue that a critical orientation acknowledges these causes and at minimum makes an attempt to involve institutional/public structures as partners or allies.
\item \textsuperscript{178} As Grabill has said, for “not school.”
\item \textsuperscript{179} In Chapter 4, I argue that a rhetorical disposition for the practice of positive deviance should be postmodern.
\end{itemize}
At the same time, it makes research objectives and methods clear and contributes to action research theory/practice and/or is significant or relevant beyond the immediate context (Huang, 2010). In other words, it is effective in its ability to mediate agency while simultaneously being conducive to a set of research goals.

In terms of implementation, the facilitator or research partner has a clearer sense of comfort with power sharing and open inquiry. This heuristic is also intended to enable an ethic of habitual reflection for a more ethical engagement of positive deviance. A more ethical practice of positive deviance (in fact, of almost any methodology) is critical, and as such it acknowledges discomfort or dissonance in power dynamics and open inquiry. This entails the articulation of research contexts, biases, and goals at both personal and organizational levels (Sullivan & Porter, 1997). It entails recognizing difference and using it to draw out the voices of those traditionally silenced or marginalized (Flower, 2008), which results in granting publics the epistemological status and the space to make decisions about issues that affect them (Simmons, 2007). Further, such a heuristic, because of its emphasis on generative recursion, should enable “optimal rhetorical invention” (McNely, 2009).

A Heuristic of Rhetorical Dispositions for Positive Deviance Action Research within Rhetoric and Writing Studies

I consider a heuristic an inventional tool that guides a person through a thinking process; it is, of course, grounded in a set of values. I argue that McNely’s notion of rhetorical disposition can constitute the basis for a more effective and ethical practice of positive deviance. Therefore, a heuristic of rhetorical dispositions for positive deviance action research

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180 See Chapter 2: Challenges in the practice of Positive deviance.
in Rhetoric and Writing Studies assumes the attributes offered by McNely (2009), which I interpret as grounded in values of critical, recursive, and perceptive practice. I interpret critical to mean reflective (social and political), contextualizing, and building towards social change. In Table 6.3, I group the attributes of McNely’s rhetorical dispositions into two sets. The first set speaks to the elements that articulate positionality and power relations and opens up spaces of possible intersection, tension, and dissonance for informed ethical and political actions of resistance, concession, negotiation, mediation, etc. The second set speaks to the establishment of ongoing recursion and feedback: the reflective, inquiry-based mechanics (always in motion) for generative heuristic reasoning. In concert, the elements of critical, recursive, and perceptive practice are the interpretive vehicles for the practice of positive deviance action research with a (deliberately)\(^{181}\) rhetorical disposition.

### Table 6.3 Interpreting Attributes of a Rhetorical Disposition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical</th>
<th>McNely’s Attributes of a Rhetorical Disposition</th>
<th>Interpretation of Attributes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Assembling relevant stakeholders</em></td>
<td><em>Stance.</em> It questions the positioning of the facilitator/research partner and the construction of communities (Grabill, 2011).*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Displaying an acute awareness of organizational infrastructures and agency/structure dynamics</em></td>
<td><em>Theory of Human Relations/Networked Subjectivity/Critical Practice.</em> It is explicitly <em>critical</em> (Sullivan &amp; Porter, 1997; Grabill, 2001; McNely, 2009), and as such prompts the rhetorician to mediate power relations (ideology, epistemology, and agency) within a network (Foster, 2007).(^{182})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{181}\) Some might contend that a rhetor will instinctively and by training approach positive deviance with a rhetorical disposition. But as I argue in my rationale for a critical practice in the next section, even the seasoned rhetor is subject to “occupational psychoses” (Burke, 1954) and is under the ethical imperative for “critical interrogation” (Sullivan & Porter, 1997).\(^{182}\) Specifically, the “(postmodern) epistemic complex” (McNely, 2009) of positive deviance.
Continual metacognition

Recursion and Inquiry. It is recursive and embraces the uncertainty of inquiry (Flower, 2008; McNely, 2009).

Perceptivity

It is perceptive to community voices/silence (Simmons, 2007; Flower, 2008; Agee, 2009; Ratcliffe, 1999/2005).

Ultimately, the goal of detailing a heuristic of rhetorical dispositions for positive deviance action research is to foreground normally invisible power relations and the areas of consonance and dissonance within a networked practice, thus providing mediation points for the investment and diffusion of power.183 Table 6.4 is the mediational tool I propose for heuristic reasoning184 when engaging a positive deviance action research project within Rhetoric and Writing Studies. I argue that it has the capacity to initiate and support the maintenance of the habits of critical, recursive, and perceptive practice. It is intended to facilitate a systematic heuristic questioning to enable a rhetorical disposition for the practice of positive deviance action research. As a tool it should be tested and adapted for practical use. The concepts within this tool and their potential applicability are explained in the sections that follow, which explain the larger heuristic via sub-heuristics. In the sections that follow, I explain this tool and the heuristic process to enable a rhetorical disposition for positive deviance action research within Rhetoric and Writing Studies.

183 Personal note: Although I speculate that making visible what is invisible will yield a more effective and ethical practice of Positive deviance, the reality is that I don’t know what the rhetor will find. My hope is that the next chapter will bring me closer to validating this speculation.

184 For the Rhetoric and Writing Studies facilitator or research partner.
Table 6.4 Mediational Tool for Heuristic Reasoning of a Rhetorical Disposition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assembling Relevant Stakeholders</th>
<th>Stance</th>
<th>Predominant Ideology Location of Epistemology</th>
<th>Perceived Problem / Openness to Inquiry</th>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Resources Available for Invention</th>
<th>Points of Convergence / Strengths</th>
<th>Points of Dissonance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self (facilitator, research partner)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Power Dynamics: Agency</td>
<td>Power Dynamics: Invention activities to mediate agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displaying an acute awareness of organizational infrastructures and agency/structure dynamics</td>
<td>Theory of Human Relations: Values and Assumptions Guiding Min. Specs.</td>
<td>Predominant Ideology Location of Epistemology</td>
<td>Perceived Problem / Openness to Inquiry</td>
<td>Goals</td>
<td>Resources Available for Invention</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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Making a Habit of Situated Practice by Mapping and Analyzing the Subjectivities of Relevant Stakeholders

Sullivan and Porter (1997) made the important observation that

*It is not enough in rhetoric merely to know the strategies: one must also have developed the critical judgment necessary to make decisions about which ones apply, and how and when to use them, in any particular case. In this sense, rhetoric is a situational and sophistic art.* (p. 29)

This argument gives rise to my interpretation of the rhetorical disposition. I argue that the critical judgment pointed to by Sullivan and Porter comes from critical practice and can be cultivated by making a rhetorical disposition habitual. To transition between the theoretical
construct of the rhetorical disposition and its pragmatic application in the execution of positive deviance action research projects within Rhetoric and Writing Studies, I borrow from previous work by Sullivan and Porter (especially their chapter on “Enacting Critical Research Practices,” 1997), Grabill (“Stance,” 2011), Foster (“Mapping Networked Subjectivity,” 2007), McNely (“Recursion,” 2009), Agee (“Silence,” 2009) and Ratcliffe (“Rhetorical Listening,” 1999/2005). In this section, I explain the process of heuristic reasoning I propose for the ongoing articulation of assumptions (ideology), goals (programmatic), and resources (external inputs). In the next section, I articulate how power dynamics and agency mediation will enable a more ethical practice of positive deviance within Rhetoric and Writing Studies and how strategies (invention activities) will emerge for a recursive and perceptive practice.

**Situated Practice**

In her book on the writing subject as networked, *Networked Process: Dissolving Boundaries of Process and Post-Process*, Foster (2007) refers to Jameson’s appropriation of Lynch’s notion of cognitive mapping to set forth the notion of “networked subjectivity” as a heuristic map. While she states that “subjectivity is tacitly implicated in all theorizing” (p.71), Foster (2007) holds that

people apparently feel themselves more grounded and less alienated when they are able to imagine their own location within the rest of the city. Similarly, as scholars and teachers, we too can be more effectively and more ethically grounded…when we are able to map ourselves…within our situated, partial, and contingent positions within a networked process. (p.70)
The positive deviance approach entails a mapping activity\textsuperscript{185} whereby community members map themselves according to their physical location in relation to discursive (institutions, organizations, etc.) and non-discursive constructs (each other, nature). This is one way the first level of \textit{stasis} is achieved: \textit{What is the community?} But a question that remains is, \textit{for whom?} Project facilitators, while they are present to guide the positive deviance community mapping activity, are \textit{not} generally\textsuperscript{186} mapped in it. Yet it is natural for subjects to consider themselves the center of their own universe: “...the subject distinguishes reality according to the center, its own consciousness, and all that is not the center, that is, the realm in which all others exist as objects” (Foster, 2007). In this sense, although I argue that while self-mapping from the inside-out is essential for identity-building (naming the problem and available resources and assets) from the perspective of the community, from the perspective of the facilitator or research partner (and participating organizations, mapping only one entity [the community]) within a project positions community members individually and as a whole as object-subjects by implicitly negating that the process, though local, is networked ideologically and in terms of goals and means. Whether it would be useful for the community to include facilitators and organizations in their mapping activities is the subject of further research, but based on my knowledge of the facilitative and research challenges of positive deviance, I propose, in addition to the community-mapping that is part of the positive deviance approach, the mapping of the networked subjectivities of Rhetoric and Writing Studies facilitator or research partner to achieve a more complex view of assumptions, goals, and resources available within the context

\textsuperscript{185} Similar to what is known in asset-based work as asset-mapping. See description and analysis in Chapters 3 and 4.

\textsuperscript{186} Most of the time, facilitators are outsiders to the positive deviance community.
of a particular project. Foster (2007) offers networked subjectivity as a heuristic map by which the subject is acknowledged as networked, and all writing activity (and rhetorical activity) is characterized as a “complex, networked process” that is situated in history, time, and space (p. 71, 113). Based on Foster’s heuristic, I argue that mapping the facilitator in relation to stakeholders and the other entities and systems within a network is a first step towards mapping networked subjectivity in critical practice. It speaks to McNely’s notion of “assembling relevant stakeholders.” It situates practice with the ultimate intent of making (invisible) power dynamics visible both within and across the network, creating a space for a more transparent negotiation of agency.

In the sub-sections that follow, I explain the articulation of stance and theories of human relations adapted from Grabill (2011) and Sullivan & Porter (1997) as the first elements of heuristic reasoning for a rhetorical disposition in the practice of positive deviance action research within Rhetoric and Writing Studies.

**Stance.** Jeff Grabill (2011) argues that stance may be the single most important aspect of a critical research practice; for the purposes of this project, the facilitator or research partner adopts stance for a *situated* practice of positive deviance. Grabill (2011) defines stance “as a position or a set of beliefs and obligations that shape how one acts as a researcher” (p.1). Perhaps the most obvious element of stance is constructing an “identity” statement. Such a statement makes visible notions of subjectivity and enables the facilitator or research partner

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187 For the purposes of this project, I propose a simplified adaptation of Foster’s heuristic, which is much more comprehensive as a stand-alone heuristic.

188 This examination will inevitably extend outside of the network at times.

189 I use the word “identity” here as Grabill’s term, for he pairs it with the notion of stance. However, I espouse the term subjectivity more than I do identity as I explain on page 105 of Chapter 5. Hence, I will use identity/subjectivity to indicate Grabill’s concept and my appropriation. I use the singular “subjectivity” with the caveat that the conception of subjectivity as singular is pragmatic but there is always room for naming multiple subjectivities.
“to process methods and make decisions” (Grabill, 2011, p. 9) in a way that acknowledges situatedness. It is, in its simplest conception, an act of naming, which far from being a useless activity, elicits a sense of attachment and ideally commitment to that which is named. Grabill (2011) proposes a series of questions that serve to articulate stance by asking the following questions:

1. researcher identity/subjectivity (who am I personally? as a researcher? in relation to my discipline?)
2. purposes as a researcher (why research?)
3. questions of power and ethics (what are my commitments with respect to research?)

(p.9)

I have adapted Grabill’s questions into a sub-heuristic (Table 6.5), adding to them questions about community, so that the first dimension of stance is the construction of self and the second dimension of stance is the construction of community from the perspective of the self. According to Grabill (2011), stance acknowledges that when communities are “identified” they are in fact “constructed.” This assumes that prior to identification (naming), communities do not exist. Within the context of a positive deviance project, the facilitator or research partner must make decisions about the construction of “the community” or the “assembly” of stakeholders. These decisions include the question recommended by the Positive Deviance Initiative for all positive deviance projects: Who is sitting at the table? And who is not here that

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190 These questions are formulated around the “researcher.” Researcher here refers to the role of research partner as such, but it also refers to the role of facilitator as researcher. Generally, because of its academic situatedness, the practice of Positive deviance within Rhetoric and Writing Studies will involve a research component. This role, even within this heuristic, needs to be negotiated depending on the scope and purpose of the project.
should be invited? But critical practice takes the point further by positing that it is not enough to ask who is present and who is absent (or who else should be invited); it is also important to ask: How will relationships be built and maintained? And how will power (agency and epistemology) be invested and diffused?

**Table 6.5. A Sub-Heuristic for Articulating Stance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stance: Part I</th>
<th>Guiding Questions Related to Self-Identity/Subjectivity¹⁹²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-identity/subjectivity</td>
<td>Who am I personally (institutional ties, etc.)? As a researcher? In relation to my discipline?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purposes as a researcher/facilitator</td>
<td>Why research? Is implementation important to me? How do I mediate these roles?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions of power and ethics</td>
<td>What are my personal and institutional commitments with respect to research? Implementation?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stance: Part II</th>
<th>Guiding Questions Related to Community-Identity/Subjectivity from “My” Perspective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constructing Community from the researcher’s/facilitator’s perspective</td>
<td>How will communities be identified/constructed? How will relationships be built and maintained? How will power be invested and diffused?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Asking these questions at the fore and during a positive deviance project is crucial.

A research methodology doesn’t answer these questions. Neither does ideology. Or ethics. But in articulating a stance, a researcher draws on these ways of thinking about research to create a position that researchers must develop in order to make wise decisions throughout a research process. A stance can help researchers drop a plumb line through the mess of research itself, providing guidance for decision making and

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¹⁹¹ I use invitation purposefully here in an attempt to distinguish invitation from inclusion.

¹⁹² Grabill (2011).

¹⁹³ It is important to note that the questions included in the heuristic and sub-heuristics I propose are not exhaustive. Further, they are guiding questions devised to lead to critical analysis for a more ethical and effective practice of Positive deviance. In heuristic spirit, they too are subject to revision and adaptation.
even for tracking when and how one’s stance changes. It might be useful to think that a
stance precedes choices regarding methods. This is true when researchers have a sense
of who they are and why they are researching before forging ahead. The relationship
between stance and method is interactive, recursive, and framed, ultimately, by the
larger theory of research at play. (p. 9)

The notion of stance makes intuitive sense, but perhaps especially because of this, we tend to
overlook it. Articulating stance heuristically becomes a _deliberate_ exercise in stating
identity/subjectivity and purpose (practical and ethical). Repetition of this process based on
feedback and continual metacognition allows for revision and for habitual uptake of the
process. Further, notions of self can be refined and compared in relation to notions of other
entities. To add to the complexity of situated practice, though with the ultimate aim of
simplifying ideological constraints for a more effective and ethical practice of positive deviance
action research, in addition to the questions about constructing community, I propose
articulating a theory of human relations (Sullivan & Porter, 1997) for each entity (institution,
organization, agency) involved in a positive deviance project to complete _Table 6.6_.

**Theory of Human Relations.** Stance reflects self-positioning and the ethics of community
construction; it creates a space for the articulation of ideology by providing “the [initial] dialogic
mediation necessary for the subject to relate to itself, to others, and to the world” (Foster,
2007, p. 116). A next step is to recognize that these efforts are imbricated within a network
(Foster, 2007). Each entity within that network, outside of the project context, operates under
certain assumptions—implicit or explicit. Sullivan & Porter (1997) call the collection of
philosophical and operational assumptions that guide methodology a theory of human
relations. A theory of human relations, when made explicit, makes evident that methodology is not neutral. To enrich the notion of networked subjectivity for the Rhetoric and Writing Studies facilitator or research partner, it is useful to articulate a theory of human relations for positive deviance as a methodology. But I propose this articulation beyond the interventional methodology (positive deviance); I argue that this notion can be applied to organizations. Organizations, agencies, and institutions subscribe to an overarching methodology as well. Their assumptions and goals, which can be derived through relational interaction as well as from their corps of identity documents (mission, vision, goals, operating procedures, etc.) translate into guiding theory, which reveals an ideological orientation. In Table 6.4, I propose another sub-heuristic. This sub-heuristic sets up a dialogical framework to articulate human relations both for the positive deviance methodology and for the philosophical and operational practices of each of the organizations, institutions, and agencies involved in a positive deviance project.

Table 6.6 Articulating a Theory of Human Relations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary Statements from Organization’s Identity Documents</th>
<th>Assumptions about Human Relations Derived from Summary Statements</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mission Statement/Vision Statement</td>
<td>What sorts of value-based assumptions do philosophical statements make? What does the language style project about organizational culture?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational Goals</td>
<td>What is the entity’s purpose? What does the decision-making process look like?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Structure</td>
<td>What does the organizational structure say about human relations? Who are the decision-makers? Who are the stakeholders? What distinguishes their relationships?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

194 “…all methodology is rhetorical, an explicit or implicit theory of human relations which guides the operation of methods.” (Sullivan & Porter, 1997, p. 11). They refer to it explicitly in terms of a research methodology, but I appropriate this term here more broadly, positing that organizations operate within a non-research methodology.
The caveat to this sub-heuristic is that it is limited to the information a facilitator or research partner has at the beginning and during the course of a project about an Other. I offer it with the intention that it be populated to the best of the facilitator or research partner’s ethical and situational ability, with the goal of arriving at a networked sense of context for a particular project. Furthermore, like other parts of this heuristic, it is subject to testing and continual revision.\textsuperscript{195}

**Stasis: Perceived Problem, Goals, and Resources.** Once stance and a theory of human relations have been articulated for each entity, a predominant ideology can be assigned as per the criteria in Figure 2.3.\textsuperscript{196} The perceived problem and goals are relatively easy to articulate. These should reflect the notions of problem and goals articulated by each entity in individual (a memorandum) and common documents (a grant or project proposal):

- Is the problem being addressed articulated differently in individual documents and/or statements?

- Or is the conception of the problem unified across articulations or are there points of dissonance?

Since funding or organizational goals can be the guiding force behind a project, it is possible that the community and the organizing forces will not agree on the problem, and if this is the case, the facilitator or researcher must make a decision: a) find a way to make the problem perceived by others (participating entities) the focus of community conversation or b) vice

\textsuperscript{195} As a first step, I have populated this sub-heuristic in Chapter 2.

\textsuperscript{196} See Chapter 2.
versa, find a way to sanction the community’s perception so that the other entities involved in the project accept it. In theory, the community’s perception should be honored because ownership of the problem is the gateway to ownership of the solutions, etc. However, in practice, exigencies must be weighed—and mediated. For example, in this hypothetical scenario, a funding organization grants an implementing organization funding for an educational initiative in an under-resourced community where, statistically, only 34% of high school freshmen pass onto the next grade level. During the implementation process, through the PD Inquiry, the community articulates illiteracy as their first educational priority. The facilitator must make a directional decision about the problem, which is either vetted by the community or by participating entities—though ultimately by both—as programmatic and community goals are in strong competition. This directional decision will vary on a case by case basis. Heuristic reasoning, while it does not solve the problem per se, can be useful in making visible congruence or dissonance early in a project cycle.

In a way similar to problem perception, there might be some slight or wide variances in each entity’s articulation of goals. Even within the context of a common project, it is possible that different entities may articulate goals differently, i.e., if they perceive (the problem and) their purpose within the project and the purpose of the project as a whole differently. Some questions to ask are as follows:

- Even if there are differences in goal statements (oral or written), has a common goal been articulated that is in the best interest of the community?
- Are any goals in competition?
• Do goals need to be revised/reformulated around a goal in common and agreed upon by all involved before proceeding?

For both the perceived problem and for the goals, there may be more questions; the questions noted here perform the basic task of foregrounding possible points of negotiation or mediation. They also give the facilitator or research partner a sense of expectations, which may be useful in determining realistic/unrealistic outcomes early on as well as bringing them up for comparative assessment during the evaluative phase of the project.

In the spirit of asset-based thinking, it is useful to articulate the inventionnal resources available for the execution of this project:

• What inventionnal resources (metaphors, models for interaction) and human resources can each entity contribute to this project?
• How are these resources accessed and who can access them?
• What are the limits of these resources?
• How might resources be combined?

Recursive practice, which is discussed in greater detail in the next section, is one way to ensure that optimal inventionnal strategies are generated for a project, that is, kairotic inventionnal tools—the right tools for the right time. However, it is helpful to list available resources by entity, recognizing that not all tools must come from the same place and that it is permissible, even desirable, to consult resources during all phases of a project. This is a way of conceding that epistemological value is multidirectional. For example, the Rhetoric and Writing Studies facilitator or research partner may draw on stasis for the PD Inquiry—framing the problem on the basis of what it is, what is good, and what might be done about it. Stasis might prove to be
a good way to bridge the facilitator or research partner’s, the implementing agencies’, the local leaders’, and the community’s knowledge bases. But once the facilitator or research partner learns that the community often deals with taboo topics lyrically—by composing and singing songs—he/she may draw from that locally-derived and culturally-relevant invention tool. In another case, the facilitator or research partner might invite a PD coach, a Liberating Structures practitioner, or other methodological expert/practitioner to conduct a workshop, whether with the facilitating team or with project participants directly.

Making explicit the perceived problem, goals, and available resources for the scope of the positive deviance project in question will have fulfilled the first aim of this heuristic reasoning process. Next, these ideas and expectations can be analyzed individually and as part of a network. But even prior to synthesis and analysis, the process of naming generates a previously absent, or at least invisible/abstract, layer of knowledge. It helps map the Rhetoric and Writing Studies facilitator or research partner as self and in relation to others within and across a network. The analysis helps to illuminate how power (epistemology and agency) functions within a networked subjectivity.

**Analysis of Mapped Subjectivities**

**Strengths and Dissonance.** The data collected from the first part of the heuristic exercise can be analyzed in a number of ways. One layer of data analysis involves mapping intersections and tensions in the form of strengths and dissonance:

- Which sites of strength are operational/programmatic?

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197 Even in a Rhetoric and Writing Studies context, the invention tools we each use vary significantly from person to person.

198 This type of decision-making is akin to Flower’s (2008) Intercultural Inquiry, which uses writing as improvisation, prompting participants to tell “the story behind the story” and articulate rival hypotheses.
• Which sites of strength are theoretical?
• Which sites of dissonance are operational/programmatic?
• Which sites of dissonance are theoretical?
• What questions remain?

By asking what strengths and dissonances exist within and across the network in terms of ideology, perception of problem and goals, expectations, and resources, the Rhetoric and Writing Studies facilitator or researcher can identify sites of potential synergy, collaboration, and negotiation. Further, specifying whether sites of strengths and dissonance are operational/programmatic or theoretical can yield a plan of action based on operational/programmatic adjustments or theoretical adjustments. I acknowledge that there is some risk in dichotomizing ontologically the theoretical and the pragmatic since they inevitably feed off of one another (See Sullivan & Porter, 1997; Weatherbee-Phelps, 1988; Miller, 1989), and it is possible for pragmatic mediation to ease theoretical questions and vice-versa. But articulating these points makes evident to the Rhetoric and Writing Studies facilitator or research partner what combination of resources might best serve an issue.

**Power Dynamics.** Another layer of heuristic questioning—the least visible yet most important—has to do with the foregrounding of power dynamics. Broadly speaking, analysis at this level targets power dynamics by emphasizing awareness and recursion:

• How does power function in this relational interplay? What power does each participant have/lack?
• On what resources might I draw to mediate points of dissonance?
• Are any questions related to agency or epistemology?
To arrive at answers to these questions, I propose a series of sub-questions. Specifically, for a positive deviance project vested in matters of grassroots ownership and sustainability, the heuristic questioning focuses on where, how, and by whom knowledge-making takes place:

- Who defines the problem?
- Who “discovers”\(^{199}\) the solutions?
- Are community members positioned as researchers or as researched?
- Is open inquiry respected? Negotiated? Denied?
- Whose voice is the loudest? Are any voices silent or silenced?
- What does sustainability mean in the context of this project? Are outcomes sustainable?

Is the process sustainable? What mechanisms are available for horizontal scaling?\(^{200}\)

Asking questions such as these is a way to track the progress of the project’s ultimate goals. It also enables preventative revision—before the project has run its course. It is this heuristically-based questioning that makes evident the need for recursion and perpectivity as an ongoing—habitual—process. Further, asking these questions habitually as well as garnering feedback from project partners can enable more targeted answers to the question: how might\(^{200}\)

\[ \text{invention} \text{al activi} \text{ties be used to mediate agency and epistemology?} \]

**Layering the Habits of Recursion and Perpectivity**

**Comfort with Uncertainty and the Case for Recursion**

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\(^{199}\) “Discovery” of solutions is very much a positive deviance-based term. I do not mean here that solutions exist apart from discourse; rather, I use discovery to mean “arrive at” through inquiry.

\(^{200}\) See Chapters 2, 3, and 4 for more on notions of sustainability.
Continual metacognition, according to McNely (2009), who cites Tishman, Jay, and Perkins (1993), involves self-awareness of one’s thinking, the openness to situations requiring complex thought, and an ongoing reflection. Metacognition is essentially thinking about thinking—the ability to be reflective. In writing terms, it is akin to the “continual matrix of thinking, organizing, rethinking, and reorganizing” (McNely, 2009, p. 84) involved in revision. Recursion helps us to understand that revision in light of continual metacognition is both a discrete temporal act and an ongoing critical project (McNely, 2009). Conflating writing with epistemology and ontology, McNely (2009) rearticulates and, I would say, invigorates our notions of revision:

If we accept the premise that recursion is essential to both the study and practice of writing, then we have a responsibility to foster frameworks (both institutionally and professionally) that enable cognitive recursion whenever possible, helping both students and citizens to leverage the concept that “this is kinda like that” into productive heuristic and invention practices. (p. 98)

Recursion in this light is the process that allows us to “hook” new knowledge onto old knowledge and create a sense of understanding. An ongoing, cyclical process, recursion implies an overarching natural state of continual reflection (metacognition) and revision (writing, articulating) with pause points that allow one to claim understanding (epistemology)—an understanding that is again subject to reflection and revision as the cycle continues. Within the context of networked subjectivity, every mapping of the subject occurs within a unique point in history, time, and space (Foster, 2007). This means that each articulation of the subject and its network is unique. If we accept the notion that “no two subjects can exist simultaneously in the
exact same space” (Agee, 2009, p. 65), then the case for recursion tied to critical practice is clear. This notion of recursion posits a way of looking at knowledge production as both situated and contingent. Mapping necessarily opens itself up to re-mapping.

**Cultivating Awareness through Deliberate Perceptivity**

As interpreters of discourse, we assign meaning to utterances--verbal, visual embodied, and written--and to the degree that we make meaning personal or abstract, we “do something with it,” with meaning, that is. In line with the work of Krista Ratcliffe (1999/2005), who has posited rhetorical listening as a trope for “interpretive invention,” I propose perceptivity as an overarching element in this heuristic process. I understand perceptivity as the ability to listen to, understand, interpret, and integrate feedback into the process of recursion in a simultaneous cycle so that with each articulation of recursion and perceptivity, there is learning and the feed-forward is aggregated (See Figure 6.1).
Figure 6.1 Model Aggregating Recursion and Perceptivity

Our capacity to listen, just as our ability to internalize and make sense, is impacted by our conceptions of what it means to listen as well as our abilities to listen. As we know, we hold many individual and networked biases. These biases come with many voices—in some cases with noise. I argue that perceptivity helps us distinguish between noise or useless feedback and genuine, useful feedback—helping us to make meaning more effectively and ethically. Ratcliffe
has argued that in privileging writing, speaking, and reading, we have neglected listening; hence, she has proposed a listening as a code of cross-cultural conduct that can avail possibilities for inventing arguments that bring differences together, for hearing differences as harmony, or even as discordant notes [...] to hear things we cannot see. In this more inclusive logos lies a potential for personal and social justice. (p. 203)

Listening, in this sense—articulated as perceptivity—can be both symbolic and embodied. Furthermore, it can result both from what we hear and from what we do not hear. Perceptivity also involves listening to various forms of silence. Silence, then, is a rhetorical act (Glenn, 2004). Agee (2009) argues that silence should be included in Foster’s notion of networked subjectivity, as it broadens the notion of the rhetorical network (Agee, 2009): “subjects do exist in space, but that space is characterized by language and silence, and subjects must grapple with both to make meaning” (p. 65). Integrating Ratcliffe’s, Foster’s, and Agee’s theories can be helpful in understanding silence as multidirectional: silence is not only subject to interpretation, but it is essential to interpretation.

In a positive deviance project, the opportunity to facilitate or make research decisions should be guided by goals and strategies based on recursion. But self-reflective feedback is only one side of the coin. In the process of recursion, the Rhetoric and Writing Studies facilitator or research partner who espouses a rhetorical disposition should account for feedback from others. In McNely’s terms, this involves determining indicators for rhetorical effectiveness; such indicators can be metric or embodied (McNely, 2011, personal communication). Thus, the facilitator or research partner can set parameters for authentic feedback and can gauge rhetorical effectiveness based on metric or embodied indicators by asking:
• How can we ensure that we listen ethically (whose feedback do we value and validate)?
• How can we ensure that we listen effectively (establishing mechanisms for authentic feedback)?

The facilitator or research partner’s perceptivity/ability to listen and interpret will depend on their positionality and the positionality of other entities. Undergoing the heuristic process of articulating a situated practice should position us to be better “rhetorical listeners.” This is because what we hear depends on whom we listen to: their assumptions, goals, orientations. What I mean by this is that our self-conception and our conception of Others will determine which information we hear and acknowledge and which information we value and validate, which has ramifications for alterity.

**Aggregating Recursion and Perceptivity**

In Figure 6.1, I propose that recursion and perceptivity function as an integrated whole in the way that their processes are parallel and continual. In this figure, I assume that the process of continual metacognition, which consists of reflective, complex inquiry, helps to generate fruitful invention resources. At the same time, the process of perceptivity, which entails seeking indicators of rhetorical effectiveness involves setting parameters for authentic feedback which can be both metric and embodied. This process feeds forward into the ongoing process of continual metacognition, into another cycle of reflection and inquiry. Taken in conjunction with the heuristic tool (Table 6.4), this model can engender habitual critical,
recursive, situated practice. Echoing Bourdieu’s (1977) concept of *habitus*, internalizing this practice as an everyday activity is conducive to an embodied rhetorical disposition that while complex becomes a “normal,” recurring act. Ultimately, this heuristic tool takes the complexity of networked subjectivity and combines it with cognitive processes for generative invention. It provides a framework for the practice of positive deviance action research, and is subject to testing, revision, and adaptation.

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201 The forces (critical, recursive, perceptive) described in this heuristic are necessarily at play to some degree. I cannot say, for example, that the positive deviance facilitation in Northern Uganda was executed without them. However, this tool is meant to encourage a *deliberately* rhetorical disposition that is *habitual*, particularly for the practice of positive deviance action research within Rhetoric and Writing Studies, as a way to break through occupational psychoses (Burke), which are a combination of terministic screens and trained incapacities.
CHAPTER 7: LESSONS AND IMPLICATIONS: TOWARD A FRAMEWORK

OF ACTIONABLE PHRONESIS

Men have dreamed of liberating machines. But there are no machines of freedom, by definition. This is not to say that the exercise of freedom is completely indifferent to spatial distribution, but it can only function when there is a certain convergence; in the case of divergence or distortion, it immediately becomes the opposite of that which had been intended. The panoptic qualities of Guise could perfectly well have allowed it to be used as a prison. Nothing could be simpler. It is clear that, in fact, the Familistère may well have served as an instrument for discipline and a rather unbearable group pressure. There are only reciprocal relations, and the perpetual gaps between intentions in relation to one another.

—Michel Foucault in Space, Knowledge, and Power

Making the rhetorical nature of positive deviance explicit, along with the creation of a heuristic as theory, ensures that positive deviance can and ought to function more ethically and more effectively. Positive deviance and rhetoric are already working together. This project begins to make a reciprocal relationship explicit. Proposing a heuristic as a theory with limitations is, in a sense, a hypothesis of how positive deviance can and should work more ethically, more effectively. It is a first step towards more comprehensive studies of how change happens and how agency is mediated in change, as advocated by Faber (2007). Nonetheless, this theory is built on lessons learned from positive deviance praxis and is intended as practical wisdom, a framework of actionable phronesis to be tested, revised, and adapted.

202 (Foucault, 1984, p. 247)
The purpose of this dissertation research has been to situate positive deviance within Rhetoric and Writing Studies, making connections with calls for asset-based, grassroots, inquiry-driven, sustainable, locally relevant but globally networked approaches to social change. In an effort to explore how change works and how agency is mediated (Faber, 2007) within positive deviance, I have constructed the case example of positive deviance facilitation in Northern Uganda and conducted an exploratory analysis of using a postmodern rhetorical framework.

Exploring positive deviance in principle and in practice, through a postmodern rhetorical lens, has yielded three new findings: (1) documented challenges in the practice of positive deviance stem from its ideological orientation as a postmodern methodology, which functions within networks of multiple ideological paradigms; (2) although positive deviance is described as community-driven, certain aspects of the process can be contested as participatory, and since there are few studies on the long-term sustainability of positive deviance projects, at this time it is impossible to make assertions on sustainability outside of experiential knowledge and speculation; and (3) recognizing positive deviance as a potentially highly agentic methodology for change also means that it is open to colonization and its practice entails an ethic; hence, its application should always be critical as a critical practice of positive deviance not only helps to mediate competing ideologies, but it also makes explicit an ethic of practice.

Based on these findings, I argue that there is value in a more emphatic relationship between Rhetoric and Writing Studies and positive deviance. In answering the question *what are the implications of this research?* in this concluding chapter, I offer a brief exploration of reciprocity in existing and possible collaborations between positive deviance and Rhetoric and Writing Studies. I explain five variations of positive deviance and their implications for research,
service, teaching and administration, arguing that positive deviance can but does not have to be a major undertaking; there is room for its practice in everyday life. And I argue that positive deviance is distributed work with both local and global implications, as it occupies a third, glocal space of distributed work (Spinuzzi).

One Approach: Multiple Variations

Despite the value of a larger scale development or organizational implementation that follows the Minimum Specifications for a positive deviance project, it is possible to take certain elements of the positive deviance approach and implement them individually in condensed periods of time, i.e., in a meeting\textsuperscript{203} or class. Certain elements of the larger approach, such as conducting a PD inquiry or even merely asking the “PD question” can be isolated effectively at a micro level. Furthermore, adapting certain elements of the approach is a good way to obtain experience with minimal risk. For the sake of differentiation, I propose five scenarios for the use of positive deviance:

Positive Deviance Approach

This category involves implementing the approach according to the Minimum Specifications in Figure 3.1. In this sense, the positive deviance approach is used as an action-based methodology for social change, and if the process is followed carefully, the potential for processual replication exists. Although it is inquiry-driven, inquiry is a means for action. This is the global understanding of positive deviance as a development or organizational change intervention. The examples of Vietnam, Indonesia, U.S. hospitals, and Uganda all fall under this

\footnote{203 See \url{http://socialinvention.net/ liberatingstructures.aspx}}
category. The role of research in this, the most prominent variation of positive deviance, is documentation.

**Positive Deviance-Inspired Techniques, Questions, or Projects**

Positive deviance-inspired techniques, questions, or smaller-scale projects draw from the desirable characteristics of positive deviance. A person or organization may adapt an element from the positive deviance approach, such as asking the PD question, to achieve an organizational or change management goal during a meeting. For example, although Liberating Structures can be used to implement positive deviance, positive deviance is itself a Liberating Structure when it is condensed into rapid inquiry. Positive deviance-inspired projects come in all shapes and sizes; they draw on the positive deviance approach to varying degrees and possibly combine it with other methodologies but **do not** necessarily meet the Minimum Specifications outlined in **Figure 3.1.** I would include in this category projects that combine positive deviance with the Lean technique used in healthcare or entertainment-education.  

**Positive Deviance Research (Research about Positive Deviance)**

Positive deviance research is research in which positive deviance itself is the object of study. This research documents positive deviance projects and draws conclusions about their impact, effectiveness, and value (both practical and theoretical). There is no one way to do positive deviance research.  

A study might zero in on a particular aspect of positive deviance or, like our role in Northern Uganda, it can involve a more comprehensive assessment. The PDI

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204 The Lean technique is derived from the Toyota Production System (TPS) and attempts to improve quality while reducing waste, time, and costs.

205 Developing new methods/methodologies for use in the documentation of positive deviance would be a valuable undertaking for the future.
website is a good resource for both positive deviance research and positive deviance evaluation: www.positivedeviance.org.

**Positive Deviance-Inspired Research (PD Inquiry)**

This type of research involves adapting the notion of the PD Inquiry to change the focus of deficit-based questions to asset-based questions. It is motivated by a research goal, such as raising awareness. Since it is researcher-led, it ceases to be a grassroots and community-sustained initiative. Nonetheless, by shifting the traditional questioning paradigm, it can be useful for innovative awareness-raising and can have powerful implications for action and policy. This type of research has been used to study diabetes prevention,\(^{206}\) teenage pregnancy prevention (Diaz, 2010), and timely graduation in a Latino high school (Ayala, 2011). An excellent resource on this developing form of research is an exploratory blog: [http://positivedevianceatutep.blogspot.com/](http://positivedevianceatutep.blogspot.com/). This blog was designed for Dr. Arvind Singhal’s Spring 2011, course on positive deviance at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP). In addition to posting resources they found useful, students posted the process of developing a framework for different PD Inquiries. This involved gaining practice in what it means to refine a problem based on very specific and valid criteria. In addition to the mechanisms already in place for the rhetorical effectiveness of positive deviance, there is potential for reciprocity between positive deviance and Rhetoric and Writing Studies, i.e., the need for heuristics of rhetorical inquiry to make the facilitation process more efficient and effective.

**Positive Deviance Action Research**

\(^{206}\) Documentation is limited. See [http://www.positivedeviance.org/resources/audio.html](http://www.positivedeviance.org/resources/audio.html)
Positive deviance is “research in action,” but few studies document it as action research. PD action research follows implementation according to the Minimum Specifications in Figure 3.1, thus fulfilling the practical aim of solving a problem within a community or organization. Concurrently, it seeks to fulfill the aim of furthering subject or disciplinary knowledge production through research by generating new ideas, wider applications or contributions to theory, for example (See Chapter 5). The facilitator-researcher combinations can be many, depending on the logistics of a project, and the researcher can study change or can study the same subject as the community.

The usefulness of positive deviance to Rhetoric and Writing Studies can come from any of these variations; however, notions of community participation and sustainability (called for by Flower, Simmons, Grabill, Cushman, and Mathieu, among others) are more likely to be derived from the positive deviance approach, as such, and from action research. The positive deviance approach is likely to be useful in programmatic interventions both within and outside of the university; thus, it has implications for administration and service. In this sense, it can be used to address issues of graduation rates and student success. It can be used to improve WAP, WAC/WID programs. Positive deviance action research can be used in settings where it is possible to have both an action and a research goal. It might be challenging to get the right partnership in place, which makes PD Inquiry research appealing as a good way to practice the PD Inquiry methodology and as an innovative way to raise awareness about important issues. Positive deviance-inspired techniques, questions, or projects are another good way to practice with different elements of positive deviance—for example using it in the classroom as a

207 The only article I came across is this one: Bradley E, Curry L, Krumholz H, Nembhard I, Ramanadhan S, Rowe L. Research in action: using positive deviance to improve quality of health care. Implementation Science 2009, 4:25.
Liberating Structure—without engaging a major project. Such adaptations can also be used for problem-solving in collaborative work, service, and administration.

One of the noted limitations of positive deviance is at the same time its major strength: by focusing on the local, it can ignore oppressive social and institutional structures and the root causes of a problem. In Chapter 5, I explained this in terms of the PAK\textsuperscript{208} paradigm. But beyond the argument of positive deviance as a valuable methodology despite this limitation is the argument that before, during, and after a project, it is possible to engage in policy matters surrounding important issues. In the Fall of 2009, I answered a call for proposals from the University of Texas at Arlington’s Academy of Distinguished Leaders requesting creative ideas from all Texas graduate students to address an issue that was under the scope of the state government. Winning proposals would be forwarded to the Texas legislature for consideration. My proposal on the use of positive deviance to address retention and graduation at all educational levels in the state of Texas placed first in this competition. Unfortunately, there has been no follow up from the Texas legislature, to date. However, I have decided that upon completion of my degree and as junior faculty in the state of Texas, I will follow up on my proposal. I echo Grabill’s (2001) observation, though he refers specifically to literacy:

For English and literacy professionals to be effective as public policy participants, we must do work other than that carried out by our professional organizations. Local involvement in community planning and more global involvement in state-level decisions about the meaning and value of literacy and the programs that result are essential. (p. 256)

\textsuperscript{208}Practice changes attitudes, which creates knowledge.
Since community-academic partnerships are contingent on relationships and timing, I argue that such work can be the best way to keep action and research goals alive when an action research project has yet to be launched.

**Positive Deviance as Distributed Work**

Clay Spinuzzi (2005) defined distributed work as “coordinative, polycontextual, cross-disciplinary work that splices together divergent work activities (separated by time, space, organizations, and objectives) and that enables the transformations of information and texts that characterize such work” (p. 265). Positive deviance is distributed work. Where many development projects are served by financial, medical, and nutritional inputs, positive deviance is served by knowledge inputs. It is currency in the knowledge economy. Unlike modular work (in the Marxian manufacturing sense as used by Spinuzzi), in distributed work, “Networks, not hierarchies, are the dominant organizational form (though one does not preclude the other, and hierarchies persist in distributed work). Distributed work is deeply interpenetrated with multiple, multidirectional information flows” (Spinuzzi, 2005, p. 268). Within a given positive deviance project, supporting individuals and organizations come together across temporal and spatial realities to pool areas of expertise. **Figure 7.1** is a relationship map showing how organizations might combine local and long distance efforts as part of a network in a particular positive deviance project. This particular map was drawn from the evaluation of two child protection projects (in which I participated as a consultant) that used positive deviance in Northern Uganda and East Java, Indonesia. Solid lines represent existing relationships. Dotted lines represent relationships formed around the positive deviance child protection projects.
Couched within the example of trafficking prevention in East Java, Indonesia, from Chapter 3, and the case example of reintegration in Northern Uganda, in Chapter 4, this map indicates that while local connections were forged (for example between Save the Children in Indonesia, local communities, local organizations, and local government officials, global connections were also made—connections crucial in the support and continuation of positive deviance projects. While a connection already existed between Save the Children in Indonesia and Save the Children in the U.S. (based on funding and resources), a connection was also forged with Save the Children in Uganda. This enabled a more informed practice of positive deviance in Uganda, as local facilitators from Uganda were flown to Indonesia to learn from experienced practitioners, and new facilitators participating in scaled projects in Indonesia were flown to Uganda to see the inception of a positive deviance project. In addition, we learned from the case example in Northern Uganda that the late Jerry Sternin travelled, along with Richard Pascale, on behalf of
the PDI to conduct a positive deviance workshop in Uganda. Our involvement (Singhal & Dura) also entailed travel. Hence, there was both physical and other types of correspondence (telephone, e-mail, Skype, chat) amongst all members of a network, which was formed around two projects.

The visualization of new and existing connections depicts the importance of the glocal in positive deviance practice. My interpretation of the term “glocal” integrates local and global forces, assuming that in today’s world both are necessarily contingent upon each other. Local realities cannot escape global realities and vice versa. For Soja (1987) this meant

To be able to contend with and comprehend what is happening seems to demand a much more flexible, combinatorial, and cautiously eclectic specialization of thought and action, theory and practice, than the old modernist intellectual division of labor. (p.290)

When Soja made assertions about an emerging postmodern geography, his words seemed more like a prediction. Today, they are a lived reality. Knowledge workers in this age of distributed work constantly mediate nationalism and cosmopolitanism, production and consumption of goods, and other binaries. They do so with ease, as the knowledge workers of today are increasingly working across disciplines and boundaries, learning both to blur and to keep lines distinct. Even so, Soja’s (1996) call for ways to use space “in more beneficial ways” (p. 1429) still prevails. Within glocal work, which can be so complex, there is a need for “spatial justice” (Soja, 1996), a glocal ethic of sorts. In addition to the technicalities of glocal knowledge management, we are faced with issues of ethics and responsibility. While I do not intend to impose an ethic, I hold that a rhetorical disposition is a step towards a more ethical
engagement of any networked endeavor in its attention to situatedness, reflexivity, and recursion.

As a methodology that is already systematized and part of a global network, positive deviance has been for me an opportunity to engage directly in a glocal network. Most of the work I do today involves some semblance of such a network. Passing such opportunities along to our students will help them enter the distributed workplace as more competent professionals. The opportunities I have been afforded as a graduate student and the continued mentoring from my advisors has been invaluable. But equally important has been the sense that with successful entrepreneurial ventures, there is a parallel need for critical practices, for spatial justice, for rhetorical dispositions.
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CURRICULUM VITA

Lucia Dura was born in Mexico City. The first daughter of Jose Antonio Dura Garcia and Lucia Sanchez Llorente, she graduated from Loretto Academy High School, El Paso, Texas, in the spring of 1996, and entered St. Mary’s University in San Antonio, Texas, in the fall with a Marianist Scholarship. In 2000, she graduated from St. Mary’s University magna cum laude and was a recipient of the University’s Presidential Award. She worked for a year at Saint Mary’s Hall as a Spanish teacher and boarding school parent, and in the fall of 2001, moved to New Haven, Connecticut, where she worked as Project Coordinator for the Yale Divinity School Gender and Faith-Based HIV/AIDS in Africa Initiative. In New Haven she also worked as a Spanish teacher and she volunteered as an art teacher at an inner-city school. In 2003, with an Alliance for Catholic Education Scholarship, she took graduate courses in Education for two semesters at the University of Notre Dame, before returning to El Paso in 2004. That spring, she enrolled at the University of Texas at El Paso and obtained a Certificate in Translation. In the fall of 2004, she began the Master of Arts in Rhetoric and Professional Writing and in 2005, she enrolled in the doctoral program in Rhetoric and Composition. Dura received her M.A. in the spring of 2006. Since her enrollment at the University of Texas at El Paso, she has worked as an editor, writer, translator, and researcher with local and international private and public organizations such as the El Paso Museum of Art, the History Museum, Creative Kids, Save the Children, and Minga Peru. She has also been the recipient of several fellowships and awards, including the University of Texas at Arlington Distinguished Leaders Award and the Dodson Dissertation Completion Fellowship. She has authored and co-authored numerous publications and will continue her academic career as an Assistant Professor for the Department of English at the University of Texas at El Paso in the fall of 2011.