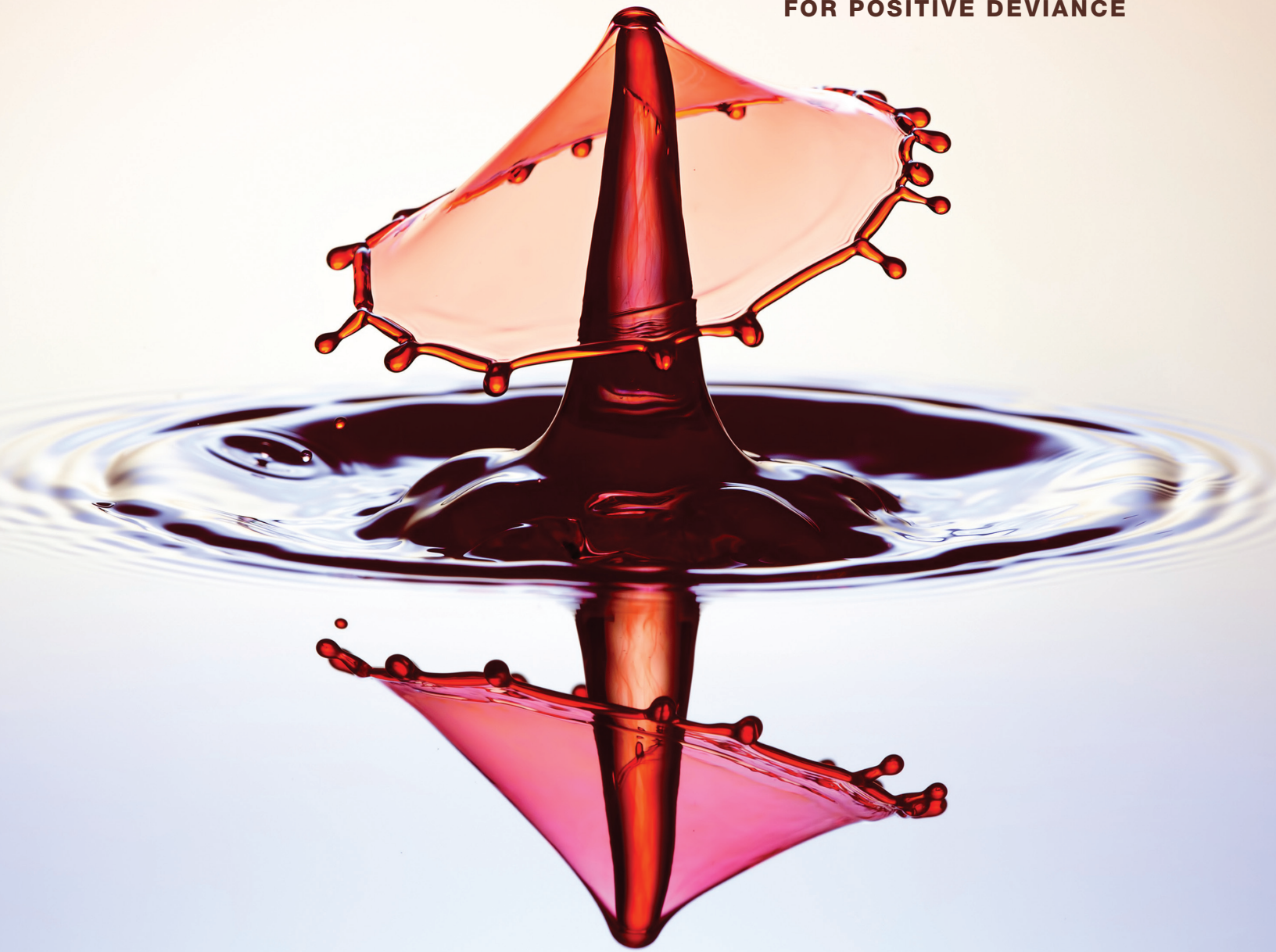


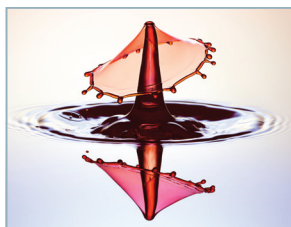
CARROLL C. ARNOLD DISTINGUISHED LECTURE 2015

Flip It:

**HOW COMPLEX SOCIAL PROBLEMS
CAN BE SOLVED SIMPLY AND
COMMUNICATIVELY BY LOOKING
FOR POSITIVE DEVIANCE**



ARVIND SINGHAL
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

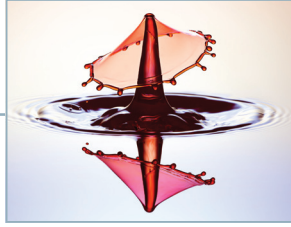


On October 8, 1994, the Administrative Committee of the National Communication Association established the Carroll C. Arnold Distinguished Lecture. The Arnold Lecture is given in plenary session each year at the annual convention of the Association and features the most accomplished researchers in the field. The topic of the lecture changes annually so as to capture the wide range of research being conducted in the field and to demonstrate the relevance of that work to society at large.

The purpose of the Arnold Lecture is to inspire not by words but by intellectual deeds. Its goal is to make the members of the Association better informed by having one of its best professionals think aloud in their presence. Over the years, the Arnold Lecture will serve as a scholarly stimulus for new ideas and new ways of approaching those ideas. The inaugural Lecture was given on November 17, 1995.

The Arnold Lecturer is chosen each year by the First Vice President. When choosing the Arnold Lecturer, the First Vice President is charged to select a long-standing member of NCA, a scholar of undisputed merit who has already been recognized as such, a person whose recent research is as vital and suggestive as his or her earlier work, and a researcher whose work meets or exceeds the scholarly standards of the academy generally.

The Lecture has been named for Carroll C. Arnold, the late Professor Emeritus of Pennsylvania State University. Trained under Professor A. Craig Baird at the University of Iowa, Arnold was the coauthor (with John Wilson) of *Public Speaking as a Liberal Art*, author of *Criticism of Oral Rhetoric* (among other works), and co-editor of *The Handbook of Rhetorical and Communication Theory*. Although primarily trained as a humanist, Arnold was nonetheless one of the most active participants in the New Orleans Conference of 1968 which helped put social scientific research in communication on solid footing. Thereafter, Arnold edited *Communication Monographs* because he was fascinated by empirical questions. As one of the three founders of the journal *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, Arnold also helped move the field toward increased dialogue with the humanities in general. For these reasons and more, Arnold was dubbed "The Teacher of the Field" when he retired from Penn State in 1977. Dr. Arnold died in January of 1997.



CARROLL C. ARNOLD DISTINGUISHED LECTURE

Flip It:

**HOW COMPLEX SOCIAL PROBLEMS CAN BE SOLVED SIMPLY AND
COMMUNICATIVELY BY LOOKING FOR POSITIVE DEVIANCE**

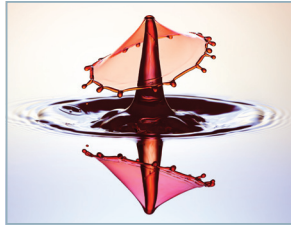
ARVIND SINGHAL
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO



NATIONAL COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATION
101st Annual Convention | Las Vegas, Nevada

SPONSORED BY

PEARSON



© 2015 National Communication Association. All rights reserved.

All NCA Publication Program materials are reviewed within the spirit of academic freedom, promoting the free exchange of ideas. The contents of this publication are the responsibility of its authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of the National Communication Association, its members, its officers, or its staff.

Brief portions of this publication may be copied and quoted without further permission, with the understanding that appropriate citations of the source will accompany any excerpts. A limited number of copies of brief excerpts may be made for scholarly or classroom use if:

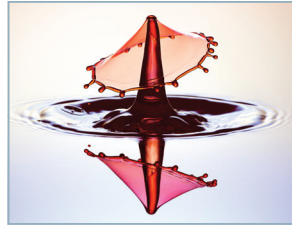
1. the materials are distributed without charge, or no fees above the actual duplication costs are charged;
2. the materials are reproductions, photocopies, or copies made by similar processes, and not reprints or republications;
3. the copies are used within a reasonable time after reproduction; and
4. the materials include the full bibliographic citation, and the following is also clearly displayed on all copies: "Copyright by the National Communication Association. Reproduced by permission of the publisher."

This permission does not extend to situations in which:

1. extensive amounts of material are reproduced or stored in an electronic or similar data retrieval system;
2. a fee above *actual* duplicating costs is charged, or if there exists a reasonable expectation of profit; or
3. the material is reproduced or reprinted for other than scholarly or educational purposes.

In such cases, permission must be obtained prior to reproduction and generally a reasonable fee will be assessed. Requests for permission to reproduce should be addressed to the NCA Director of External Affairs and Publications.

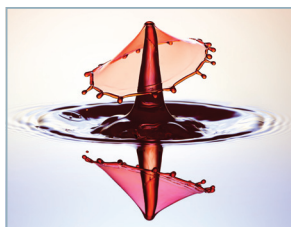
National Communication Association
1765 N Street, NW
Washington, DC, 20036
www.natcom.org



ARVIND SINGHAL

Arvind Singhal, Ph.D., is the Samuel Shirley and Edna Holt Marston Endowed Professor of Communication and Director of Social Justice Initiative at The University of Texas at El Paso. He is also appointed as the William J. Clinton Distinguished Fellow, Clinton School of Public Service, University of Arkansas (since 2009) and as Professor 2 at University College of Hedmark, Norway (since 2015). Dr. Singhal teaches and conducts research in the diffusion of innovations, the positive deviance approach, organizing for social change, the entertainment-education strategy, and liberating interactional structures. His research and outreach spans sectors such as health, education, sustainable development, civic participation, and corporate citizenship. He is co-author or editor of 13 books. Two of his books, *Combating AIDS* and *Entertainment-Education* have won the NCA Distinguished Book Award for Applied Communication. In addition, Dr. Singhal has authored some 175 peer-reviewed essays in journals of communication, public health, and social change and won more than two dozen international and national awards. He has visited and lectured in more than 75 countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America, Australia, Europe, and North America. He can be contacted at asinghal@utep.edu.





Flip It:

HOW COMPLEX SOCIAL PROBLEMS CAN BE SOLVED SIMPLY AND COMMUNICATIVELY BY LOOKING FOR POSITIVE DEVIANCE

Following is a transcript of the 2015 Carroll C. Arnold Distinguished Lecture as delivered.



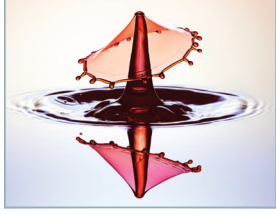
So...flip it! And, of course, there's the obligatory colon and then there's something after that. And, we'll sort of muddle our way through the notion of what positive deviance is and what complex social problems are and what role Communication can possibly play as a discipline, as an area of research, as an area of scholarship, and perhaps even as an area of practice.

So, the first slide is a blank screen. And if you invoke the Zen philosophers...they would say that a blank screen may represent a beginner's mind—a mind that may have many possibilities. A mind that's curious. A mind that's open. And I want to begin with that invitation to you, to see if you can, even if it's temporary and momentarily, even if it's for a few minutes, see if you can reset yourself to a beginner's mind. Not easy...for those of you who are experts, and I know there are a lot of experts here. And it's a challenge that I issue to myself as well, as I have this conversation with you.

Now, I want to see if there's somebody in this audience who would recognize a familiar figure—Abraham Lincoln. Well, there's a reason we begin with a flipped image of Abraham Lincoln. There are many stories about Lincoln, many which I greatly loved, but one that especially spoke to me as I began to work in the area of positive deviance is the story of Lincoln being in the presence a soldier during the Civil War—a soldier who was meeting for the first time the Commander in Chief—the President. And he sort of clicked his heels and saluted Lincoln, extended his hand and as he did so he realized that his hand to be sort of like this... [Raises arm straight in air]. And he said "Oh, Mr. President, you're tall! How tall are you?" Does anybody know how tall Lincoln was? 6'5" or 6'4.5" is what I hear.

So, the question was "Oh, Mr. President, you're tall. How tall are you?" and without batting an eyelid Abraham Lincoln says, "Son, like you, tall enough that my feet reach the ground." [Repeats answer twice]

Now most of us experts respond to questions such as that very precisely. You know, I've heard people say "Oh, I'm 182 and 1/2 centimeters tall." Or you know, oftentimes 5'8" and 3/4 tall. Like that 3/4 is really important! Precision, yes? Expertise. And sometimes it's "Oh, you know, I'm taller than you" or "You're not as tall as I am." And Lincoln's answer, of course it may mean different things to different people, signifies to me the value of the common ground. And in the realm of what we'll be talking about—positive deviance—what it says to me is that expertise doesn't lie just within the Commander-in-Chief, or with the President, or with the professor, but wisdom is distributed if we have the eyes to acknowledge it and if we have the heart to see it. And that's not an easy thing for experts, no? That's why we say "beginner's mind" or "open mind."

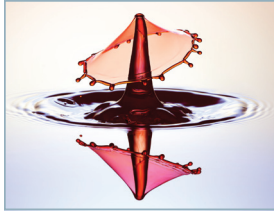


So, let's put Lincoln back in his place. The contention that I am presenting is that we can do a better job of solving complex social problems. And in order to do so, it would be useful to us to, if we can—it's not going to be easy—to flip our mindsets. Now what are complex social problems? I don't need to define them; I'll give you some examples. But these are problems that don't have a simple, technical fix. Oftentimes these problems are relational, they are behavioral, they are hierarchical, not so easy to untangle—multiple causes, underlying causes, you know, you may partial out this and that but we don't do a very good job of explaining any variance in any dependent variable. So, we'll talk about complex social problems. The contention is that we can, I think, significantly improve our record of solving complex social problems if we...make the effort, if we broaden the discipline, to flip our mindsets.

So, the flipped mindset, simply put, is the positive deviance way. And visually it looks like this. [Gestures to screen] And we'll tell you more about what it means conceptually or narratively as we move on. I like to tell stories, some of you know I like to do work in the area of entertainment education, so, now I'm on stage and I'm going to, you know, try to tell you a few stories. I'm going to use the narrative approach to make some points about positive deviance. So, I'm to be held to a test.

The first story is of a fictional character named Nasiruddin. And I see my friend Jack Condon kind of nodding... How many of us have heard a story of Nasiruddin? Okay, I see some hands. Let's see if you've heard this particular story. And in this story, Nasiruddin is a professed smuggler. So, let's say he goes on top of Mount Everest with a megaphone and says "I'm a smuggler!" And the challenge goes out to all customs officials. "Catch me if you can!" And so every morning Nasiruddin rides on a donkey, lots of donkeys, loaded with stuff. Comes to the border check point. And there's a customs official who's like, "Okay, today I'm going to nail you, Nasiruddin. What do you have?" Nasiruddin says look and the customs official looks and he really knows how to look, right? He's been training in looking. So he looks here and there and finds nothing of interest. So what does he do? And what can he do? He's got to let Nasiruddin go. The next day he's back! Riding a donkey with stuff loaded, with other donkeys, there are tons of things. The customs official is really like, "I'm really going to nail you today, Nasiruddin. What do you have?" Nasiruddin says look and the customs official really looks, I mean this time really looks; he puts on his x-ray glasses and does the sniffing test and the touching test and this test and that test. And finds absolutely nothing of interest. What does he do? What can he do? He's got to let Nasiruddin go. And this happens day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, decade after decade. The customs official is getting increasingly frustrated in his inability to nail Nasiruddin in his act of wrongdoing. So maybe he goes to the Harvard School of Customs Checking, no? To get a senior diploma and learns these techniques and learns those techniques, comes to NCA, attends a preconference workshop, you know whatever. [Chuckles] And again, years go by and he's unable to nail Nasiruddin in an act of wrongdoing. And finally one day the customs official retires, deeply frustrated that he could not solve a problem he was focused on. The next day, you can imagine, Nasiruddin goes on top of Mount Everest and shouts "I retire from smuggling!" And they happen to meet. Must have been the Starbucks here in this hotel—long lines. And the customs official says to Nasiruddin, "Nasiruddin, now that I'm an old man and no longer hold any official capacity, now that I'm in no position to do anything to you, please, please Nasiruddin, could you please tell me what you were smuggling?" "Donkeys," says Nasiruddin.

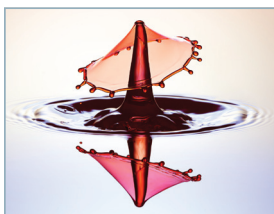
So, why do I tell this story and let's ask the question, even though it's a story, why was the customs official unable to see what was there right in front of his very eyes? The problem that he was trying to solve, the answer, was right there. And he missed it every single time. And a donkey is not a small thing, yes? Right there, and not just one donkey. And how many times did I say, donkeys, donkeys, donkeys. I don't know how many of you got it, but you can realize why we as "experts" often become incapacitated by our training, by our mindsets. Some people call it trained incapacity, some people call it occupational psychosis, some people say that if you're a hammer then the world begins to look like a...nail. You have people who talk about bound rationality and those kinds of things. So anyway, that's story number one.



The question is what do you see? And, the flip, what is it that you don't see? So the positive deviance premise is the following: Solutions to complex problems exist—stare us in the face, we do not see them—we are incapable of seeing them. We are actually trained to not see them. We don't even know where to look, and the old problem-solving mindsets get in the way. Ready for story two? [Gestures to screen] And who can recognize pixels on a screen? Mother Teresa.

This is a...sort of quintessential story to understand the positive deviance approach to solving complex social problems. So, Mother Teresa, once she arrived in Washington, DC, was greeted by a thousand people waving placards, and the representative said, "Tomorrow we are having a march in Washington. We would like you to march with us." And she said, "My child, what's the march about?" And he said, "We are marching against the Vietnam War." And now there's silence. And now she's thinking, and the representative said, "We are marching against the Vietnam War, you will certainly march with us, right?" And she said, "My child, if you are going to Washington to have a march against the Vietnam War, I am so sorry, but I will not be able to march with you. But, my child, if you were to choose to have a march in Washington for peace, I will be the first to lead."

So the question to ask ourselves is, for Mother Teresa, are the notions of being against the war or being for peace one and the same thing, or are they very different? You don't need to answer, but different enough that for one, "I'm so sorry" and for the other, "If you so choose, I will be the first to lead." As problem solvers, because we always begin with the problem, we are always against something. It's a natural mindset. I'm against drug abuse, I'm against teenage pregnancy, I'm against racism, and there's nothing wrong with that. But I think what Mother Teresa is telling us is that it's always useful to flip the mindset because we have the ability to do so. And ask what is it that you're for? So as problem solvers, we do knowledge gaps, attitude gaps, practice gaps, we begin by saying what are the deficits in the community, we begin by saying what are the needs that a community has? We rarely flip and ask what are we for? We rarely flip and ask what's working? We rarely flip and ask what are the strengths, what are the assets of the community? We have so much literature on high risk, and that's okay—nothing wrong with it. What we are saying is if you flip your mindset and ask what's working, maybe you'll be at a different place. That's all we are saying.

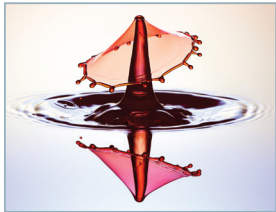


Story three. Oh... this warms my heart! So, Mahatma Gandhi was the father of the Indian nation, we called him Rashtra-pita, lovingly we called him Bapu. He was a barrister, he was a lawyer, he trained in London, and for the last 50 years of his life, he pretty much lived like this, no? And spun his own cloth, you know, but you can see him wearing a loin cloth that he spun. [Gestures to screen] And he's traveling by train in what class of service? Can you tell? Third class, no? And you can imagine this drove his people, my grandparents' generation to ask, Bapu, why do you

travel third class? We as a country can do better. So, President Obama has... what is the plane called... Air Force 1? And Michelle Obama is First Lady? As we were traveling here to Las Vegas, we got bumped up, me and my wife who's here, to first class. And how do you feel? I mean, this was a Facebook moment, you know? Take a picture... I mean did you really travel first class if nobody knows you traveled first class?

So, Bapu, the question was, why do you travel third class? And his response was always the same: "I travel third class, because as you know, there is no fourth class." [Repeats response] Now, this kind of mentality, this kind of a mindset, this kind of sensitivity is very uncommon. Like the Lincoln-esque sensibility of "Son, like you, tall enough that my feet reach the ground." And what we are seeing is this tremendous untapped potentiality hidden, which lies in flipping mindsets. Because what Gandhi is really saying is if you begin to look at things and experience things from what you call the "fourth class", you will have a very different sensibility. Whereas, when it comes to problem

solving, we are obsessed with best-case scenarios, best practices—there’s nothing wrong with it. But it just takes us to a different place. So what’s the positive deviance approach? You connect the Nasiruddin story with Mother Teresa’s story and the Gandhi story and you’ve got the conceptual elements of the positive deviance approach.



So now let me bring this together with a real case of solving a complex problem. The year is 1990. And in 1990, this is a true case, a very well-documented case, 65 percent of the children under age five in Vietnam were malnourished. Big problem. And Save the Children USA sent two representatives, a husband and wife team—Jerry and Monique Sternin—to help address the issue of malnutrition. They had worked with malnutrition in many other countries and they had primarily used the community-centered problem-solving approach. Now, something happened where they had to innovate in Vietnam. They were given six months to show results. At the time, there was a publication from Tufts University that had the title “Positive Deviance” in it. They read it and said, by golly, we are going to try and address this problem a different way than we have in the past. They had never done this before—this flipping of the mindset.

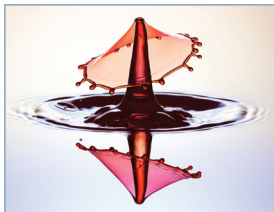
So this is what they did. They started with four communities near Hanoi, where there were 3,000 kids under the age of five. And of course you can measure, you can weigh, all these 3,000 kids. You can take their arm circumference and you can say, based on their growth chart, whether they are malnourished or not, which is what they did. And then they asked this quintessential positive deviance question, which is usually never asked. This is what the question looked like... That’s Jerry Sternin and that’s a flipped question. Jerry, you could say, was my guru; I first brought him to Ohio University when I was there in 2005. I said, I’d like to apprentice with you. And he always did this... [Specific gesture of twirling hands]...like flip it flip it flip it! So the question was the following: Are there children under the age of five in poor, rural households that are well nourished? Do you see Mother Teresa here? What’s working? Do you see Gandhi here? What’s working for the fourth class? And of course, it’s a question to see what you can’t see. Because you can expect all of us who run regression equations will hypothesize that kids that are well-nourished would come from families that are well-supported, right? So this was an unasked question.

Basically, you’re asking “do I see healthy children?”—Mother Teresa. Among the poorest of the poor—Gandhi. Because that is where the donkeys are—Nasiruddin. If there are kids who come from the poorest of the poor families who are well-nourished, because the norm is what? If you come from a poor, rural, remote family that has a very small piece of land, your child is going to be malnourished. But, the fact that somebody has solved the problem, if you can find them...that’s where the answers lie. Because if they have solved it and solved it in their context with the worst odds, the donkeys lie there. Get the idea? How those three stories come together with the positive deviance approach?

So what did they find? The key was that they got the community involved in identifying kids who were healthy but came from the poorest of the poor families. The community members were like, “This can’t happen! Not possible!” No, no but we did weigh them and they are well-nourished. So, the community is intrigued, right? What happened? So the community was asked to figure out what the heck was happening. And something must have been happening because they didn’t have access to extra resources. They must have been doing something. Doing something, right? So now you know where to look. Teams went out and they looked and they found a few things. What did they find? There were a few mothers that were adding the shoots, the greens of sweet potato plants, to the food. What do we do with the greens of sweet potato plants? How many of us eat those greens? No positive deviance here... [Chuckles]...What’s the point? When you label something as sweet potato, you become interested in the potato. That’s the mindset. You don’t think about the greens. So the solution to the problem was there. And you can explain how it was there, with vitamin A, beta carotene, etc. One of the other things they found was that this mother, this

crazy mother, was actively feeding her child. What? Actively feeding her child. Well what's so crazy about that? Well the norm is when the child begins to sit, you put what you wish the child to ingest in front of them because, you know, the mother is busy and the child eats some and drops some and wastes some. This crazy mother, non-normative, positively deviant mother because she is not the norm and her child is healthy, is actively feeding her child. And what happened when she worked in the field? She asked a sibling to actively feed the child. There were some mothers taking teeny tiny crabs and shellfish from the rice fields, which are there for the taking in Vietnam. Things mothers would ordinarily not collect because it was considered chicken food or duck food. If you label something as chicken food or duck food, that's the way it is. But these mothers were picking these up, removing the shell, and giving it to their children. The solutions to the problem were there. The donkeys had been coming and going for a very long time. And by asking a very different question, those solutions were discovered. So far so good?

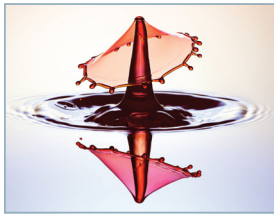
So, this is a very well-documented study and these are the results. This happened over a period of six or seven years and Vietnam basically solved its malnutrition problem. And this is when the positive deviance approach began to be "known" in nutrition circles, usually in overseas contexts. The premise is that there exists in every community, if we have the eyes to see it, ordinary people who have found extraordinary solutions to an existing problem against all odds. They are a very small minority, a rounding error, the outliers, and you know what we do with outliers? We love normality. We love central tendency. So positive deviance is bathed in data. In Vietnam, the example that I gave you had 3,000 kids, you weighed them, 35 percent of them are the "green dots," but then you keep eliminating all the green dots, all the ones who are well-nourished, until you can find somebody who is well-nourished and unexplainable. It's the unexplainable ones that you are interested in. So it's a completely data-driven approach.



I'm going to give you three quick examples of applications of positive deviance. The first time it came to the United States was in 2004. And there is a very big complex problem that people were trying to solve and didn't know how to solve it, which is the problem of hospital-wide infections. We go to the hospital to get well, but 3.5 million people annually acquire an infection when they're in the hospital, infections that they shouldn't acquire. Over 100,000 die. It's a very big public health issue that's quite under the radar. Hand hygiene compliance rates—which is a very simple technical thing, washing your hands before you have an encounter with the patient—in U.S. hospitals average about 38 percent. Which means that anytime anybody touches you in a hospital, the likelihood of that hand, that touch, being a vector of infection is more than 2:1. Get the idea? How do you solve this? You can have directives coming from the 14th floor, as have been coming for how many years, and we know what happens, no? And the worst offenders are who? Physicians. Among the physicians, who are the worst offenders? Surgeons. Surprise you? Yes...well maybe not. Who's going to tell a surgeon, "Oh sir, you did wash your hands but you just touched your beeper...because your wife called..."? Nobody can. So people die because people cannot speak up. It's not a simple issue. It's a complex behavioral issue.

So, we asked some very simple questions. And, again, this study was funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and went on for three years in six pilot hospitals. And I'm just going to give you one example of what we found. Basically, we asked, are there ordinary people? Is there a patient? Patients? Patients are the problem, right? Is there a patient who's figured out a way to make sure that before anybody touches him, that their hands are sanitized? Yes. We found Daryl in Pittsburgh. What does Daryl do? When the health care provider walks into Daryl's room, Daryl will look at the health care provider and smile and if the health care provider doesn't wash their hands or go for the sanitizer, Daryl smiles and then turns his head because he doesn't want to make eye contact. And what does he do next? He turns his head back to the health care provider, smiles, winks, nods, and is telling them...[Gestures toward a sign] What Daryl does is not normative behavior. Daryl has found a solution. The wisdom

to solve the problem exists there with a patient who usually is powerless; he is a positive deviant. So what do you do with what you find? So, we asked Daryl and the patients, what should we do? And they said, okay...can we just make a little poster, costs 50 cents, laminated...a poster designed by the patients, which said: "Patients, you have the right to clean hands." It looked like this...[Gestures to screen]...and what do we do with this poster? Well, just put it right in front of the wall where our bed is. Oh, well what is that going to do? Well, if we don't have the skills of Daryl, we can't wink or nod, all we have to do when the health care provider walks in is look at the poster and keep smiling. Get the idea? There were a few hundred such nuggets that we found in work in these U.S. hospitals. When MRSA and worldwide infections are skyrocketing...in these six hospitals, the units that applied positive deviance, infections dropped by over 70 percent.

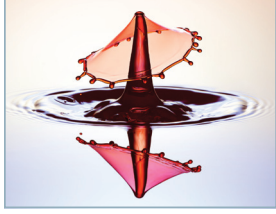


Let me give you a case of applying positive deviance in prisons in Denmark. Denmark does a wonderful job when it comes to the issue of recidivism, compared to the United States. Well, any country would do well when compared to the United States. Denmark does a very good job of rehabilitating, let's say, its prisoners, but it comes at a very high cost. What's the cost? The people who work in Danish jails—the jailers, the officials—have a high rate of stress and anxiety. They have the highest rates of absenteeism. The average age of retirement of a government official in Denmark is over 60; the average age of retirement of those who work in correctional facilities is 48. Get the idea? They had been trying to solve this the conventional way, until, one day, things flipped and somebody asked a very different question.

The question was, against all odds, in maximum security prisons, where you would expect most stress, are there any guards who have had very low rates of absenteeism or none? The average number of days that a guard was absent was 33 in maximum security prisons in a year. And who are psychologically thriving? And the answer was yes, not very many, but we do have a few. Oh, we do? Okay...the donkeys are there. The solutions are there. So let's talk to these people. And this is all data-driven, right? Absenteeism, age of retirement...what did they find? I'll give you a couple of things.

Those who were psychologically thriving had made an informal pact that they would not read the dossier of the prisoner when the prisoner would come in. What's the normative practice? First thing you want to know is who's checking in, right? I want to know at a maximum security prison, you know, what have they done? The difference was they were not reading the dossier. Their words were "In order to save ourselves, we kill our curiosity." What does that have to do with stress and burnout? Well, you decide. If you know whom you're walking with, how do you behave toward them and how do they behave toward you? As opposed to, well I don't know. Non-judgmental maybe. Get the idea?

So here's another thing they found. There's one or two of these crazy jailers, when a prisoner checked in, ordinarily normative practice is what? You check them in, you fumigate them, you give them orange clothes, and you lock them in. Some of these guards would give the prisoners a tour of the prison. Welcome, you know, to this facility and let me show you where your gymnasium is...and there's the swimming pool...and you get a few hours on Friday and there's the bubbler...Get the idea? Non-normative practice—what does that do? I don't know what that does but it was doing something! That was the difference, that was the donkey; they'd be giving tours for a long time. The solutions to the problem were right there. You only could develop the eyes to see it by flipping the question.

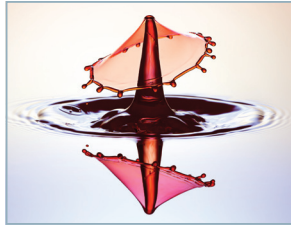


This case of positive deviance comes from Claudia Boyd's MA thesis. So, this is Claudia's work. She asked a very simple question, a question which previously was not asked. In El Paso, a border area...high rates of diabetes... Are there some folks who, and her question was more complicated than this, who have figured out a way to manage their diabetes with no or low medication? The implausible probables. Yes, the answer is that Claudia found a few. How many? Twelve. And, of course, Claudia discovered many donkeys, but one of the donkeys was self-disclosure. The best thing you can do to take care of your diabetes is to self-disclose. The best prescription that a doctor can write for you on a prescription pad is "please self-disclose your status." And what does that do? Well, you tell your friends and your family and now they know and now there's an ethic of care which didn't exist before. Get the idea? That's her finding—one of the findings.

So, what's the point? When you ask improbable, and I'm using the word "probable" in a probabilistic sense, and implausible positive deviance questions—flipped questions—the answers that you get will be surprising. And they have to be because you're asking a question that doesn't make sense. So what you're going to find is not going to make sense. Right? Because the answers are going to be very simple as it seems was the case in the examples I've given. Surprising answers, surprising solutions. Accessible to all because somebody in the fourth class has figured out a way to do it, and if they can do it, others can do it, too. The assertion that I'm making is that the positive deviance questions that we ask and the solutions that we find are fundamentally communicative. That's a great thing for our discipline! So you're asking, "what is it that I see?" or "what is it that I don't see?"... "what is it that I hear against the war?"... or "for peace?"... "on whose behalf am I hearing?"... and in the answers you find you think of a Darryl. What has Darryl figured out to do with his wink and a nod and his silence? What has the jailer figured out to do? I don't read the dossier... I'll give you a tour. What has the diabetic in El Paso found out? Self-disclose. Communicative. And then it shouldn't surprise us, because if people have found a solution to the problem without any extra assistance or resources, they must be doing something. And that doing, based on the work I'm doing, seems to be communicative. Hurray! Maybe our field will get the Nobel Prize one day if we're solving the most complex problems of the world.

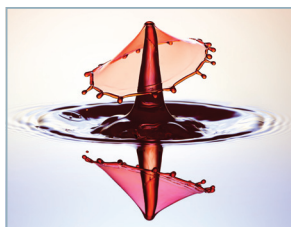
I'll end with His Holiness the Dali Lama. He was once asked in a public gathering, "Your Holiness, what is the meaning and purpose of life?" Simple question, no? And I mean he's an expert, right? He should know. And he smiled and he laughed. And then he said, "your question was what is the meaning and purpose of life...my answer is I don't know." But then he said, "since you asked, I should try to answer this question. My answer is the whole purpose and meaning of life is to spread the warm heart." [Repeats quote two times] What is it that we say? What is it that we hear?

...Always end with Robert Frost. Thank you very much.



REFERENCES/SOURCES

- Boyd, C. (2015). *The sweet taste of health: A positive deviance inquiry into communicative acts that lead to effective management of diabetes among Hispanics*. MA Thesis. ETD Collection for University of Texas, El Paso.
- Dura, L., & Singhal, A. (2009). A positive deviance approach to reduce girls' trafficking in Indonesia: asset-based communicative acts that make a difference. *Journal of Creative Communication*, 4(1), 1-17.
- Frost, R. (1942). The secret sits. A poem in *The witness tree*. <http://wonderingminstrels.blogspot.com/2001/01/secret-sits-robert-frost.html>.
- Mack, A., & Rock, I. (1998). *Inattention blindness*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press
- Mackintosh, U., Marsh, D., & Schroeder, D. (2002). Sustained positive deviant child care practices and their effects on child growth in Viet Nam, *Food and Nutrition Bulletin*, 23(4), (supplement).
- Pascale, R. T., Sternin, J., & Sternin, M. (2010). *The power of positive deviance: How unlikely innovators solve the world's toughest problems*. Boston, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Singhal, A. (2010). Communicating what works! Applying the positive deviance approach in health communication. *Health Communication*, 25, 605-606.
- Singhal, A. (2013). The value of positive deviations. *Developments Magazine*, 31(6): 17-20.
- Singhal, A. (2013). Positive deviance: uncovering innovations that are invisible in plain Sight. *Kappan*, 95(3), 28-33.
- Singhal, A. (2013). Transforming education from the inside-out: Positive Deviance to enhance learning and student retention. In Hiemstra, R. & Carré, P. (Eds.) *A feast of learning: International perspectives on adult learning and change* (pp. 141-159). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
- Singhal, A., Buscell, P., & Lindberg, C. (2010). *Inviting everyone: Healing healthcare through positive deviance*. Bordentown, NJ: PlexusPress.
- Singhal, A., Buscell, P., & Lindberg, C. (2014). *Inspiring change and saving lives: The positive deviance way*. Bordentown, NJ: PlexusPress.
- Singhal, A., & Dura, L. (2009). *Protecting children from exploitation and trafficking: Using the Positive Deviance approach in Uganda and Indonesia*. Washington, DC: Save the Children.
- Singhal, A., & Greiner, K. (2011). Using positive deviance to reduce hospital-acquired infection at the Veterans Administration Healthcare System in Pittsburgh. In Suchman, A., & Williamson, P. R. (Eds.), *Leading change in healthcare: transforming organizations using complexity, positive psychology and relationship-centered care* (pp. 177-209). New York: Radcliffe Publishing.
- Singhal, A., McCandless, K., Buscell, P., & Lindberg, C. (2009). Spanning silos and spurring conversations: positive deviance for reducing infection levels in hospitals. *Performance*, 2(3), 78-83.
- Singhal, A., Sternin, J., & Dura, L. (2009). Combating malnutrition in the land of a thousand rice fields: Positive Deviance grows roots in Vietnam. *Positive Deviance Wisdom Series, number 1*, pp. 1-8. Boston, MA: Tufts University, Positive Deviance Initiative.
- Thuesen, L. (2010). Wicked challenges. *Oxford Leadership Journal*, 1(4), 1-6.
- Zeitlin, M., Ghassemi, H., & Mansour, M. (1990). *Positive deviance in child nutrition*. New York: UN University Press.



DONORS

NCA thanks Pearson Higher Education for their continued support of the Arnold Lecture. NCA also thanks the many friends, colleagues, and students of Dr. Arnold who honored his scholarly contributions with personal donations to the Carroll C. Arnold Distinguished Lecture fund.

Janis Andersen	Noreen M. Carrocci	Keith Erickson
Peter Andersen	Ingeborg G. Chaly	Walter Fisher
Kenneth Andersen	Kristin F. Chaudoin	Paul Friedman
Ronald Applbaum	Sister Joan Chittister	Gustav Friedrich
Susan Applbaum	Timothy Y. Choy	Linda Fuller
Carroll C. Arnold	Kenneth Cissna	D. C. Gila
Deborah Atwater	Herman Cohen	Susan Gilpin
Robert Avery	Celeste Condit	James Golden
Wallace Bacon	Martha Cooper	Dennis S. Gouran
Harold Barrett	E. Sam Cox	Richard Gregg
Charles L. Bartow	Ralph B. Culp	Leland Griffin
Samuel Becker	John Daly	Bruce Gronbeck
Thomas W. Benson	Arlie Daniel	Roderick P. Hart
Roy Berko	Suzanne M. Daughton	Kenneth Harwood
Goodwin Berquist	Arthur F. Dauria	Gerard Hauser
Erwin Bettinghaus	Robert Doolittle	Nola Heidelbaugh
Jane Blankenship	Nancy Dunbar	Kathryn Hening
Don Boileau	Robert Dunham	Thomas Hopkins
John Waite Bowers	Margaret Eadie	Robert Hopper
Irving Brown	William Eadie	Michael Hyde
Robert Brubaker	Flo Beth Ehninger	Fredric Jablin
Joseph Bulsys	Lois Einhorn	Carol Jablonski
Karlyn Kohrs Campbell	Donald Ellis	Anita C. James

Kathleen Hall Jamieson
J. Vernon Jensen
Bonnie Johnson
Christopher Johnstone
Henry Johnstone
Lynne Kelly
Corwin P. King
Dennis R. Klinzing
Mark Knapp
Roberta L. Kosberg
Kathleen Koughl
Manuel I. Kuhr
Robert Kully
Reiko Kuramoto
James M. Lahiff
Dale Leathers
Beverly Whitaker Long
Stephen Lucas
Jeanne Lutz
Cheryl Malone
A. Jackson McCormack
James McCroskey
Sherrie L. McNeeley
Martin Medhurst
Paul Messaris
N. Edd Miller
Ray Nadeau

Mary Newman
Thomas Nilsen
Victoria O'Donnell
Thomas Olbricht
Thomas J. Pace
Arlie Parks
Stanley Paulson
Douglas Pedersen
Sue D. Pendell
Mary Pettas
Gerald Phillips
Darrell T. Piersol
Linda Putnam
Sharon Ratliffe
Loren Reid
Beatrice Reynolds
Richard D. Rieke
Stanley Rives
Lawrence Rosenfeld
Alan Rubin
Rebecca Rubin
Akira Sanbonmatsu
Joan Sanbonmatsu
Father Leo Sands
Thomas Scheidel
Patricia Schmidt
Robert L. Scott

David Seibold
Barbara Sharf
Daniel Shurman
Malcolm Sillars
Herbert Simons
Craig R. Smith
Jo Sprague
Hermann Stelzner
Nathan P. Stucky
Jerry Tarver
Anita Taylor
Robert Tiemens
Kathleen J. Turner
Richard Vatz
Paul A. Walwick
Steven A. Ward
Lynne Webb
Robert Welch
Molly Wertheimer
Eugene White
Harold E. Wisner
James A. Wood
Julia Wood
Margaret Wood
David Zarefsky

