

Lessons Learned Struggling to Identify Positive Deviants in a Rural Southern Community

Caroline E. Wilson
J. Dean Farmer



<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8099-4700>

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1172-1335>

This study explores the potential for application of the Positive Deviance Approach for social change in the rural United States. Through the lens of the Campus Kitchen at Ballard University (CKBU), the authors examine the issues of food insecurity and unobtrusive control structures present in rural communities and posit innovative ways to address these and other intractable social issues common in many rural communities in the United States. Using ethnographic methods, the authors probe the structure of the Campus Kitchens Project's national organization and Ballard University's student leadership team to uncover hindrances that constrain sustainable social change that often are engrained in conventional charity models of development.

Keywords: social change, positive deviance approach, asset-based, structuration theory, food insecurity, unobtrusive control, rural communities

Introduction

In recent years, communication research has come to include numerous traditions of development-related action and applied studies. For example, the Positive Deviance Approach has illuminated assets-based solutions to many intractable problems around the globe, including malnutrition in Vietnam (Singhal, Sternin, et al., 2009), pre- and post-natal care for infants and mothers in Pakistan (Shafique et al., 2010), school persistence in rural Argentina (Durá & Singhal, 2009), and child protection in Uganda (Singhal & Durá, 2009). With the exception of these explicating teen pregnancy avoidance (Diaz, 2010) and diabetes management (Boyd, 2015) in health communication, research in this area largely has focused on the above identified global south problems and urban/professional organizational populations in the United States (Lindberg et al., 2009; Singhal, Buscell, et al., 2009) and other industrialized countries (e.g., Thuesen & Schmidt-Hansen, 2011). These projects illustrate significant advances in how we address and solve problems communicatively, thereby using communication for survival, but much of the research has paid scant attention to similar intractable problems in the rural United States. These communities' intractable problems with poverty and food insecurity—essentially, the communities as wholes—often are muted (Kramarae, 2005). Deficit-based assistance and development programs routinely accomplish this muting through structures designed by outside “experts” to ameliorate community problems, yet these programs threaten the survival of rural communities because of the questionable sustainability of outside funding (Durá, 2015). The Positive Deviance Approach offers an attractive, applied organizing framework to address problems in rural areas of the United States in the same manner as researchers successfully have applied its tenets around the world.

The purpose of this ethnographic case study is to illuminate the struggles encountered while striving to employ tenets of the Positive Deviance Approach in a rural environment in the southeastern United States. We will describe our participant observation fieldwork and explicate themes of how existing cultural structures as well as program-created structures hamper asset-based, communication-focused community development and can deepen food insecurity. After a demographic portrait of Tenrah¹ County and an overview of the Campus Kitchens Project, we will offer insight into the dynamic between

¹ This reference and all subsequent references to localities, persons, and non-commercial organizations other than the national Campus Kitchens Project (CKP) are pseudonyms to protect anonymity of all participants.

Caroline E. Wilson (M.A., Ohio University, 2022) is a doctoral student in the School of Communication Studies at Ohio University. Address correspondence to the first author at cw763719@ohio.edu.

J. Dean Farmer (Ph.D., Ohio University, 1999) is Chair and Associate Professor in the Department of Communication Studies at Campbell University.

Positive Deviance and Giddens' (1979) Structuration Theory and proffer suggestions based on our lessons learned in pursuing asset-based community development in a rural area of the United States.

Literature Review

Tenrah County, North Carolina

The US Department of Agriculture defines a food desert as an area without adequate access to fresh, affordable food, where residents often are forced to rely on fast food restaurants and convenience stores for everyday needs (Wright, 2021). Tenrah County, located just outside the Research Triangle of North Carolina, is a textbook example of a food desert. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community 5-Year Estimates (2016a, see also 2016b, 2016c), 16.2% of Tenrah County residents are classified as food insecure, and 56.8% of households with children 18 years old or younger participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Even in Bunco, the seat of Tenrah County, there are only three grocery stores: two Food Lion stores and an IGA affiliate.

This crisis can be seen even more clearly in the Tenrah County public school system. In North Carolina, 50.3% of students are eligible for the federally funded free or reduced lunch program—slightly higher than the national average of 48.1% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016a). The average percentage of students eligible for the program among Tenrah County schools is 65%, and, at the beginning of the 2017-2018 academic year, Tenrah County released a list of seven schools slated to participate in the Federally funded Community Eligibility Provision (CEP). According to the Tenrah County Schools website, CEP is geared toward schools in the nation's most impoverished areas and allows every student enrolled at the school to receive free lunch without a household application. Consideration for this program is based on the percentage of students whose families participate in various government programs, such as SNAP. One of these schools, Waxville Elementary School, located in the far western corner of Tenrah County near Morgan, reports that over 75% of its students were eligible for the program before the school enrolled in CEP (Common Core of Data, n.d.). Though Morgan may seem like an extreme outlier in Tenrah County, its plight represents important underlying issues in Tenrah County's economy.

Campus Kitchens Project (CKP) Background

The Campus Kitchens Project, founded by entrepreneur Robert Egger in 2001, works to reduce food waste and fight food insecurity through a national network of food reclamation organizations on college campuses. The Campus Kitchens Project is headquartered in Washington, D.C., where the D.C. Central Kitchen delivers daily meals to the surrounding community. As far as daily operations go, the student leaders in Campus Kitchens across the country are encouraged to reclaim food from their campus's cafeterias and other local grocery stores and restaurants, secure locations to store and prepare meals, recruit student volunteers to cook the food, and deliver meals to those in need in their community. On a deeper level, the Campus Kitchens Project seeks to uncover innovative solutions to community problems using preexisting resources in a community. The Campus Kitchens Project fulfills this mission by striving to use only food reclaimed from within the community and engage community members in uncovering innovative ways to use available resources to make healthier food choices. In spring 2016, Ballard University in Listre, North Carolina won a national launch grant to become the 53rd branch of the Campus Kitchens Project. Situated in rural Tenrah County, the Campus Kitchen at Ballard University (CKBU) is in a prime location to make an impact in the fight against food insecurity in the area. However, despite having served hundreds of meals throughout its relatively short existence, CKBU has struggled to make any sustainable change.

Structuration Theory

Anthony Giddens' (1979) Structuration Theory explores the question of whether individuals shape the reality around them or if the social structures in place shape an individual's reality. Giddens argued that although the structures around individuals affect their actions, individuals ultimately are the agents who produce those social structures. Applying this concept to social change, Giddens posited that every "social actor"—from the systemically silenced to the imperious politician—has an instrumental role in the society in which they live (p. 72). Thus, every person in a society has the potential to effect social change. Hence, Giddens' theory aligns with asset-based community development approaches (see Kretzmann & McKnight, 1996)—the foundation of the Campus Kitchens Project—in suggesting that community members from every level must spearhead social change in order for the change to be sustainable.

Further, Giddens explored how structures have the potential to simultaneously enable and constrain social change. Because any organization requires some sort of order in order to operate, structure is necessary for a society to function. However, the very purpose of structure is to limit the actions of individual agents in some way to maintain order. Thus, nearly every structure—whether physical or social, explicit or implicit—holds the power to enable and constrain change.

Food Insecurity and Structuration

Sadler et al. (2016) stated that government policies regarding food insecurity too often are based on misconceptions about accessibility. The assumption that more grocery stores, more food stamps, and more school lunch programs will cure hunger in food insecure areas runs rampant in many local governments. Sadler and colleagues posited, however, that these policies and programs actually produce and reproduce problem-causing structures they seek to address. Programs based on these misconceptions foster learned helplessness, which Hansen and Thomsen (2013) identified as "a debilitating cognitive state in which individuals may possess the requisite skills and abilities to perform reasonably, but exhibit suboptimal performance because they attribute prior successes to external causes" (p. 1010). In other words, as structures force people to become more dependent on government aid, choices regarding access to food become based less on individual abilities and more reliant on surrounding societal structures. Further, private social change organizations can foster the same dichotomy of enabling and constraining, both within the organization and in the community they seek to serve. As Kramer et al. (2017) pointed out, even organizations that encourage all members to participate fully and have a voice in every aspect of the organization may find that "full participation and task efficiency are incompatible goals" (p. 430). Thus, the balance between structure and inclusive communication remains an enigma in many organizations.

Positive Deviance

The Campus Kitchens Project purports to engage in asset-based community development (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1996). One avenue for pursuing asset-based community development is the Positive Deviance Approach, suggested by Zeitlin et al. (1990) and first demonstrated in practice by Sternin and colleagues (Sternin & Choo, 2000; Marsh et al., 2004; Sternin, 2005). Further, Singhal and colleagues recognized the inherent communicative properties of the Positive Deviance Approach as they introduced it to the field of Communication (Durá & Singhal, 2009; Singhal, Sternin, et al., 2009; Singhal, 2015). Durá (2015, p. 67) posited the "6 D's" of the Positive Deviance Approach:

- 1) **Define** the problem – codefined with the community
- 2) **Determine** the Existence of Statistical Outliers – who is at the highest risk (based on measurable data) yet succeeding beyond or in spite of the odds?
- 3) **Discover** uncommon but replicable behaviors and practices – who are the unusual suspects?
- 4) **Design** a program/intervention – amplify and operationalize PD behaviors for adoption
- 5) **Discern** the degree of progress – Implement ongoing monitoring and evaluation

- 6) **Disseminate** – amplify the behavior and tacit knowledge (see Konovalenko-Sletli & Singhal, 2017) to the larger community and other communities

In essence, the Positive Deviance Approach turns the Diffusion of Innovations model (Rogers, 2003, 2004) on its head (Singhal, 2015). Rather than focusing on early adopters as traditional diffusion research and practice dictate, the Positive Deviance Approach analyzes the behavior of those individuals most likely to be classified as laggards by the Diffusion of Innovations model (individuals with little or no social or economic capital) to determine whether they have, without any additional assets, solved a seemingly intractable problem in their community.

Being asset-based, the Positive Deviance Approach necessarily uses existing structures in a community. As Giddens (1995, p. 28) maintains, knowledgeability of community members always is bounded—no one has the complete answer to every problem in every situation. The structures of the community prevent complete knowledge. Positive Deviance projects have explained further that outside ‘experts’ also lack the ability to provide complete solutions to problems, because such experts often have less knowledge of enabling and constraining structures than the local community does, and that ‘expert’ solutions are deficiency-based rather than asset-based—looking to provide what the community lacks, rather than working with existing structures to uncover solutions. Failure of ‘expert’ solutions is deficiency-based in that they lack recognition of a community’s enabling structures, focusing only on constraining structures. This lack of recognition illustrates Giddens’ (1993) contention that intent is only one communicative element; “every interaction also has a moral and power relation” (p. 125). The Positive Deviance Approach makes a concerted effort to uncover enabling structures, frequently within the power of local communities, which often “stare us in the face, but remain invisible in plain sight” (Singhal, 2013, p. 28). Such enabling structures are not uniform across communities and organizations but must be disembedded—“transformed and recreated” (Witmer, 1997, p. 324) from outside expert to local practice. As Singhal (2015) maintains, this disembedding is inherently a communicative practice.

Considering its demographics, Morgan certainly qualifies as a community that could employ the Positive Deviance Approach to convert and adapt structures first practiced in the National Kitchen to confront food insecurity. However, while the Positive Deviance Approach has proven successful in worldwide interventions, its implementation as an intervention through CKBU has proven challenging in Morgan. Integrating Structuration Theory with the Positive Deviance Approach leads us to the following questions:

- RQ1:** What themes emerge that identify hindrances to uncovering positive deviance behaviors?
RQ2: Within these themes, how have traditional organizing structures sustained privileged status in the masking of possible positive deviance behavior?
RQ3: Does the CKBU leadership team’s interpretation of Campus Kitchens Project policies reinforce these traditional organizing structures?

Methods

Both authors became involved with CKBU in spring 2017 and engaged in various forms of qualitative research with the organization through spring 2019. We observed advisory board meetings, leadership team meetings, and biweekly meals and conducted unstructured interviews with volunteers, board members, community members, and school personnel in an attempt to develop a deeper understanding of the case (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 1978, 1994). Between 2017 and 2019, the lead author attended 65 leadership team meetings, 40 biweekly meals, and four advisory board meetings. The second author attended 40 biweekly meals and six advisory board meetings. Meal days comprised three shifts, the first beginning at 11:00 a.m. and the last ending around 9:00 p.m. The lead author was present at each shift and was joined by the second author during the three-hour serving shift. Leadership team meetings and advisory board meetings lasted one hour. Combined, we conducted approximately 595 hours of participant observation.

During our three years of participant observation, both authors engaged in informal, unstructured interviews with people associated with CKBU. In an attempt to preserve the conversational nature of these interviews and to avoid limiting participation, the interviews were not audio recorded. Instead, the authors took extensive reflective fieldnotes immediately after each CKBU event, recounting conversations in as much detail as possible (Papa et al., 2005). This approach allowed us to focus on the natural emergent communication patterns within CKBU's operations rather than trying to fit those communication patterns into a specific analytic lens (Papa et al., 2005). After conversations with 17 student leadership team members, eight advisory board members, and over 200 CKBU meal attendees across the three years of our research, we produced a combined total of 120 single-spaced pages of handwritten reflective fieldnotes. We analyzed these data/capta through inductive thematic analysis, uncovering patterns, themes, and categories (Patton, 1990). In this process, we used the principles of interpretive interactionism (Denzin, 1989) to interpret the case.

Interpretive Interactionism

Interpretive interactionism is an ethnographic form of research that investigates and interprets individual or group situations involving epiphanies or crises in the lives of those concerned through a six-stage process (Denzin, 1989). Following Denzin, first we framed research questions, looking outward from ourselves to generate them. We found the deep structures of our questions about food insecurity and southern culture were rooted in a desire to understand better the residents of an underserved rural area. We made a preliminary investigation of the culture to ascertain problems that affect multiple lives, organizations, or social groups. *The lead author's* preliminary investigations of the region found 16.2% of Tenrah County residents classified as food insecure and 56.8% of households with children 18 years old or younger participated in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016a). In querying how these experiences and associations occur and try to formulate a singular statement or research question that arrives at the heart of the experience, we ask the singular statement recommended by Denzin (1989) as RQ1: What themes emerge that identify hindrances to uncovering positive deviance behaviors? Interpretive interactionism's singular statement mirrors the determining question of positive deviance (Durá, 2015; Singhal, 2018; Singhal & Svenkerud, 2018, 2019), which seeks to identify who is at the highest risk, based on measurable data, yet succeeds in spite of overwhelming odds.

As Denzin (1989) directs, as a second step, we deconstructed of existing literature germane to the problem. Throughout this discussion of methodology, we attempt to locate ourselves in terms of the culture, to make apparent our interpretive positionality as communication academics.

Third, interpretive interactionism calls for researchers to capture data and/or experience(s) relevant to the epiphany or crisis (Denzin, 1989). The most common forms of interpretive texts that relate to epiphanies are self-stories (narratives) of cultural members (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The lead author engaged many cultural members in unstructured interviews during CKBU meals. The unstructured nature of these interactions was necessitated by time constraints and in an effort to keep our presence as unobtrusive as possible, developing rapport and trust with community members (Glesne, 2016; Papa et al., 2005). Further, we sought to challenge the archetypal "negative academic" who enters a community to gather data and disseminate knowledge (Chambers, 2014), opting instead to create space for natural conversations over shared meals.

The fourth step in interpretive interactionism is the bracketing process in which preconceptions of the researcher and of previous literature are set aside (Denzin, 1989; Polkinghorne, 1983; Van Manen, 1990). We endeavored to interpret the phenomenon (culture) in terms of itself, using the vernacular of key informants when possible (Denzin, 1989). As Ono and Sloop (1995) noted, vernacular language can provide communication researchers with much information and insight about the everyday lived experience and culture of participants.

The fifth step, construction, builds on the bracketing process (Denzin, 1989). Construction reassembles bracketed elements back into the whole in tandem with the information gathered during the

capture process. The goal of the construction process “is to recreate the lived experience of cultural members in terms of its constituent and analytic elements” (Denzin, 1989, p. 59).

Sixth is contextualization, where personal experiences are obtained and presented to embody essential features of the phenomenon as constituted in the bracketing and construction phases (Denzin, 1989). Contrasts and contradictions are not ignored as outliers but are woven into the fabric of the interpretation. The main themes that emerge are compared and synthesized. Denzin (1989) maintained that the key to contextualization is how lived experience alters and shapes the process under study.

Field Research

Beginning in 2017, CKBU hosted meals every other Thursday at Sinking Sands Presbyterian Church in Morgan, North Carolina. The meals attracted an average of 20 guests, all of whom were middle-class church members who wanted to support Ballard University’s charitable efforts, save for one cluster of community members who frequented the church’s food pantry. Meal preparation and delivery later moved to nearby Waxville Elementary, a result of the national Campus Kitchen Project’s requirements for a facility with a commercial kitchen, which Sinking Sands Presbyterian did not have. With this move—less than five miles away from Sinking Sands—meal guest demographics underwent significant change (Waxville Elementary students, guardians, and staff became a majority of the guests), a phenomenon of which we will discuss ramifications.

After gaining access to CKBU’s student leadership team in August 2017, the lead author watched the organization grow and migrate further into the heart of western Tenrah County. In observing the leadership team, she gained further insight into the day-to-day tasks of CKBU and learned more about the founding of the organization, which we discuss further in the next section. Her field research centered on conversations with guests over dinner at the biweekly meals that aimed not to follow a structured interview guide or administer a survey, but to gain some insight into a day in the life of a Tenrah County citizen. She also conducted internal field research, asking volunteers and leadership team members about their motivation for serving, their interpretation of CKBU’s mission, and how their experience with CKBU measured up to their expectations. The second author attended meals and advisory board meetings as participant observer, noting the interactions between cooking and serving staffs and meal guests.

Prior to moving operations to Waxville Elementary, the process was the same at every meal: Within half an hour of the Serving Team’s arrival at Sinking Sands Presbyterian, seven round tables were scattered around the room, the food was placed in the metal warmers outside the kitchen, and the meal was ready to be served. Guests quietly made their way to the serving line, holding out their plates to college students armed with hairnets, ladles, and Campus Kitchens Project aprons. Once the last guest sat down to eat, the volunteers were invited to fill up a plate and eat with the guests. That invitation rarely was accepted, as volunteers stood motionless behind the makeshift serving bar, seemingly confounded at the thought of crossing over to the other side. The second author’s field notes record a small, rotating group of the students who quickly self-appointed themselves as health monitors, focusing on their desire to “cure hunger in Tenrah county”—at least by religiously monitoring the temperatures of food on the serving bar for one meal every two weeks. While we shared their desire to avoid ptomaine poisoning, these activities amounted to a technical appointment, serving to maintain distance and “offering up rituals that protect the status quo” (Gunderson, 2018, p. 149) between volunteers and guests. Such was the technical proficiency that the second author nicknamed one of the chief protagonists in this saga ‘Captain Thermometer,’ who could be observed, “Walking with purpose, temperature probe in hand, looking for temperatures to measure and record in the seemingly ever-present notebook” (Second author field notes, September 25, 2017). By focusing on the technical, these volunteers vanquished the pressures for communion and barred any hope for community.

As the lead author’s peers graciously held down the fort in case anyone came back for seconds, she grabbed a plate and crossed the fifteen-foot chasm to the non-church-member table. There, in conversations over chicken soup or spaghetti or tuna casserole, research began. She learned about all the times *Zepplin*, a well-known drifter in the town, had wandered over to *Melanie*’s house and laid on her

kitchen floor to await an ambulance after a drug overdose. She heard *Christina* and *Robbie* talk about their plans to work in a nail salon and a body shop after high school. She watched *Zena* put half of her casserole and pear cobbler in a to-go box to share with her five brothers when she and her parents returned home to their empty cupboards. Although the lead author was welcomed to sit at the table each time, she rarely was invited into the conversation, and rarely did she have anything relevant to contribute.

One of the lead author's most notable meals at Sinking Sands Presbyterian was shared with *Barry*, a World War II veteran struggling to support his wife and granddaughter. *Barry* and the lead author were first in line to get their chicken soup, and as the other guests made their way to the line, one of the well-dressed church members stopped by their table and said, "Welcome to the meal." *Barry* nodded and thanked her in between bites of soup and the lead author replied, "Thank you, I'm glad to be here." As she noted in her field reflections:

It was then that I realized that none of the guests had been there to see me help set up tables, I wasn't wearing anything that identified me as a CKBU volunteer or a Ballard student, and I was really enjoying that chicken soup—as a guest. Much to my dismay, my immediate reaction was to let her know—somehow—that I was on the Serving Team. Thankfully, I held my tongue long enough to evaluate why I wanted to tell her that and quickly came to the realization that it was because I felt less important. Ashamed as I was at my arrogance, that moment uncovered the foundation for my research: what are the structures in place at CKBU that have built an ingrained hierarchy in which one group is expected to feel inferior to the other? (Lead author field notes, September 11, 2017).

As the meals transitioned from Sinking Sands to Waxville Elementary, the second author noted the change in the atmosphere:

Antiseptic cafeterias don't build a lot of community even with a 100 health rating. . . . Except for [the lead author], no one engages guests beyond the serving line. Volunteers who eat segregate themselves, staff members of Waxville segregate themselves by rank (teachers do not interact with custodial or cafeteria staff) . . . and guests segregate themselves racially (Latina/o, African-American, Caucasian, and multiracial) and do not engage each other, sitting at different cafeteria tables (Second author field notes, January 23, 2018).

Remarkably, the second author later discovered Ballard administration's negotiations with Waxville school leadership limited attendance to school staff and students and their families.

Results

Emergent Themes

Through nearly three years of participant observation research and document analysis, the following themes of hindrances to Positive Deviant identification and amplification emerged in response to RQ1:

Theme 1: Strict Regulations from Traditional Structures (Ballard University, CKP, Waxville Elementary)

This theme affirmed the privileging of traditional structures question posited in RQ2. Just like any functional organization, CKBU has very clear structural layers, which, up to this point, have aided CKBU in establishing a presence in western Tenrah County. As the organization has evolved and grown, however, the structures have stayed the same. After changing its cooking and serving locations a few times as the founding leadership team members got their bearings, the Campus Kitchen at Ballard University secured a biweekly presence in the cafeteria of Waxville Elementary School near Morgan,

North Carolina. Every other Monday, CKBU invited the community in and around Morgan to share a meal in the cafeteria. In the final year of our research with the organization, CKBU built a limited yet strong volunteer base, reconstructed its leadership team, and served anywhere between 50 and 250 meals every other week. Why, then, has the Campus Kitchen at Ballard University—about to enter its fifth year of existence—struggled to make any headway in cultivating meaningful, lasting community? The organization did everything by the book—and that was part of the problem.

Whether concrete regulations or not, the perceptions of limiting structures was pervasive in the CKBU environment. The training manual given to each new branch of the Campus Kitchens Project contains information on food safety, cleaning procedures, volunteer recruitment tactics, and meal delivery etiquette. The section on how Campus Kitchen meals should look privileges kitchens in urban areas where it makes sense to deliver individual meals to individual clients. A significant disconnect arises when a Campus Kitchen is started in a rural area like Tenrah County, where “next door neighbors” often live miles away from each other. Because the Campus Kitchens Project is modeled after the D.C. Central Kitchen, there are no precedents or guidelines in the manual for how a weekly community meal might look. While the national organization does produce this manual for performing a Kitchen, local CKBU structures added more to constraining structures than did the Campus Kitchens Project. One of the lead author’s reflective field notes describe the situation well:

In my first year of involvement with CKBU, the classic excuse to avoid any nearly innovative community building suggestion was something along the lines of, “we have to do things by the book.” One can imagine my surprise when I finally opened “the book” and found nothing regarding the type of coherent community atmosphere I hoped to help create at CKBU (Lead author field notes, April 23, 2018).

As Foucault (1979) maintained, disciplinary power is at its most powerful when it is internalized, as members of the initial leadership of the CKBU “assume[d] responsibility for the constraints of power . . . inscrib[ing] in him[her]self the power relation in which [s/]he simultaneously plays both roles; [s/]he becomes the principle of his[her] own subjection” (pp. 202–203). A majority of the three founding presidents of CKBU interpreted the manual as a recipe to “cure hunger in Tenrah County,” although this goal never is stipulated in Campus Kitchens Project documents, two of the three presidents assumed the directive was there and created their own docile bodies. Their mission to “cure hunger” by serving one meal every two weeks constructed an atmosphere that precluded community formation and instead “subjected, used, transformed, and improved” CKBU (Foucault, 1979, p. 136). The third founder, jaded by this limited vision, gradually withdrew from CKBU activities. University oversight was complicit in the self-subjugation practiced by the remaining two presidents, aiming to maintain the kitchen as a student-led organization while not disturbing existing traditional power structures among community organizational partners like Sinking Sands Presbyterian or the Tenrah County school system.

Theme 2: Misinterpretation/Conflicting Definitions of CKBU’s Mission

Theme 2 addressed RQ3’s inquiry concerning the CKBU student leadership team’s reinforcement of traditional structures. The founding presidents’ incongruity about curing hunger led to the second emergent theme: The overwhelming focus on hunger diminished the Campus Kitchens Project’s mission to address social issues holistically. The Campus Kitchens Project sums up its mission in three phrases: strengthen bodies, empower minds, and build community. The organization is rooted in asset-based community development, a strategy that champions long-term relationship over short-term charity to foster community-driven social change (van de Venter & Redwood, 2016). As Campus Kitchens’ Expansion and Partnerships Manager Matt Schnarr affirmed founder Robert Egger’s mantra at CKBU’s kick-off breakfast in November 2016, “you’re not going to cure hunger at the end of a spoon” (Schnarr, 2016, personal communication). At the D.C. Central Kitchen, the organization from which the Campus Kitchens Project diverges, most of the employees are educationally disadvantaged adults who have graduated from the D.C. Central Kitchen’s culinary school. The Central Kitchen empowers minds and

builds community by placing meal preparation in the hands of their culinary school graduates and by delivering those meals to a list of clients in the area. At CKBU, the meal preparation teams were largely university students isolated from the Sinking Sands or Waxville communities, a distinction further explored in explication of theme three.

Differing views of food insecurity between the Central Kitchen and the rural areas where CKBU operates also illuminate misinterpretation and conflicting views of mission. For example, the D.C. Central Kitchen capitalized on the urban farming trend in recent years by teaching clients how to grow their own food in downtown apartments and suburban neighborhoods and by reclaiming food from local urban farmers. While this tactic may thrive in Washington, D.C., Tenrah County was a different story. In rural areas, farming is rarely a hobby; it is a primary source of income. Even in reaching out to farmers concerning food donations and gleaning opportunities, the CKBU leadership team has found that the few farmers with excess crops have already promised their surplus to other organizations.

Community bears a different definition in rural communities as well. The D.C. Central Kitchen's meal delivery strategy seems to have been effective in fostering community partnerships and engaging community members to recognize and solve problems in their area. However, as one of the few rural branches of the Campus Kitchens Project, one community building facet of CKBU's mission should be to bring people together physically in order to provide a space for conversations between community members. Because CKBU was a recent addition as a relatively new member of such a disjointed community, its leadership team members could not expect residents of western Tenrah County to seek out the organization of their own volition. Rather, CKBU should uncover preexisting social structures in the community in order to build on them and ultimately provide a central location for dialogue where there currently is not one. This uncovering hopefully could lead to understanding the determining question (Singhal, 2018) of social change in Morgan and western Tenrah County. As the Positive Deviance Approach mandates, change must originate from within the community at the hands of community members who are succeeding despite seemingly insurmountable odds. Although we are optimistic CKBU will be the place for these conversations to occur, in current praxis, community dialogue continues to be an evanescent desire.

Theme 3: Transience of CKBU Volunteers, or "I'm just here because..."

On an early day of CKBU's existence, when meal performances were at Sinking Sands Presbyterian Church, there were too many cooks in the kitchen—and many with no desire to be there. The second author recounts a group of fraternity brothers who volunteered for that day's cooking shift in a reflective field note:

This early meal is one of tuna mac and cheese with a side of canned green beans from the Fishes and Loaves Food Pantry, and reclaimed bread from a regional bakery. The fraternity brothers are in charge of warming the bread, a task that they immediately attempt, two hours before announced serving time. They repeatedly try to appropriate the oven over the following half hour, at which point they announce that they must leave (at 4:30 p.m.), as they must eat before their evening class begins at 7:00 p.m. Ballard University has no classes that begin at 7:00, but there was a college basketball game that evening of regional and national interest (Second author, field notes, November 20, 2017).

The serving line that night sets precedence for the next three years: University students adorned in hairnets lined up behind a serving table, silently ladling a soup kitchen meal to silent patrons with little if any meaningful connection. One could theorize, following McCroskey (1976), that "communication apprehension would most certainly have a major impact on nonverbal communication behavior" (p. 44). It also follows that the silence could be interpreted as evidence of expectancy violations (Burgoon & Aho, 1982; Burgoon & Hale, 1988; Burgoon et al., 1979). Persistent and intentional fieldwork, however, pointed to transience and the perceived lack of anticipation of future interaction (Kellermann, 1986) that influenced both sides of the table. For the University students, CKBU was a quick chance to accumulate

service hours required by campus and fraternal organizations. For the guests, it remained a free meal from a faceless other. The locations mandated for serving contribute to this continued lack of community building opportunity.

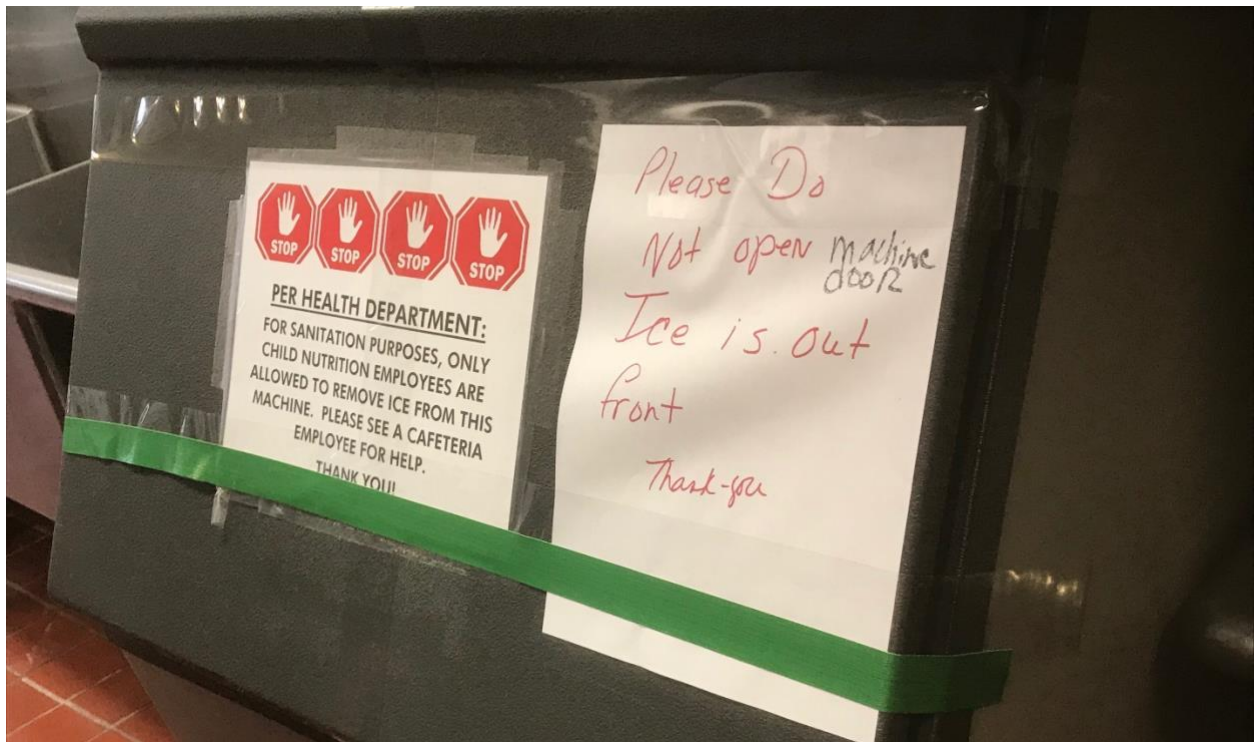
Theme 4: Physical Structure of Serving Location

The unfortunate divide exemplified in the serving line grew worse in the three seasons of CKBU during which we conducted field research. The physical structures of the serving location graduated from a church kitchen to an antiseptic elementary school cafeteria. Guests lined up and were reduced to Dickensian *Oliver Twists*, docile bodies perfectly trained to be in their subservient place—partitioned to recreate societal order (Foucault, 1979, p. 143).

The physical structure of the Waxville Elementary cafeteria was protected by the cafeteria manager, consistently surveilling her cafeteria with hierarchical observation, enacting the first prong of Foucault’s (1979) disciplinary apparatus. While Foucault’s third prong, examination, often is implicit (or “panoptically unobtrusive;” see Foucault, 1979, pp. 195-228), the micropenalties of normalizing judgement were visible in the cafeteria kitchen at Waxville. These micropenalties ranged from which activities were permitted in the dining area to what cafeteria equipment was available for use by CKBU. At the last meal for which the second author volunteered, new signs were affixed to the ice machine (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Waxville Elementary ice machine



Note. The cafeteria ice machine, located on the back wall of the kitchen, is taped shut with two separate notes prohibiting anyone not on Waxville Elementary’s cafeteria staff from opening it.

Neither the generic “Per Health Department” sign nor the handwritten instruction were enough. Tape was required. Although all CKBU shift captains were versed in Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points

(HACCP) guidelines (which address food management safety issues) per Campus Kitchens Project regulations, now ice was a restricted commodity.

The fixtures in the dining area of the cafeteria created an atmosphere not conducive to community. The long tables with hard, affixed stools precluded rearrangement for a more communal feel. The tables functioned as semi fixed-feature space (Hall, 1969; Jordon, 2001), adding one final nonverbal layer. The arrangement of the semi fixed features enabled the self-segregation of attendees, many of whom eat and leave without speaking a word to anyone.

In response to Research Question 2, our participant observation, informal interviews, and document review indicate that existing structures in the Tenrah County community limit the ability of asset-based, innovative solutions from diffusing in the region. For example, the limited guidelines from the National Kitchen Project that require a three-compartment sink in a commercial kitchen constrained the CKBU from fully integrating into the Western Tenrah county community. The only site that met these stipulations within a 15-mile radius was the cafeteria at Waxville Elementary. Despite the fact that the original site at Sinking Sands Presbyterian Church was engrained in the community and offered incredible potential for community partnerships (some of which we discuss in a later section), the National Kitchen prohibited continued meetings at Sinking Sands. The culinary-school-inspired urban structure of the National Kitchen did not translate readily into the rural setting of CKBU operations.

The National Kitchen structural limitations were miniscule obstacles that could have been surmounted easily if local structural constraints had not been present. Central actors in the performance of the CKBU were the county's two largest employers, the Tenrah County School System and Ballard University ([Tenrah]edc.org/top-employers.asp). In recent years, Ballard University leadership has made concerted efforts to work with rural and underserved populations (as evidenced in projects like CKBU), yet leadership remained complicit with other groups and organizations by failing to take a more activist stance. Ballard University is located in the rural South, and the residue of historical class and racial distinctions inherent in southern society remain. While these distinctions no longer are overt, they continue to operate forcefully, albeit invisibly (Foucault, 1979). This invisible power was evidenced by the limitations on who could attend the CKBU meals at Waxville Elementary. In agreeing with Ballard University's request to host the meals at Waxville, Tenrah County school administration stipulated that only Waxville children and their parents and Waxville school staff could attend the meals. Hence, attempts to communicate and interact with the larger community for engagement and social change were thwarted, and CKBU was relegated to a soup kitchen with extremely limited parameters. As Hall et al. (2014) maintain, such a traditional soup kitchen structure communicates clear division between volunteers and the people who are there for a meal.

In response to Research Question 3, CKBU student leadership reified these organizational structures as well. The three founding presidents of CKBU engaged in a struggle over direction in how to "end hunger in Tenrah County." Unfortunately, the limiting vision of two of the presidents prevailed. All three presidents came to the organization with differing backgrounds – differing majors, differing ethnicities, and differing religious traditions –but two of the presidents' visions united in a commitment to obey the letter of the law as dictated by National Kitchen guidelines. As the third president effectively was pushed out of the organization for dissenting from the "one-size-fits-all" model of the National Kitchen, lost was a vision of community and social change that could have made a difference in the area. The two presidents concurred with University and County stipulations in the move to Waxville to harmonize with the dictums of the National Kitchen. Their focus highlighted food preparation rather than community building and education, and communicated the reinforcement of existing social and political structures that continue separate different social groups in places like Tenrah County (An, et al., 2018; Atkins-Sayre, & Stokes, 2014) rather than encouraging self-produced local responses to overcome the structures (Turpin, 2017) concomitant with the Positive Deviance Approach.

Discussion and Implications

It is clear that the structures on which CKBU tried to build community had reached their enabling limit and had begun constraining any potential for growth over the course of this research. Granted, these structures helped CKBU progress in some ways: Organizations need structure to function, and the students on the leadership team made incredible strides in making CKBU a cultural beacon of social change (Durá et al., 2014) on Ballard's campus and in Tenrah County at large. The structure of a fully equipped elementary school kitchen facilitated safe and efficient meal preparation, and Waxville Elementary's preexisting familiarity in the community helped give CKBU some credibility. However, if CKBU does not transcend these structures, the organization will remain a conventional, charity-based soup kitchen.

It seemed that the root of these traditional structure issues was the two founding presidents' adherence to their limited ideas of the organization's main goal. One president saw potential for relationship-based community development, while the other two focused more on the potential 'saviorism' of the organization. Unfortunately, the idea that 'won' was that CKBU's paramount purpose was to single-handedly cure hunger in western Tenrah County. Kramer and colleagues (2017) posited that "commitment to certain structures bolsters certain members' positions of power while limiting other options" (p. 432), a phenomenon that is clearly exemplified in the case of CKBU. As the two likeminded presidents worked together to establish CKBU's soup kitchen identity, the organization established a rhythm of reclaiming, cooking, serving, and leaving, every two weeks—minimal shallow community engagement—and, once that rhythm became structure, any suggestion for change was constrained.

Thus, the structures that need to be redefined first to allow for any positive change in the organization are the intangible social structures: the idea that a group of twenty-something-year-olds can swoop in and eradicate hunger across Tenrah County; the extreme reluctance by both volunteers and guests to cross the serving bar; the nearly palpable tension that arises when someone finally does cross the serving bar; and, perhaps most importantly, CKBU's strict adherence to "the book." If these structural constraints are not addressed, no amount of physical structural change—a new serving location, a new leadership team, a new organization altogether—will make a difference.

By creating unique conversation spaces through their biweekly meals, the Campus Kitchen at Ballard University had the potential to employ second-order change as a way to join the western Tenrah County community. Papa and colleagues (2005) cited Pearce (1998) in explaining that second-order change centers on creating environments for communication that otherwise would not be possible within communities. By forging conduits for dialogue among community members, "we are not just moving new players into positions on the board, but rather we change the board itself" (Papa et al., 2005, p. 246). Though food insecurity remains a rampant issue in Morgan, the end goal of CKBU cannot be to cure hunger. It can—and should – be to amplify the knowledge, narratives, and resources of the citizens of Morgan and the surrounding towns. It should deconstruct the normative power structures inherent in nonprofit organizing to create space for new, sustainable, community-centered practices. It should erase the lines between "server" and "served" by decentering CKBU's organizational interests in favor of the interests of the community, as defined by community members.

CKBU has a long way to go to reach these goals, but the potential remains. As one of the few rural branches of the Campus Kitchens Project, CKBU has an opportunity to rewrite the narrative of rural nonprofit organizing in a way that invites contributions from those most directly affected by their operations in the community. However, over the course of this project, CKBU reified many of the traditional organizing practices that have long plagued nonprofit work (see Clair & Anderson, 2013). For example, the shift away from serving meals at Sinking Sands Presbyterian Church represented a shift toward valuing quantity over quality (i.e., serving more meals at the expense of losing a constructive community partnership). CKBU served an average of 20 meals at each event at Sinking Sands, while the commercial kitchen and built-in population of Waxville Elementary allowed them to serve between three and ten times as many meals on any given night. So, as our research has shown, those structures that

enable larger events simultaneously constrain meaningful interaction between community members at CKBU meals.

To recall points made by Sadler et al. (2016), the structuration of government programs often hinders sustainable social change. Morgan is barely contained in the western corner of Tenrah County, placing it nearly 20 miles from Bunco, the county seat. The town's small size, coupled with its distance from the epicenter of Tenrah County government, reduces the Morgan community members' voice in their local government to a faint whisper. It follows, then, that government programs created based on the needs of slightly more urbanized Bunco would overlook the specific needs of fringe communities like Morgan. Thus, CKBU must strive to avoid becoming a "one size fits all," overly structured charity that ends up discouraging community collaboration, lest they inadvertently exacerbate the very issues they seek to help solve.

Potential for Positive Deviance

Interestingly, CKBU had a viable pathway to the application of the Positive Deviance Approach in their original serving location at Sinking Sands Presbyterian Church in Morgan. *Houten Milhouse*, the pastor of Sinking Sands Presbyterian Church, founded Fishes and Loaves Food Pantry, which works to reduce food waste in the surrounding area by reclaiming food from local businesses and working with local farmers who want to donate their extra crops. The pantry, stocked with more fresh produce than canned goods, feeds nearly 5,000 people every month (*Houten Milhouse*, personal communication). In addition to the Fishes and Loaves Food Pantry, *Milhouse* founded the Fishes and Loaves Thrift Store and the Fishes and Loaves Grill—both offshoots of the pantry that seek to reach further into the community—and the Solid Start Child Care program for parents with low incomes. In short, *Milhouse* saw needs in his community, saw ways to attend to those needs from the inside, and made them happen.

Milhouse was a positive deviant in Morgan because he promoted long-term relationships over short-term charity and operated from the belief that any sustainable change in a community must ultimately be championed by those who will be most affected by it (Pascale et al., 2010, p. 3). He was a community member who discovered how to utilize resources by deviating from the norm to produce a more sustainable result (Pascale et al., 2010). *Milhouse's* innovations using food that would otherwise go to waste mirrors CKBU's food reclamation framework, but *Milhouse's* understanding of and respect for the unique issues and resources in the community set his efforts apart as an example of successful positive deviance in the western Tenrah County community.

Another benefit to the Positive Deviance Approach is that the positive deviants' "perceived similarity with others in the community [grant] them trust and legitimacy" (Konovalenko-Sletli & Singhal, 2017, p. 24). Similarly, Wuthnow (2013) defined a leader not by their social status, but by the depth with which they engage with and care for the community. Wuthnow further described specific leadership values that are common in rural areas—trustworthiness, genuine investment, and meaningful social interaction. From what we gathered during interviews and informal interactions with community members, it is clear that residents of Morgan valued these leadership qualities more than they valued the type of formal, sterilized leadership emanating from CKBU. Thus, we posit that *Milhouse's* identity as a member of the community was key to his effectiveness; he proved his investment in the people of the area, and his fellow community members knew that the things that affected western Tenrah County affected him too. The organizations he founded were not simply drops in an ocean of halfhearted charity endeavors; they remain beacons of social change, breeding grounds for important conversations, community-centered spaces for members to learn from each other.

The juxtaposition between *Milhouse's* community-conscious presence in Morgan and CKBU's policy-conscious presence in Morgan suggests several practical implications for social change organizing in rural communities. Consistent with positive deviance praxis (see Konovalenko-Sletli & Singhal, 2017; Singhal & Svenkerud, 2018, 2019), *Milhouse's* privileging of situated, place-based knowledge created a sustainable foundation for multifaceted social change in Morgan. Meanwhile, CKBU's privileging of corporate policy and hegemonic structures that precluded full participation by community members

severely constrained their contribution to the community. Further, *Milhouse's* attention to the intersections of social problems (e.g., food insecurity, unemployment, lack of affordable childcare, etc. as co-constitutive) highlighted the shortcomings of CKBU's single-focus mission to end hunger and reinforced the facets of positive deviance that define social problems through an intersectional lens (Cho et al., 2013; Marsh et al., 2004). The brief partnership between CKBU and *Milhouse's* organizations reveals the potential for these two types of organizations to share resources and work together toward a common goal. Strict attention to detail and policy is not inherently a negative practice in social change organizing, nor is full participation on all levels inherently a positive practice in social change organizing (Dempsey, 2009). There is space between those two extremes, and we argue that the Positive Deviance Approach capitalizes on that space to facilitate sustainable, culturally informed social change.

CKBU and *Milhouse's* organizations (specifically the Fishes and Loaves Food Pantry) also offer insights into food-based community organizing and social change specifically. Barthes (1961/2013) claimed food as a signifier, a practice of communication. Food in the southern and rural United States communicates identity and can serve as a facilitator for change (Atkins-Sayre & Stokes, 2014; Papa et al., 2005), demonstrating both duality of structure (Giddens, 1993) and possibilities for positive deviance. A more robust and long-term partnership between an organization like CKBU and a positive deviant like *Milhouse* would showcase the potential for unique spaces of conversation—like community meals—to generate meaningful communication networks that allow subcommunities (e.g., university students, elementary school faculty, and long-term community residents) to coexist and work toward change within their community at large.

Limitations and Future Research

Both authors have been involved with CKBU since close to its inception, so interpretations may be skewed due to relationships formed through their close affiliations with the organization. As a participant observer with the student leadership team, the lead author had responsibilities that involved interacting with the Campus Kitchens Project representative assigned to Ballard's Campus Kitchen. These responsibilities limited her ability to challenge some of the pivotal structures imposed on CKBU by the national organization. The fact that the second author was not a college student presented challenges in that he may not have fully related to the volunteers as a peer. Although his children attend Tenrah County schools (at an elementary school 30 miles away from Waxville), his position as an academic at Ballard University may have precluded his assimilation or acceptance in to the Waxville community as a fellow Tenrah County parent.

Also significant is the fact that the Campus Kitchen at Ballard University is one small organization in one small community in the southeastern United States. Though rural communities often face similar issues, the underlying structures at the root of those issues may differ. For example, Tenrah County's position in the "Bible Belt" likely influences cultural practices of "volunteering," "service," and "community." When practiced appropriately, Long (2018) maintains that the evangelical culture of the region would support practices of "liv[ing] in right relationship with each other . . . [with] a sense of the purpose . . . to be a people whose life together, [is] an essentially social life (p. 291); a life that certainly would include food (Papa et al., 2005; Wenzel, 2016). However, some question evangelical 'conversion' culture as a limiting factor to service and community (Carter, 2007; Harmon et al., 2021; Kraft, 2015). Future research should address these possibilities in other communities, both within the southeastern "Bible Belt" region of the United States and beyond.

One catalyst for this study was to illustrate that "best practices" (e.g., the Campus Kitchens Project handbook) must be dynamic enough to change and grow as a community changes and grows. Thus, the findings in this study of Tenrah County are not applicable to every rural community experiencing food insecurity in the United States; those communities must identify their own positive deviants.

References

- An, B., Levy, M., & Hero, R. (2018). It's not just welfare: Racial inequality and the local provision of public goods in the United States. *Urban Affairs Review*, 54(5), 833–865.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1078087417752476>
- Atkins-Sayre, W., & Stokes, A. Q. (2014). Crafting the Cornbread Nation: The Southern Foodways Alliance and Southern identity. *Southern Communication Journal*, 79(2), 77–93.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1041794X.2013.861010>
- Barthes, R. (1961/2013). Toward a psychosociology of contemporary food consumption. In C. Counihan & P. Van Esterik (Eds.), *Food and culture: A reader* (3rd ed., pp. 23–30). Routledge. (Original work published 1961)
- Boyd, C. M. (2015). *The sweet taste of health: A Positive Deviance inquiry into communicative acts that lead to effective management of diabetes among Hispanics*. Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Texas – El Paso.
- Burgoon, J. K., & Aho, L. (1982). Three field experiments on the effects of violations of conversational distance. *Communication Monographs*, 49, 71–88. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03637758209376073>
- Burgoon, J. K., & Hale, J. L. (1988). Nonverbal expectancy violations: Model elaboration and application to immediacy behaviors. *Communication Monographs*, 55, 58–79.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03637758809376158>
- Burgoon, J. K., Stacks, D. W., & Woodall, W. G. (1979). A communicative model of violations of distancing expectations. *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, 43, 153–167.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10570317909373963>
- Carter, S. (2007). Living inside the Bible (Belt). *College English*, 69(6), 572–595.
- Chambers, R. (2014). *Rural development: Putting the last first*. Routledge.
- Cho, S., Crenshaw, K. W., & McCall, L. (2013). Toward a field of intersectionality studies: Theory, applications, and praxis. *Signs*, 38(4), 785–810. <https://doi.org/10.1086/669608>
- City-Data. (n.d.). [Morgan], North Carolina. [http://www.city-data.com/city/\[Morgan\]-North-Carolina.html](http://www.city-data.com/city/[Morgan]-North-Carolina.html)
- Clair, R.P., & Anderson, L.B. (2013). Portrayals of the poor on the cusp of capitalism: Promotional materials in the case of Heifer International. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 27(4), 537–567. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2046147X19840072>
- Common Core of Data. (n.d.). *School and district navigator*. National Center for Education Statistics.
<https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolmap/>
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design* (4th Ed.). Sage.
- Dempsey, S.E. (2009). NGOs, communicative labor, and the work of grassroots representation. *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, 6(4), 328–345.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14791420903348625>
- Denzin, N. K. (1989). *Interpretive interactionism*. Sage.
- Diaz, A. (2010). *A Positive Deviance inquiry of communicative behaviors that influence the prevention of Hispanic teenage pregnancy*. Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Texas–El Paso.
- Durá, L. (2015). What's wrong here? What's right here? Introducing the positive deviance approach to community-based work. *Connexions: International Professional Communication Journal*, 4(1), 57–89. <https://doi.org/10.21310/cnx.4.1.16dur>
- Durá, L., Felt, L. J., & Singhal, A. (2014). What counts? For whom?: Cultural beacons and unexpected areas of programmatic impact. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 44, 98–109.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2014.01.001>
- Durá, L., & Singhal, A. (2009). *Will Ramon finish sixth grade? Positive Deviance for student retention in rural Argentina*. Positive Deviance Wisdom Series, Number 2. Tufts University, Positive Deviance Initiative.
- Foucault, M. (1979). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. Vintage.

- Giddens, A. (1995). *A contemporary critique of historical materialism* (2nd Ed.). Stanford University Press.
- Giddens, A. (1993). *New rules of sociological method* (2nd Ed.). Stanford University Press.
- Giddens, A. (1979). *Central problems in social theory: action, structure, and contradiction in social analysis*. University of California Press.
- Glesne, C. (2016). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction* (5th Ed.). Pearson.
- Gunderson, G. (2018). *Speak life: Crafting mercy in a hard-hearted time*. Stakeholder Health.
- Hall, C., Zhao, J., & Shafir, E. (2014). Self-affirmation among the poor: Cognitive and behavioral implications. *Psychological Science*, 25(2), 619–625. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797613510949>
- Hall, E. T. (1969). 1969. *The hidden dimension*. Anchor.
- Harmon, B. E., Schmidt, M., Escobar, F., San Diego, E. R. N., & Steele, A. (2021). Filling the gaps: The role of faith-based organizations in addressing the health needs of today's Latino communities. *Journal of Religion & Health*, 60(2), 1198–1213. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-020-01002-x>
- Hansen, T., & Thomsen, T. U. (2013). Learned helplessness and dietary choices: I know what I know, but I will probably fail anyway: How learned helplessness moderates the knowledge calibration-dietary choice quality relationship. *Psychology & Marketing*, 30(11), 1008–1028. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/mar.20663>
- Jordon, S. (2001). Embodied pedagogy: The body and teaching theology. *Teaching Theology & Religion*, 4(2), 98–101. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9647.00100>
- Kellermann, K. (1986). Anticipation of future interaction and information exchange in initial interaction. *Human Communication Research*, 13, 41–75. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2958.1986.tb00095.x>
- Konovalenko-Slettli, V., & Singhal, A. (2017). Identification and amplification of tacit knowledge: The Positive Deviance Approach as knowledge management praxis. *Electronic Journal of Knowledge Management*, 15(1), 17–27.
- Kraft, K. (2015). Faith and impartiality in humanitarian response: Lessons from Lebanese evangelical churches providing food aid. *International Review of the Red Cross*, 97(897/898), 395–421.
- Kramarae, C. (2005). Muted group theory and communication: Asking dangerous questions. *Women & Language*, 28(2), 55–61.
- Kramer, M. W., Hoelscher, C. S., Nguyen, C., Day, E. A., & Cooper, O. D. (2017). Structuration processes in an interagency collaboration: Enabling and constraining participation and efficiency. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 45, 429–444. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00909882.2017.1355558>
- Kretzmann, J., & McKnight, J. P. (1996). Assets-based community development. *National Civic Review*, 85(4), 23–29. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ncr.4100850405>
- Lindberg, C., Norstrand, P., Munger, M., DeMarsico, C., & Buscell, P. (2009). Letting go, gaining control: Positive Deviance and MRSA prevention. *Clinical Leader*, 2, 60–67.
- Long, D. S. (2018). Being good Pharisees: The joy of inauthentic community. *Christian Higher Education*, 17(5), 290–295. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15363759.2018.1500809>
- Marsh, D. R., Schroeder, D. G., Dearden, K. A., Sternin, J., & Sternin, M. (2004). The power of positive deviance. *BMJ: British Medical Journal (International Edition)*, 329(7475), 1177–1179. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.329.7475.1177>
- McCroskey, J. C. (1976). The effects of communication apprehension on nonverbal behavior. *Communication Quarterly*, 24(1), 39–44. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01463377609369208>
- Ono, K. A., & Sloop, J. M. (1995). The critique of vernacular discourse. *Communication Monographs*, 62, 19–46. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03637759509376346>
- Papa, W. H., Papa, M. J., Kandath, K. P., Worrell, T., & Muthuswamy, N. (2005). Dialectic of unity and fragmentation in feeding the homeless: Promoting social justice through communication. *Atlantic Journal of Communication*, 13(4), 242–271. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15456889ajc1304_3
- Pascale, R., Sternin, J., & Sternin, M. (2010). *The power of positive deviance: How unlikely innovators solve the world's toughest problems*. Harvard Business Press.

- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2nd Ed.). Sage.
- Pearce, W. B. (1998). On putting social justice in the discipline of communication and putting enriched concepts of communication in social justice research and practice. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 26, 272–278. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00909889809365505>
- Polkinghorne, D. (1983). *Methodology for the human sciences: Systems of inquiry*. State University of New York Press.
- Rogers, E. M. (2003). *Diffusion of innovations* (5th Ed.). Free Press.
- Rogers, E. M. (2004). A prospective and retrospective look at the diffusion model. *Journal of Health Communication, (Supplement 1)*, 9, 13–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10810730490271449>
- Sadler, R., Gilliland, J., & Arku, G. (2016). Theoretical issues in the “food desert” debate and ways forward. *GeoJournal*, 81(3), 443–455. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10708-015-9634-6>
- Shafique, M., Sternin, M., & Singhal, A. (2010). *Will Rahima's firstborn survive overwhelming odds? Positive Deviance for maternal and newborn care in Pakistan*. *Positive Deviance Wisdom Series, Number 5*. Tufts University, Positive Deviance Initiative.
- Singhal, A. (2018, July). *Communicating positive deviance for social change*. Lecture presented at the NCA Institute for Faculty Development, Granville, OH.
- Singhal, A. (2015, November). *Flip it: How complex social problems can be solved simply and communicatively by looking for positive deviance*. Paper presented as the 2015 Carroll C. Arnold Distinguished Lecture, Las Vegas, Nevada. National Communication Association.
- Singhal, A. (2013). Uncovering innovations that are invisible in plain sight. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 95(3), 28–33.
- Singhal, A., Buscell, P., & McCandless, K. (2009). *Saving lives by changing relationships: Positive Deviance for MRSA control and prevention in a U.S. hospital*. *Positive Deviance Wisdom Series, Number 3*. Tufts University, Positive Deviance Initiative.
- Singhal, A., & Durá, L. (2009). *Sunflowers reaching for the sun: Positive Deviance for child protection in Uganda*. *Positive Deviance Wisdom Series, Number 4*. Tufts University, Positive Deviance Initiative.
- Singhal, A., Sternin, J., & Durá, L. (2009). *Combating malnutrition in the land of a thousand rice fields: Positive Deviance grows roots in Vietnam*. *Positive Deviance Wisdom Series, Number 1*. Tufts University, Positive Deviance Initiative.
- Singhal, A., & Svenkerud, P. J. (2018). Diffusion of evidence-based interventions or practice-based positive deviations. *Journal of Development Communication*, 29(2), 34–44.
- Singhal, A., & Svenkerud, P. J. (2019). Flipping the diffusion of innovations paradigm: Embracing the positive deviance approach to social change. *Asia Pacific Media Educator*, 29(2), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1326365X19857010>
- Stake, R. E. (1994). Case studies. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.) *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 236–247). Sage.
- Stake, R. E. (1978). The case study method in social inquiry. *Educational Researcher*, 7(2), 5–8.
- Sternin, J. (2005, July/August). On the front lines. *Science & Spirit*, 16(4), 34–37.
- Sternin, J., & Choo, R. (2000, January-February). The power of positive deviancy. *Harvard Business Review*, 78(1), 14–15.
- [Tenrah] County Economic Development. (n. d.). *Top employers*. <http://tenrahledc.org/top-employers.asp>
- Thuesen, L., & Schmidt-Hansen, L. (2011). Learning from the behaviour of inmates and guards helps solving wicked challenges in the Danish Prison and Probation Service. *Prison Service Journal*, 198, 22–26.
- Turpin, M. (2017). Autopoiesis and Structuration Theory: A framework to investigate the contribution of a development project to a rural community. *Systems Research & Behavioral Science*, 34(6), 671–685. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sres.2403>

- U.S. Census Bureau (2016a). *Food stamps/Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)*. Explore Census Data. <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=Food%20stamps%2FSupplemental%20Nutrition%20Assistance%20Program%202012-2016%20&tid=ACSST5Y2016.S2201>
- U.S. Census Bureau (2016b). *Income in the past 12 months (in 2016 inflation-adjusted dollars)*. Explore Census Data. <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=Income%20in%20the%20past%2012%20months%20in%202016%20inflation-adjusted%20dollars&tid=ACSST5Y2016.S1901>
- U.S. Census Bureau (2016c). *Poverty status in the past 12 months*. Explore Census Data. <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=Poverty%20status%20in%20the%20past%2012%20months%20&tid=ACSST5Y2016.S1701>
- van de Venter, E., & Redwood, S. (2016). Does an asset-based community development project promote health and wellbeing? *The Lancet*, 388. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(16\)32344-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(16)32344-3)
- Van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. State University of New York Press.
- Wenzel, A. (2016). Eating together, separately: Intergroup communication and food in a multiethnic community. *International Journal of Communication (19328036)*, 10, 620–641.
- Witmer, D. F. (1997). Communication and recovery: Structuration as an ontological approach to organizational culture. *Communication Monographs*, 64(4), 324–349. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03637759709376427>
- Wright, A. (2021, April 30). *Interactive web tool maps food deserts, provides key data*. USDA. <https://www.usda.gov/media/blog/2011/05/03/interactive-web-tool-maps-food-deserts-provides-key-data#:~:text=In%20the%20Food%20Desert%20Locator,supermarket%20or%20large%20grocery%20store>
- Wuthnow, R. (2013). *Small-town America: Finding Community, Shaping the Future*. Princeton University Press.
- Zeitlin, M., Ghassemi, H., & Mansour, M. (1990). *Positive deviance in child nutrition with emphasis on psychosocial and behavioural aspects and implications for development*. The United Nations University.