Deviating from Norms to Create Extraordinary Change:
Introducing the Concept of Transcendent Deviance

by

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Abstract

This paper develops the concept *transcendent deviance*, defined as "intentional behavior that departs radically from the norms of the individual's referent groups, overcoming personal or environmental constraints to create extraordinary change," and situates the concept within positive organizational scholarship (POS), particularly the literature on positive deviance. I clarify key POS concepts of excellence and the extraordinary, examine sociological literature on deviance and social psychology literature on non-conformity to shed light on possible enablers and drivers of transcendent deviance, and introduce an organizing framework which integrates and helps clarify the difference between excellence, positive deviance, innovation, transcendent deviance and the extraordinary through a positive reframing of Merton's typology of deviance (1938). In conclusion, I explore ways to expand the study of outliers and the extraordinary within the behavioral sciences.

Key words: transcendent deviance, positive deviance, extraordinary, excellence, deviance, conformity, non-conformity, outliers

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"Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast."
The White Queen, Lewis Carroll

"One of the extraordinary things about human events is that the unthinkable becomes thinkable."
Salman Rushdie

Why was Sonia Sotomayor able to transcend her impoverished background to become a Supreme Court Justice, while her cousin, considered the brighter of the two, died a heroin addict from AIDS (Sotomayor, 2013)? What enabled Nelson Mandela to emerge from years of imprisonment to advocate compassion to transform his people's approach to freedom (Nelson Mandela, 2013)? Transcendent deviance unites these outlying behaviors under one definition: "intentional behavior that departs radically from the norms of the individual's referent groups, overcoming personal or environmental constraints to create extraordinary change."

I first introduce and situate the concept of transcendent deviance within its theoretical home in positive organizational scholarship, particularly the literature on positive deviance. Secondly, I clarify how the paths to create excellent versus extraordinary outcomes are different. I review how these words are used in management literatures, as well as show how sociological perspectives on deviance illuminate the difference between excellence and the extraordinary. Thirdly, I examine what the literature on non-conformity tells us about why some people are able to transcend norms and other social pressures, and what the implications are for enablers and drivers of transcendent deviance. Finally, I create an organizing framework which integrates and helps clarify the difference between excellence,

positive deviance, innovation, transcendent deviance and the extraordinary through a positive reframing of Merton's typology of deviance (1938). In doing so, I unite literature in positive organizational scholarship, deviance and non-conformity. The latter two literatures treat issues of norms, and the motivations and processes by which human beings deviate or conform to them, but are separated by the two disciplines of sociology and social psychology and rarely looked at together[1]. In my discussion, I recommend future areas of inquiry, and advocate the expansion of the study of outliers and the extraordinary within the behavioral sciences.

Theoretical Roots of Transcendent Deviance

Transcendent deviance as a philosophical concept belongs to positive psychology and positive organizational scholarship traditions that study with scientific rigor the positive and the extraordinary in human experience (Donaldson & Ko, 2010; Peterson & Seligman, 2003; Spreitzer & Sonenshein, 2003). Positive organizational scholarship has been explained as the investigation of "extraordinary outcomes and the processes that produce them." (Cameron and Caza, 2004: 732), and the "cultivation of extraordinary states in the individual, group and organization," (Dutton, Glynn and Spreitzer, 2006: 1). Cameron (2007: 8) indicated a consensus forming around the meaning of the word "positive" which includes "extraordinary positive outcomes" and "positively deviant performance."

Positive deviance itself originates from the larger sociological concept of deviance, considered to have originated with Emile Durkheim with the 1895 publication of *The Rules of Sociological Method* (Miller et al., 2001). The term deviance has usually been used to

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[1] Reviewing 32 articles on non-conformity, over 70 on conformity, and over 40 articles on deviance/positive deviance, only a handful referenced both the non-conformity/conformity literature and deviance literature.

describe negative deviance from societal norms or behaviors that are socially evaluated as being negative or objectionable (Heckert & Heckert, 2004: 76). Gross (1977a) seems to have first used the terms "positive and negative deviance," and "virtuous deviance," although most reviews of positive deviance credit Dodge (1985) as the father of the concept of positive deviance (Kooistra & Harrison, 2007:2). Dodge (1985) noted that the idea of a beneficial or approbatory kind of deviance was not unheard of, but had not been systematically recognized or explored in sociology, nor given the specific name "positive deviance." Sorokin (1950), Lemert (1951), and Clinard (1974) referred to the possibility of desirable or approved deviations from norms, or "virtuous deviance" as Pepinsky (1960) called it. Although not mentioned by Dodge, Wilkins (1964) drew a bell-curve identifying normal acts in the middle, crimes or sins on the left outlying tail, and saintly acts on the right outlying tail, although he also did not label the latter positive deviance.

Outside sociology in a parallel development within nutrition research, Zeitlin et al. (1990) introduced the words "positive deviance," referring to the phenomenon of a handful of women who managed to maintain good nutrition for their children with the same access to resources in the same context and community where malnutrition was the norm. They noted that this phenomenon had been remarked on previously in the work of Hegsted (1967), Wray (1972) and Greaves (1979), although without the use of the words positive deviance. Dodge's 1985 article was not cited, so it seems to have been a parallel or semi-synchronistic development. Zeitlin's conception of positive deviance was further operationalized with great success by Sternin, Sternin and Marsh (1998) in rural health settings in Vietnam and elsewhere. Their approach has since been applied widely within health sectors, education, and to the private business sector (Pascale & Sternin, 2005; Pascale, Sternin and Sternin, 2010).

Transcendent deviance builds in particular upon Spreitzer & Sonenshein's concept of positive deviance (2003, 2004), which is based on the sociological roots of deviance, and Bateman and Porath's concept of transcendental behavior (2003). In Cameron, Dutton & Quinn's seminal book, *Positive Organizational Scholarship: Foundations of a New Discipline* (2003), Spreitzer & Sonenshein (2003: 209) define positive deviance as "intentional behaviors that depart from the norms of a referent group in honorable ways." In the same book, Bateman & Porath (2003: loc. 1529) define transcendental behavior as "self-determined behavior that overrides constraining personal or environmental factors and effects extraordinary (positive) change." I have built on Spreitzer and Sonenshein's definition of positive deviance, and Bateman and Porath's definition of transcendental behavior to create a composite definition of *transcendent deviance*: "intentional behavior that departs radically from the norms of the individual's referent groups, overcoming personal or environmental constraints to create extraordinary change."

When the individuals "depart radically from the norms of their referent groups," they show a qualitatively distinct departure in objectives and behaviors from the norms of their particular personal and social context. Examples include first-generation college students at tradition-bound Ivy League colleges, disabled individuals who aspire to be world-class athletes as paralympians, organizational innovators such as Ricardo Semler, who turn management hierarchies upside down (Semler, 1993), or industry innovators such as Elon Musk (Elon Musk, 2013). The fact that they "overcome personal or environmental constraints" indicates the difficulty of the challenge and extent of change necessary to achieve their aspirations, as well as the courage needed to face risks and obstacles in pursuit of their goals. These constraints may include a coercive government, such as those faced by Mandela or French resistance fighters in World War II, the risk of challenging the status quo faced by Semler and Musk, or the lack of resources, encouragement, opportunities or

expectations encountered by Sotomayor and other first-generation students. Finally, by "creating extraordinary change," they imagine a way the world could work distinct from the norms around them, and act to make it happen. Their extraordinary success redefines the boundaries of human achievement, or rewrites the rules and creates a new, revolutionary way of doing things. The paradigm-breaking nature of the achievement may be felt particular to their context, as in the case of Sotomayor and Semler, or may be considered truly historic across all social and cultural contexts, as is certainly the case of Mandela, and potentially, of Musk.

These examples of transcendent deviance and the extraordinary inspire us to redefine what is possible, and potentially change the way we view the world. Sotomayor transcended her circumstances, and redefined what was possible for Latin-American men and women of all socio-economic backgrounds in the United States (Sotomayor, 2013). Semler redefined the way an organization could work and flourish (Semler, 1993). Musk is redefining possibilities in the energy, automotive and aerospace industries, and potentially our approach to life on earth and in space (Elon Musk, 2013). Mandela was extraordinary in the way he endured his captivity with dignity, and used it to forge relationships with Afrikaner guards and white political leaders. Understanding that fear rather than hate was the greatest barrier to overcome amongst the whites, through his compassion and emphasis on reconciliation he transcended boundaries to negotiate a peaceful transition to universal suffrage and embrace being a leader for all South Africans, black, coloured, *and* white (Fletcher, 2013).

Kuhn (1962) coined the term paradigm shift to describe a shift in perception within the natural sciences of how the world works that requires re-evaluation of what has gone before, and introduces new theories, rules and applications which show more promise for future research than previous paradigms. Once a paradigm shifts, the old one withers away. The shift in perception unleashes new possibility and allows a proliferation of similar events

to occur. This is often the case with disruptive innovation: if it doesn't destroy the old market, at the very least it creates a new parallel market with its own rules, business models and growth dynamics (Christensen, 1997). In the realm of individual human behaviour, however, examples of transcendent deviance often remain outliers, rather than gradually becoming the norm. I argue that we need to understand the mechanisms of transcendent deviance, so that, in a positive upward spiral (Frederickson, 2003), current positive outliers can proliferate until they too can no longer be considered outliers, allowing newer examples of the extraordinary to redefine the height and breadth of human achievement and aspiration.

Excellence versus the Extraordinary in Management Literature

The investigation and cultivation of extraordinary outcomes and states is considered key to positive organizational scholarship (Cameron and Caza, 2004; Dutton, Glynn and Spreitzer, 2006). In this field, however, all is not extraordinary; sometimes it is excellent. Positive organizational scholarship has also been explained as, "the development of individual, group and collective strengths that represent forms of individual and collective excellence" (Dutton & Sonenshein, 2007), and "theories of excellence, transcendence, positive deviance, extraordinary performance, and positive spirals of flourishing," (Cameron, Dutton & Quinn, 2003: loc 42). Further, even with positive deviance, excellence and extraordinary seem to be used interchangeably, as quasi-superlative descriptors. Spreitzer and Sonnenshein (2003) describe positive deviance as "the positive cousin of 'deviance' – the virtuous or excellent" (loc 2499), and "excellent behavior in organizations" (loc 2504). But they also say, "positive deviance behaviors are truly extraordinary" (loc 2654), and "in order to be extraordinary (positive deviants) had to take significant risks and step outside of well-defined boundaries. They had to have the courage to continually create new possibilities for

behavior that fell outside of current norms of appropriate behavior." (loc 2668). It is this last characterization of the extraordinary that has helped me build my own definition of transcendent deviance.

Clarifying the difference between excellence and extraordinary not only serves to delineate boundary conditions for transcendent deviance. It may also help shape future precision in the use of these terms in the field of positive organizational scholarship and positive deviance, and encourage thinking on how we in the behavioral sciences can embrace rather than avoid the study of outliers and seek to understand the extraordinary in human behaviour with rigor.

I began my search with the hypothesis that the extraordinary results from departing from norms, whereas excellence is doing what everyone else does, often against an agreed standard, but doing it better. Olympic athletes strives for excellence and high performance - to be *Citius, Altius, Fortius[2]* – "faster, higher, stronger." In doing so, they do not depart substantively from the norms of their referent group, only in terms of magnitude. Examining dictionary definitions support this view of excellence. Merriam-Webster defines excellence as "very good, extremely good, superior, very good of its kind, eminently good, first-class. The Oxford Dictionary defines excellence as "extremely good; outstanding." The Merriam-Webster dictionary definition is mixed. It defines extraordinary as "very unusual, very different from what is normal or ordinary," but it also defines it as "extremely good or impressive; going beyond what is usual, regular, or customary; exceptional to a very marked extent." However, the Oxford Dictionary defines extraordinary as "very unusual or remarkable," and, further, shows how the etymologies, both from Latin, underline the

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[2] The Olympic motto (http://registration.olympic.org/en/faq/detail/id/29).

difference. The etymology for excellence is *"excellere*: to excel,"* whereas the etymology for extraordinary is *"extra ordinem*: out of the normal course of events."

I then tested this hypothesis by surveying academic, peer-reviewed journals in Business Source Complete and in the Academy of Management (AoM) database to understand how these terms were defined and the context of their use. The Business Source Complete search had no time restrictions except for the end search date of 15 February, 2015. Therefore, this should be a complete search as far back as Business Source Complete allows for each of the journals. The AoM time frame was as long as the search allowed: from August 1954 till the date of search, 15 February, 2015. Table One shows how many articles were found using key words *excellence* or *extraordinary*, either on their own as in the first row, or supplemented by additional key words, *organization*, *leadership*, or *business*, as shown in the second, third and fourth rows. The search shows a far higher use of the word *excellence* to the word *extraordinary*: 9764 to 2205 in Business Search Complete, and 889 to 407 in the AoM

Table One – Frequency and Use of Excellence and Extraordinary

Database	Additional Key Words	Excellence	Extraordinary
Business Source Complete		9764	2205
	Organization, Leadership	256 (160)	28 (3)
	Business	4917 (160)	98 (6)
AoM	Leadership	889 (240)	407 (39)

Business Source Complete non-time-bound till 15 Feb 2015; AoM journals from Aug 1954 till 15 Feb 2015.

database. In the *excellence* column in the rows with additional key words, figures without parentheses show total number of articles found – 256 when *organization* and *leadership* were added, 4917 when *business* was added, and 889 when *leadership* was added. The figures with parentheses (160, 160, 240 respectively) show the number of articles actually reviewed. Since the number of articles identified by the *extraordinary* keyword was radically

less, I reviewed all articles: their number is shown without parentheses, while the figures with parentheses show the number of articles which were relevant to the topic: 28 when *organization* and *leadership* were added, of which 2 were relevant, 98 when *business* was added, of which 6 were relevant, and 407 when *leadership* was added, of which 39 were relevant.

The search for *excellence* in Business Source Complete revealed overwhelmingly a focus on what might be called *business process excellence*, sometimes called *operational excellence, business excellence, quality management, total quality management (TQM), performance excellence,* or *organizational excellence*. In these areas, *excellence* is achieved by optimizing human, physical and financial resources. (Van Marrewijk et al., 2004). The level of analysis is at the organizational level. The focus is on standards, frameworks, balanced scorecards, or defined processes which are supposed to improve the quality of outputs to bring the organization to a standard of excellence, usually as defined by the management team, but sometimes with guidelines from quality boards or regulators.

Excellence often applies both to the outputs as well as how precisely the business processes adhere to a specified standard or way of doing things (Berry et al., 1994, Brown, 2013, Latham, 2013, Peters and Waterman, 1982). The Baldridge Performance Excellence Framework in the US, managed by the National Institute of Standards and Technology, an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce, and the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM), were commonly referenced in *excellence* articles as examples of governmental standards which organizations can opt in to benefit from the tools and advice offered. These frameworks enable organizations to align around tangible targets for both process and outcome. Excellence, therefore, is all about what is definable and measurable, whether setting standards and auditing through a Baldridge-type review, a Service Excellence

Alignment Audit (Crotts et al., 2005), or a Leadership Excellence Index, which Gopal (2008), advocates as a prime driver of total quality management and business excellence.

On an individual level, *excellence* tends to be referred to in the context of talent: optimization of relevant management skills and competencies (Schroder, 1989), top-level expertise (Mieg, 2014), or expert performance (Ericsson, 2006; Ericsson & Ward, 2007). The individual and organization come together in *centers of excellence*, an organizational unit which disseminates or leverages a set of capabilities, expertise or knowledge explicitly identified by the firm as important for value creation (Frost et al., 2002). Mieg (2014) calls *centers of excellence* institutions where top experts are concentrated or high potentials brought together to train toward greater excellence, and notes their existence across diverse domains such as education, government, science, business, hospitals, and sport. Indeed, the other fields that often came up in the Business Source Complete search were education, nursing, and sport – fields which are very concerned with setting standards, defining and improving processes and procedures, developing expertise, creating consistent outputs, and measuring outcomes.

The search for the *extraordinary* yielded much fewer results. Narrowing the search in Business Source Complete through the use of keywords generated only 126 mentions, most of which were not relevant as they referred to *extraordinary items* (a specific term in accounting) and or referenced unusual events or experiences. Only 9 articles out of the 126 mentions in the whole history of Business Source Complete were relevant. In the AoM database, *leadership* was the only additional key word which generated any relevant findings: 39 out of 407 articles. The few references to extraordinary results tended to cluster around the effects created by charismatic or transformational leadership, or created through creativity or innovation. The authors did not specify what made the results extraordinary, but some speculated on aspects of the process, including openness to opportunity (Gallos, 2006;

Savage & Sales, 2006), and seeing what others can't see (Hill, 2004; Savage & Sales, 2006; Smith, 1994).

It is perhaps not so surprising that the extraordinary is a rare focus of study. The organizational sciences have traditionally emulated the natural sciences in trying to discern natural laws of human behaviour from which we can predict future behaviour (Daft & Lewin, 1990). As a discipline we tend to pursue a statistically significant normal distribution: we are pushed to show representativeness, random selection, and large samples in our studies (Siggelkow, 2007). When the research objective is to understand tendencies and norms in the current larger population, this approach serves us well; outliers are a problem to be tidied away rather than a focus. The extraordinary remains a highly under-developed area of inquiry in the organizational sciences.

Excellence and the Extraordinary Clarified through Perspectives on Deviance

Comparing traditional perspectives on how to identify deviance support the clarification of the difference between excellence and extraordinary as one of meeting and excelling standards and norms versus deviating from norms in a positive way. The *statistical perspective* in defining deviance (Wilkins, 1964; Winslow, 1975; Clinard & Meier, 2001; Heckert, 1989, 1997) is one of four major sociological perspectives describing deviance (Spreitzer & Sonenshein, 2004). Under this definition, deviance is seen as a scale towards excellence or high performance or virtuousness on the right, and inferiority or poor performance or criminality on the left. Essentially, this perspective on deviance describes far left and far right outliers on a bell-curve. Quinn (1996) views top athletes and high-performing managers as positive deviants using the statistical perspective (Spreitzer & Sonnenshein, 2004). Although these are outliers, this is the paradigm of excellence rather

than extraordinary: the standards and ways to measure up and down the bell curve are the same. The difference is one of magnitude.

The second perspective, *supraconformity*, describes deviance as behavior that oversubscribes to a particular norm (Ewald & Jiobu, 1985; Hughes & Coakley, 1991), such that something that is normally positive becomes negative. This is observed particularly in sports (Ewald & Jiobu, 1985), where athletes will over-train, or starve themselves to achieve weight restrictions, or push past pain to the point where they injure themselves. Much of the positive deviance literature in sports science refer to this perspective on deviation. Further, managers who obsessively follow rules would also be considered supraconformists in their behavior. I argue that supraconformity is an extension of the statistical perspective on deviance, and shows the danger of blindly and rigidly following standards, procedures and measures without taking into consideration context or appropriateness. Supraconformity is akin to Merton's ritualism (1938), exemplified by the bureaucrat who painstakingly follows rules having forgotten their initial purpose (Goode, 1991). Sustaining excellence requires adherence to standards, but also the flexibility to adapt to changes in the situation and the environment, and, when necessary, to change or innovate to ensure continuing positive results rather than diminishing returns.

The third and fourth perspectives on deviance are central to the ongoing debate in sociology on how to define or describe deviance (Heckert, 1997). Deviance has traditionally referred to behaviors that violate norms, or that are socially evaluated as being negative or objectionable (Heckert & Heckert, 2004: 76). Deviance defined as a violation of norms (the first half of the traditional definition), subscribes to a *normative perspective*, also known as an objectivist (Heckert & Heckert, 2004; Miller et al., 2001), or an essentialist or positivistic perspective (Goode, 2002). The normative perspective focuses less on why norms exist, and more on why people violate them. There is a rich tradition of theory, e.g. Merton on anomie

(1938), and the whole discipline of criminology (Miller et al., 2001), which seeks to explain this. The second half of the traditional definition of deviance, behaviors that are socially evaluated as being negative or objectionable, subscribes to a *reactive perspective*, also known as a constructionist or experiential (Goode, 2002), interactionist (Heckert, 1989), or a relativistic or subjectivist perspective (Miller et al., 2001). The reactive perspective focuses on the "labelling" (Becker, 1963; Heckert 1989) by others of certain behaviors as deviant, with the idea that deviant behavior exists only if people label it so. This perspective is strongly influenced by symbolic interactionism (Heckert, 1989) – the idea that people act based on a socially derived construction of meaning, which is modified and re-interpreted through interaction with others (Blumer, 1969). Spreitzer and Sonenshein (2004) base their definition of positive deviance on a combination of normative and reactive perspectives, leaning heavily on the normative emphasis on behaviour which deviates from norms and expectations of a referent group, but with the reactive characteristic of labelling the behaviour as having honourable intentions.

Descriptions of positive deviance in management literature seems to switch back and forth between the *statistical* (Quinn, 1996) and a combination of *normative* and *reactive* perspectives of deviance (Spreitzer and Sonenshein, 2004). I believe this in part causes the confusion between definitions of what is excellent versus extraordinary. Transcendent deviance follows largely Spreitzer and Sonenshein's combination of the normative and reactive perspectives, where transcendent deviance is socially defined and contextual, and requires a qualitative change in behaviour from the norms surrounding that particular individual. Whereas excellence is found at the far right of the normative bell-curve, the extraordinary breaks norms to create a new curve with new goals and standards. When this change is of a positive, paradigm-shifting character, the results are extraordinary rather than excellent. It is an extraordinary achievement for a student living in impoverished

circumstances whose parents never finished high school to go to an Ivy League college. For those graduating from Exeter and Andover with several generations of Ivy League graduates in the family, it is an excellent achievement, but not extraordinary.

Deviating from the Norms: A Closer Look at Non-Conformity

To understand transcendent deviance, we must understand the motivations and mechanisms leading to non-conformity from surrounding norms. Krech, Crutchfield and Ballachey (1962) and Willis (1963) independently argued for distinctions in types of non-conformity. Rather than see non-conformity as a continuum of conformity, Willis envisioned a triangle, with *conformity* as one point, *anti-conformity* (what Krech et al., 1962, called "*counter-conformity*") at the second point, and *independence* at the third point. *Conformity* describes behavior and beliefs in accordance with social norms, as a response to social pressures on the individual (Nail, MacDonald and Levy, 2000). *Anti-conformity* describes behavior and beliefs that react against these norms and social pressures. *Anti-conformity* might indicate psychological reactance (Brehm, 1966): reacting because of the perception that rights and freedoms are curtailed or threatened by the group. *Conformity* and *anti-conformity* thus are both dependent on group norms, as they either align or react against them.

Independence, however, describes behavior and beliefs which are subscribed to without reference to current norms. An independent thinker will feel free to conform or not to conform depending on which holds the most instrumental value at the time (Hollander & Willis, 1967). The distinction between *anti-conformity* and *independence* is supported by empirical studies by Smith (1967) and earlier work by Argyle (1957). Nail, MacDonald and Levy (2000) and Levine and Hogg (2009) confirm these distinctions as current operational definitions of non-conformity, noting that an independent is motivated by the goal of being

true to one's self, while an anti-conformist is motivated by the desire to disagree with, disrupt and oppose the group.

Figure One – Conformity and Non-Conformity Overview
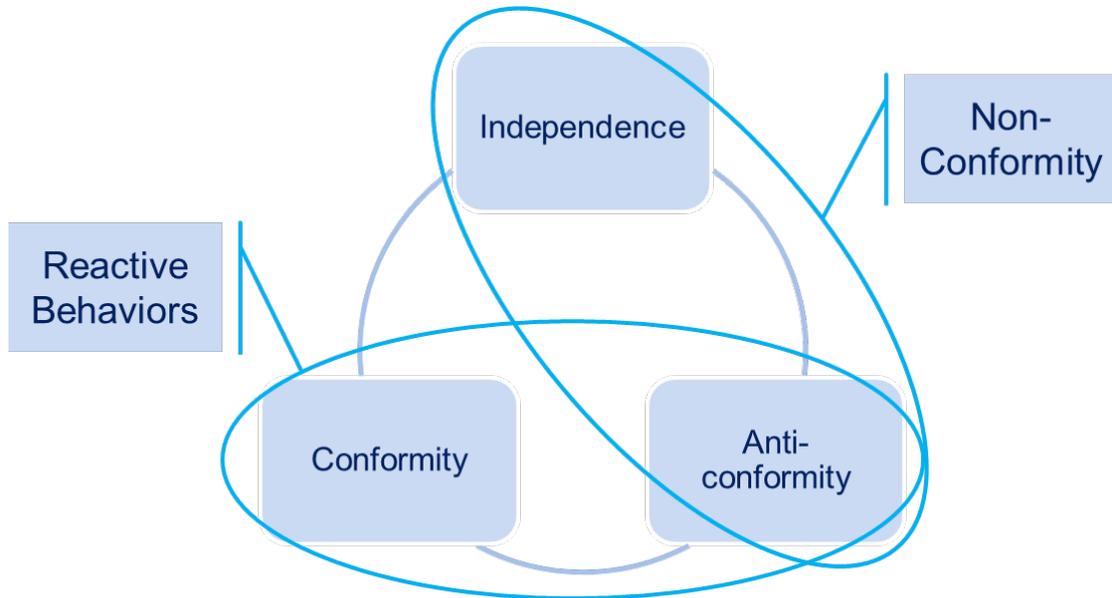
Transcendent deviance requires some kind of non-conformity, either anti-conformity, or, most likely, independence of thought and action, which is directed toward positive change and motivated enough to overcome significant obstacles. Despite these distinctions made over fifty years ago, however, non-conformity of both types remains under-researched. Willis (1963) argued that researchers could not assume that the antecedents of non-conformity are the obverse of conformity, and advocated an expansion of the study of non-conformity. His call to action was similar to Seligman's opening salvo in 1992 which officially marked the beginning of the positive psychology movement. Seligman maintained that researchers must start with different assumptions and questions to understand positive psychology than their peers who assume a disease model (Peterson & Seligman, 2003: loc 189). For example, Galperin (2012) examined factors for "constructive deviance" and "destructive deviance," and found them related to the degree that both were norm-challenging (both negatively correlated to obedience, $p < .05$ and $p < .01$ respectively), but otherwise the difference in

intent created a divergence in the constructs. Constructive deviance showed positive correlation ($p < .01$) for innovative behaviour and advocacy, while these two were not significant for destructive deviance. Destructive deviance, on the other hand, showed positive correlation ($p < .01$) for "exit" (e.g. thinking of quitting) and "neglect" (e.g. calling in sick when don't feel like working), while these were not significant for constructive deviance. Hollander and Willis (1967) argued that there is one way to conform, but many ways not to conform, and while non-conforming behavior might be similar, the underlying motivations may be different: further descriptive and inferential or explanatory levels of analysis are required.

Almost twenty years later, Santee & and Maslach (1982:690) noted that such was the conceptual bias toward conformity in social psychology research that it was common for researchers to label any independent behavior in terms of conformity, e.g. "reduction of conformity" (Allen and Newtson, 1972). More recently, Hornsey, Majkut et al. (2003:3, 9) maintained that the "conformity bias" still exists in the literature, and stated (2003:3), "We know surprisingly little about the psychological processes underlying independence from group norms." This is true whether it applies to traditional deviance, positive deviance, or transcendent deviance. Santee and Maslach (1982) argued that the assumptions drawn from traditional conformity experiments are suspect because the studies tended to test conformity around "emotionally neutral paradigms," e.g. judgements on physical reality, or (Hornsey, Smith & Begg, 2007) issues of little personal relevance. Further, in many laboratory experiments exploring conformity, the non-conformist answer was the correct one (e.g. the correct length of a line or number of dots), so while the researcher could argue conformity as a reason for choosing the incorrect answer, they couldn't necessarily cite non-conformity as the reason for choosing the correct answer (Santee & Maslach, 1982). They argue that to truly understand non-conformity, one must also test people's willingness to depart from

majority views about issues they feel strongly about, including social issues with a moral component. Thirty years later, this issue has not gone away: Packer and Miners (2013) recommended further research in face-to-face dissent situations with norms of greater consequence than has been seen in previous studies. Fifty years on from Willis' initial call to action, little is still known about motivates or enables an individual to deviate from the norms of their referent group (Packer & Chasteen, 2009; Packer & Miners, 2012), and potentially start down the path to the extraordinary.

Social Pressures Non-Conformists Need to Overcome

Despite the caveat that one must study non-conformity to understand non-conformity, in absence of that, the conformity literature can help us glean what kind of social pressures individuals have to resist or ignore when they deviate from norms. Social psychologists French and Raven (1959) in their seminal work on social influence (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004) identified five bases of power: *legitimate, coercive, reward, referent*, and *expert*. *Legitimate* power includes any power created by hierarchy, bureaucracy, rules or laws; *coercive* and *reward* power relate to the ability to punish or reward; *referent* power describes when an individual exerts influence because of the admiration or regard with which that individual is held; *expert* power influences because that person is held to have more knowledge in a particular area. *Referent* power shares a similarity with *expert* power in that the individual defers to another either because of their admiration for them or because they recognize the other's greater knowledge in a particular area. *Legitimate, referent* and *expert* power simplify life in many ways, although with this simplification may come a suspension of some degree of critical thinking and personal responsibility. I argue that on a societal level, Mandela resisted legitimate, coercive and reward power, while Sotomayor selectively resisted

the referent and expert power in her original referent group (while her cousin did not), seeking new referent examples and inspirations from outside her original social milieu.

It takes a certain courage and self-efficacy to resist legitimate and coercive power. Spreitzer and Sonenshein (2003) and Bateman and Porath (2003) suggest courage as well as self-efficacy as possible enablers of positive deviance and transcendental behaviour respectively. Smith (1994) maintains that daring is a leadership attribute that enables the extraordinary. Hollander (1975), writing with the context of civil liberty protests in mind, identified six impediments to independence, one of which was fear of disrupting proceeding (disrupting the flow of things, or routine patterns of behavior, provoking conflict). In the positive organizational scholarship literature, the willingness to disrupt proceedings or organizational norms for a moral good when this puts oneself at risk is considered a courageous act (Koerner, 2014), or "courageous principled action" (Worline & Quinn, 2003). Transcendent deviance requires the courage to disrupt the natural flow of things, step away from familiarity into the unknown, and to face whatever potential obstacles, risks and threats this may unleash to achieve one's goals. Whereas Bateman and Porath (2003) cite the more common construct of domain-specific self-efficacy (Bandura 1977, 1982, 1989), I believe the lesser known construct of generalized self-efficacy (Judge et al., 2002; Smith, 1989) to be more relevant to transcendent deviance. Generalized self-efficacy describes the ability to approach a new situation outside of one's normal domain of experience with the belief that one will be able to find solutions to unforeseen situations and problems (Schulz et al., 2002). Tolerance for ambiguity (Budner, 1962) may also be necessary to feel that one will somehow be able to deal with these unknown obstacles.

An independent actor may also be less needful or driven by conventional social motivations to conform. Deutsch and Gerard (1955) identified two motivations for conformity which are less explicitly about responding to social pressures, and arguable more

about a kind of basic survival: the simple human need to belong, and to make sense of the world. *Normative* conformity is based on the desire to fit in and gain social approval of others.[3] Man (1969) built on Deutsch and Gerard (1955), arguing that wanting to belong and fit in with the group even if one doesn't agree with their ideas, which he also called *normative* conformity, is driven by fear of rejection. This is similar to risk of disapproval, identified by Hollander (1975) as a second impediment to independence. Whereas, *ingratiational* conformity, according to Man (1969), exhibits the same behavior as *normative* conformity, but stems not from fear, but rather to gain favour or some kind of social reward from an individual or individuals. Deutsch and Gerard (1955) and Man (1969) both describe *informational* conformity as motivated by the desire to form an accurate representation of reality and relying on others to do so. Deutsch and Gerard (1955) argued that there is a natural tendency to look to the group for guidance and believe the majority when the individual lacks information about a situation. This follows when there is uncertainty (Cialdini, 2001), when the situation is ambiguous (Bond & Smith, 1996), or when the individual lacks confidence (Bettenhausen & Murninghan, 1985). High certainty of belief indicates a greater tendency to speak up against the majority (Rios, 2012). Further, those with a high self-belief in their own intelligence, will also tend to be more independent in their thinking (Hollander & Willis, 1967), a first step toward independent action. Non-conformists enacting transcendent deviance may care less about what others think of them, or feel less dependent on social affiliation for their identity and sense of self. A strong belief, or attitude strength (Rios, 2012), may also spur them to transcend social anxieties in service of their purpose. The connection between belief, identity and transcendent deviance is examined further below.

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[3] Note that Schulman (1967), in the context of laboratory experiments which proliferated in early conformity studies, argued that normative conformity to the experimenter, not just the majority group, also had to be accounted for.

The Trap of Unconscious Conformity

Social influence and conformity derive not only from bases of social power, or mortal threats to be ejected from the group. Bettenhausen and Murninghan (1985:350) regard social norms in general as "among the least visible and most powerful forms of social control over human action." Different forms of visible social power such as legitimate, coercive and reward power form the most obvious barriers which need to be overcome for the type of transcendent deviance observed in freedom fighters such as Mandela or World War II resisters against the Nazis, but norms may well be the most powerful force that needs to be overcome to create transcendent deviance in cases such as Sotomayor or Semler, where overt social oppression is not the issue.

Kelman (1958), described three different responses to social influence. *Compliance* (e.g. to legitimate, coercive, reward, and expert power, or to normative influence) leads one to behave in conformance with social expectations in hopes of a favourable result, but internally one rejects or disagrees with the rules or ideas at hand. Both Mandela and Sotomayor chose not to comply with selected aspects of their initial life contexts (Mandela, 2008; Sotomayor, 2013). *Identification* (e.g. to referent power) occurs where one assumes or attempts a positive relationship to the referent individual or group in the hopes that the relationship can be strengthened. In this case, the identifier may or may not agree with all the accompanying rules and ideas; the focus is on the relationship and being accepted as a peer. Sotomayor mentions being inspired as a child initially by Perry Mason, the lawyer in the eponymous television show, and over time, even more so by the referent group played by the judge (Sotomayor 2013:80). With *internalization*, one accepts internally and wholeheartedly the rules, ideas and situation, and acts externally in accordance with these ideas, beliefs and social expectations. It would seem that both Mandela and Sotomayor were able to resist

internalization of key contextual norms in their early environment, thus allowing them to imagine a different future.

Internalization is often unconscious, with people's behaviors and beliefs being formed without them necessarily understanding the source. Cialdini (2007) considers *descriptive* norms as a strong method of social control. They are arguably an even more powerful and insidious social influence as people are not even aware of the impact on their behaviour: there is complete unconscious internalization of the norms. Nolan, Schultz, Cialdini et al. (2008) showed empirically that *descriptive* norms (doing or advocating doing things because others are doing them) has a stronger influence on behavior than individual belief, even when study participants rated norms as less important to their own decision-making. Latané and Darley (1969) showed a similar result when onlookers to an incident exhibited "bystander apathy:" they were not willing to admit that their behavior was affected by the presence of others. Even when we're not conscious of copying others, we do – what Bargh & Chartrand (1999) call "the unbearable automaticity of being." Indeed, what others do around us, tends to become the only reality we know or are able to imagine. Consciously or unconsciously, we fail to perceive alternatives to what is before us, which prevents us from independent thought, or taking independent action. (Hollander, 1975).

Descriptive norms combined with referent power can be a benign influence: in a "chameleon effect" we copy or mimic those people we regard highly or admire (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999; Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). They become role models, consciously or unconsciously. Yet the influence need not be benign for it to be internalized, as Schein found in his study of American POWs in North Korea (1996). Schein argued that understanding the process of "coercive persuasion" and "cognitive redefinition" sheds light on the processes of socialization and acculturation, internalization and conformity, in non-totalitarian societies and organizations. Although his unit of analysis is the group, his discussion of internalization

through acculturation also applies to the individual. He defines culture as "the set of shared, taken-for-granted implicit assumptions that a group holds and that determines how it perceives, thinks about, and reacts to its various environments" (1992), and notes that these assumptions – which uphold the more visible norms - are rarely questioned or examined. "The members of a culture are not even aware of their own culture until they encounter a different one" (1996: 236). With so many explicit and unconscious social pressures to conform, and compelling survivalist reasons to do so, why would it occur to anyone to do anything else but follow norms and do what everyone else does?

Values and Self-Concordance as Potential Drivers of Transcendent Deviance

Rios (2012) supplied three different antecedents for minority opinions: attitude strength, social group or category identification, and the desire to bolster self-concept. In general, most people voicing opinions in a group belong to the majority, but people in the minority are more likely to speak up if they feel strongly about something. We have already seen above how attitude strength diminishes *informational* conformity. Strong moral belief indicates a willingness to speak out (Hornsey, Majkut et al., 2003; Hornsey, Smith & Begg, 2007). Spreitzer and Sonenshein (2003) argued that meaning, or caring deeply about something, gives an individual reason to risk deviating from the norms. The degree to which one identifies with a social group, forming part of one's self-concept or social identity (Tajfel, 1981), also makes a difference. Low identification makes it easier to voice a minority opinion. However, those who have a high identification with the group, and want to articulate a minority opinion which they think is in the collective interest of the group, will also be vocal in hopes of influencing the group (Packer & Chasteen, 2009). This "other-focus" is also identified by Spreitzer and Sonenshein (2003) as a motivator for positive deviance.

Attitude strength enabled by social group or category identification seem particularly salient in examples of civil disobedience, where individuals protest against prevailing norms. The remaining four impediments toward independence enumerated by Hollander (1975) highlight the social nature of minority protest and the power of isolation. In addition to the risk of disapproval and fear of disrupting proceeding mentioned earlier, Hollander cited lack of perceived alternatives, absence of shared communication, inability to feel responsibility (due to bystander apathy, or the "bystander effect"), and sense of impotence (the feeling that no one is listening, or that nothing will make a difference). Gross (1977a, b) discovered meeting others of similar mind was key to help potential Vietnam War resisters take those first consequential steps. Through shared communication with others who had already or were contemplating resistance, the resisters-in-chrysalis began to perceive and understand the "how" of alternative actions, overcame their bystander apathy, and recovered their sense of potency and agency, if not their sense of free will. Of course, in doing so, they also discovered a new referent group, social network, and social identity which strengthened them in their fight against legitimate power, and what then might have been majority opinion (Gross, 1977a, b). Similarly, the existence of a nascent communications network uniting disempowered, isolated women was seen as critical to create momentum in the early days of the women's movement in the United States (Freeman, 1973).

Rios (2012) and Imhoff and Erb (2009) argue that minority voice can also be motivated by a need for uniqueness in one's self-concept, and a related need to bolster self-certainty by clarifying one's self-concept. This sounds similar to reactance theory (Brehm, 1966), where the individual feels threatened or constrained by the group so reacts to carve out his or her individual self-concept. Other researchers have found, however, that self-concept is important for independence. Santee and Maslach (1982) found that those who practiced "creative dissent" (independence) showed strong private self-consciousness (attentiveness to

personal identity and own thoughts and feelings) and somewhat strong individuation (one's willingness to call attention to oneself) on the one hand, and very low public self-consciousness (concern with social identity) and social anxiety (fear of what others will think) on the other. This private self-consciousness may contribute to a mindfulness (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000) that allows an individual to be present in the moment, be less susceptible to past-delineated distinctions and categories and the mindless following of rules and routines. This allows the individual to resist internalization of descriptive norms, and the low public self-consciousness and low social anxiety then enables the individual to act independently.

Public expression of deeply-held beliefs are also seen to reinforce one's privately-held sense of self (Hornsey, Majkut et al., 2003; Hornsey, Smith & Begg, 2007; Tice, 1992). When individuals with a strong moral basis for their opinions spoke up in the face of weak majority support for their views, it seemed to be driven more by a need for self-definition than a desire to convince others (Hornsey, Majkut et al., 2003; Hornsey, Smith & Begg, 2007). Individuals with a strong self-identification as an activist would act even if they felt their actions would have very little impact on change. Action was a way of reinforcing identity (Hornsey, Blackwood et al., 2006). Non-conformists may care less about being rejected or favoured by the majority group setting the norms around them, finding strength in their convictions or self-concordance with a minority identity group. However, a true independent would still act independently of the minority identity group, whereas paradoxically an anti-conformist might rebel against the majority norms while conforming to minority norms.

Non-conformism or dissent does not necessarily have to be linked to disengagement with the majority. Dissenters who are motivated by doing what they think is in the collective good, are different from those motivated by individual aims. The former tends to practice an

engaged dissent, while the latter disengages from the group (Packer and Chasteen, 2009; Packer & Mines, 2012). Perhaps the former are independent, while the latter are anti-conformist. Smith (1967) found that what he called "rebels" (anti-conformists) showed higher anomie and lower CPI (California Psychological Inventory) scores around social alienation than both independents and conformists. We still need more precision on explanatory and inferential levels of analysis (Hollander & Willis, 1967) to better understand the antecedents and mechanisms leading to independence as opposed to anti-conformity, and to know whether in fact, an individual may be motivated by both sequentially or at the same time.

An "Inflection Point" Leading to Transcendent Deviance

It may be more accurate to describe self-concept that leads to transcendent deviance or other non-conformity as dynamic and evolving. Grove (1996, 1997) borrowed from differential calculus the idea of a strategic inflection point characterizing a fundamental change in business strategy. An inflection point is the point on a curve where it changes from being concave to convex, or vice-versa. During this transition, the concept, structure and purpose of the business irrevocably changes, but at that particular point in time the shift is so subtle business managers may not be aware of it. Grove postulated that the same thing happens in individuals' lives. Within transcendent deviance, the inflection point is found in that period of time during which the individual undergoes an experiential, ontological, and paradigmatic shift in a process of realization that "Things don't have to be this way."

"Seeing what others can't see" was considered an aspect leading to extraordinary achievement according to my management literature search (Savage & Sales, 2006; Smith, 1994). Prospection (Gilbert & Wilson, 2007; Seligman et al., 2013) describes the ability to imagine future possibilities, to pre-experience the future through mental simulations of what could be. Gilbert and Wilson (2007) believe prospection is based on conscious cognition,

whereas Buckner and Carroll (2007) and Seligman et al. (2013) believe it can incorporate both conscious and unconscious thought and use affect as well as cognition. Prospection takes place in the prefrontal cortex and in the medial temporal lobes, both of which are part of the default network engaged when the individual is not actively task-focused (Seligman et al., 2013). Although these areas of the brain are used to remember the past, they are also used to imagine a distinctly different future, to recombine different data into new perspectives (Seligman et al., 2013), to navigate or map out unknown territory, and to understand or empathize with others' viewpoints (Buckner & Carroll, 2007). These are all activities which would be critical for the success of individuals who deviate from the norms around them to strike off into the unknown.

The recombination of different data into new possibilities allows an individual to see beyond the current constraints of how things are, and implies an ability to reconstruct reality as we know it. Functional fixedness (Duncker. 1945) describes a cognitive bias toward problem-solving and finding novel solutions where one is blinded by an object's current functional usage and thus unable to see alternative possibilities for a single component's use, or for an alternative assemblage of components which would create a different function. As a simple example, an individual would conceptually fix the functionality of the fork as an eating implement, whereas it could also be used as a lever or weapon. In a more conceptual sense, functional fixedness entails regarding problems at a surface level, relying on a single analogy based on the whole of the parts, and thus enabling only solutions with an incremental difference that were rooted in the previous context or system. Although Musk (2013) doesn't mention prospection or functional fixedness, when asked how he is able to innovate at such grand scale, he talks of the importance of first-principles reasoning – "boil things down to their fundamental truths and reason up from there as opposed to reasoning by analogy… which essentially means copying what other people do with slight variations." By reasoning

up from fundamental truths around values and motivations, an individual can imagine a world which is not dependent on how his or her current context is constructed. Prospection and first-principles reasoning may underlie moral imagination, which Hartman, Wilson and Arnold (2005) propose as an antecedent for positive ethical deviance (entrepreneurs who build their business incorporating ethical concerns into the business model). Werhane (1999) describes moral imagination as the ability to transcend current context to envision and actualize new mental models that create new possibilities and solutions in ways that are economically viable and morally justifiable.

The research on prospection shows that some people seem to have a greater "future self-continuity" which allows them to link imagined worlds and their future identity to their present self, or to imagine the as-yet unrealized future and their role in it with a degree of concreteness similar to the present (Blouin-Hudon & Pychyl, 2015). This has implications both for the notion of an elastic, changing self-concept which might enable transcendent deviance, and also for the notion of commitment to a future yet unrealized. Seligman et al. (2013) use the analogy that prospection is "like the staging of a play using appearances to simulate the actors and events; but it must be more, for one must be in the drama, and the script must feel real." Similarly, Erhard (1977) distinguishes between an idea as content vs. an idea as context. An idea as content is a position, which fosters an opposition, leading to a battlefield of opposing ideas with the outcome in doubt. An idea presented as context, however, is presented with a belief in the inevitability of the idea as outcome. With this inevitability in mind, opposition is embraced to understand better the issues and how to resolve them, and put in place the process and structures to make the idea into reality. Erhard gives the example of Kennedy's "man on the moon in ten years." NASA was committed to the idea as an inevitability, so opposition such as not having the right metals to achieve this was resolved by inventing the metals. Opposition such as not knowing whether to do it with

high technology or high energy was resolved by the US choosing high technology and the Soviets choosing high energy. For those who achieve transcendent deviance, the prospection necessary to imagine a different, better world may have rendered that future as tangible to the individual as the present – a future context which felt inevitable. Prospection, including the use of first-principles reasoning and freedom from functional fixedness, and a capacity for moral imagination may be enablers for the ontological inflection point leading to transcendent deviance and extraordinary, positive change.

Coming to the inflection point and realizing "things don't have to be this way" does not necessarily mean the individual has fully identified where they want to go or what they want to create. They may simply know at the time that they want something different from what they currently experience in their referent group context.[4] Other enablers to transcendent deviance may be openness to experience, one of the big-5 personality characteristics (McCrae & Costa, 1987), and a learning goal orientation (Elliot & Dweck, 1988) leading to experimentation and trial and error. McCrae (1987) found openness to experience to be far more consistently associated with divergent thinking than any of the other big-5 personality traits. Openness to experience will mentally allow an individual to imagine and try out a possibility not existing in the norms around them, as well as allow them to undertake a path where there are many unknowns. Similarly, a learning goal orientation means an individual is less concerned about how they perform and look to others, and more interested in what they learn as they negotiate different challenges. This frees them up psychologically to undertake more seemingly insoluble challenges, such as they would encounter when they start down the path of transcendent deviance, and learn and grow from their experiences.

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[4] Based on pilot interviews with first-generation college students to qualify ideas for transcendent deviance.

Gross (1977a) suggested that the road to what she calls "virtuous deviance[5]" is made up of escalations of commitment. She likens it to Goffman's concept of "creating fateful experience" (1967): aware that they may incur consequences, individuals choose nevertheless to take certain avoidable steps. Gross argued that virtuous deviance is a much more self-managed and conscious path than that described by researchers and theorists who focus on traditional, negative deviance. In her study of Vietnam War resisters, Gross (1977a: 321) speaks of the relevance of conflictual validation (Gouldner, 1970:221): the self-regard and recognition of boundaries experienced when the self violates expectations of others, creating a sense of difference and autonomy in the individual relative to those with whom he or she experiences tensions. This dawning awareness opens the door to social action, and potentially, transcendent deviance.

In the case of Jane Kennedy (Gross, 1977b: 74), a middle-class nurse with no history of social dissent who ended up being jailed for her anti-Vietnam War activities, her entry into social dissent seemed to be driven by a need for self-concordance. A meeting with a Selma protester prompted her to question her own values and commitment to her beliefs, when he challenged her:

> 'So you understand about this. So what are you going to do this summer when it gets hot in Chicago?' And then my heart really sunk…I tried to forget that direct challenge. I really did, because that's a dreadful, dreadful thing…I thought, 'I can't do that sort of thing.' I would read what the marchers had done, and then it came to me that that's what I had to do….Finally I got down there and found the group. I didn't know a soul….But OK, I was moving. I didn't know where I was going. I didn't know what it all meant. But I knew I was moving in the right direction.

For the Vietnam War resisters, taking this first, consequential step seemed to bring a sense of serenity, integration, self-definition and self-concordance, the latter also mentioned by Bateman and Porath (2003) as a possible driver of transcendental behavior. Some of the

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[5] Commonly known as "positive deviance" in the positive organizational scholarship literature, and more recently "constructive deviance" (Galperin, 2012).

resisters described their fateful step (Gross, 1977a: 322) as having "proved to myself that I had free will," "showing control over my destiny," "making a stand." On the path to transcendent deviance, through the inflection point, there seems to be some core of private self-identity which becomes strengthened through interaction with others and public expression and commitment.

Existentialist philosophers such as Heidegger (1927) and Sartre (1943) would have seen these actions as steps toward authenticity: a process of becoming achieved only by questioning norms, interpreting freshly one's own experiences rather than relying on institutionalized concepts and abstractions, and acting independently of normative pressures. For them, conformity was an act of negation of one's essence. Non-conformists may be more internally driven or autonomous in their actions, and therefore more able to resist social influences such as legitimate, referent or expert power, or to resist normative or informational norms. A meta-analysis by Avtgis (1998) of the relation between locus of control (Rotter, 1966) and susceptibility to influence, persuasion and conformity showed a .39 correlation for having an external locus of control (the belief that events in life are controlled by luck, fate or powerful others) compared to those with an internal locus of control (the belief that events in life are controlled by oneself). However, Stillman, Baumeister et al. (2010) were able to distinguish belief in free will (the belief one has choice in one's actions) from internal locus of control (Levenson, 1974), finding that belief in free will increased the use of the executive function involved in self-management and decision-making more than an internal locus of control. Further, Alquist, Ainsworth and Baumeister (2013) found that belief in free will led to autonomous action and resistance to pressures of conformity. They defined free will as a layman's perception of being able to act based on one's own inner thoughts, feelings, and choices, rather than being driven by external pressures. Some aspect of inner-directedness seems key to being able to successfully negotiate the deviance from norms necessary for

transcendent deviance. Bateman and Porath (2003) proposed intrinsic motivation as a possible enabler of transcendental behaviour, while Spreitzer and Sonenshein (2003) mentioned self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000) as a possible enabler of positive deviance. More research needs to be done on the relation between non-conformity, particularly independence, and locus of control (Rotter, 1966), intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000), and autonomy and self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000).

Non-conformity requires more conscious effort compared to conformity (Alquist, Ainsworth & Baumeister, 2013). Making choices and decisions, initiating behavior, deciding to risk and overcome argumentation, conflict or social rejection, are part of self-regulation, or using the executive function, and self-regulation comes at a temporary cost. Baumeister, Bratslavsky et al. (1998:1252) call this cost "ego-depletion." The executive function requires energy, or ego strength, to function. Repeated exercising of the executive function will exhaust the ego, affecting a person's ability to self-regulate and make the choices he or she would make when endowed with more energy (Baumeister, Bratslavsky et al., 1998; Baumeister, Vohs & Tice, 2007). Webb and Sheeran (2002) found that implementation intentions overcome temporary ego-depletion, so if an individual sees their non-conforming behavior as part of a succession of goal-oriented steps, they will feel less fatigue. This may help explain choices when and when not to conform. In many cases, the effort is just not worth it. Spreitzer and Sonenshein (2003) suggested self-management (or self-regulation) as a possible enabler of positive deviance. However, the ego-strength and self-regulation required not to conform may only be justified for those issues with attitude strength and personal import central to one's self-concept, those issues or goals that lead to transcendent deviance.

Finally, Hornsey, Blackwood et al. (2006) examined how different goals for collective protest might affect future participation. They found that those who participated in a rally as a

member of an organization did so with the goal of building up an oppositional movement, not with any belief that the rally would change the opinions and actions of those dictating policy, or change the opinions and actions of the general public. Perceived effectiveness in building up an oppositional movement predicted future involvement in the cause. For those rally participants who were not affiliated with an organization, the primary goal was to influence the general public, and perceived effectiveness in this predicted future involvement in the cause. However, while this and other studies show evidence linking self-efficacy to collective action, for both members and non-members of this particular rally, more than any goal-related efficacy cost-benefit analyses, the greatest predictor of future involvement was their self-identification as an activist.

Table Two reviews the different social influences which encourage conformity, and the possible enablers of transcendent deviance based on this review of the social psychology literature on non-conformity, and the positive organizational scholarship literature. While this list may seem exhaustive, if not exhausting, the non-conformity literature suggests that transcendent deviance is not just enabled or driven by personal characteristics such as autonomy, openness to experience, courage, or self-regulation, but is also a form of identity work writ large. Identity work refers to the work individuals do to differentiate themselves and manage the boundaries between self- and social-identities in order to feel authentic and coherent (Koerner, 2014). With transcendent deviance, the individual embraces possibilities – aspects of self – that don't normally exist in their original context, and starts on a journey of learning, discovery and creation. This journey begins with the phase around the inflection point – the point where the individual embarks on a trajectory different from the norms of their referent group. The energy it takes to non-conform and embark on a path less travelled implies strong motivations. The focus of this paper has been on what it takes to deviate from the normative path. How they are able to persevere to overcome the personal and

Table Two: Characteristics Enabling Resistance to Social Influences

Social Influences	Characteristics Enabling Resistance
Descriptive norms (Nolan, Schultz & Cialdini, 2008): doing or advocating doing things because others are doing them	*Prospection* (Gilbert & Wilson, 2007) *Absence of functional fixedness* (Duncker, 1945) *First-principles reasoning* (Musk, 2013); *Moral imagination* (Hartman, Wilson & Arnold, 2005; Werhane, 1999); *Mindfulness* (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000); *Private self-consciousness* (Santee & Maslach, 1982);
Informational conformity (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955): the desire to form an accurate representation of reality and relying on others to do so	*Attitude strength* (Rios, 2012); *Moral belief* (Hornsey, Majkut et al., 2003); *Self-belief in own intelligence* (Hollander & Willis, 1967); *Prospection* (Gilbert & Wilson, 2007) *First-principles reasoning* (Musk, 2013); *Learning goal orientation* (Elliot & Dweck, 1988); *Openness to experience* (McCrae, 1987; McCrae & Costa, 1987);
Isolation causing lack of perceived alternatives, shared communication, sense of impotence (Hollander, 1975)	*Minority social group or category identification* (Gross 1977 a, b; Rios, 2012);
Legitimate power (French & Raven, 1959) power created by hierarchy, bureaucracy, rules or laws; *Coercive power* (French & Raven, 1959): power to punish; *Fear of disrupting proceeding* (Hollander, 1975): disrupting the flow of things, or routine patterns of behavior, provoking conflict	*Belief in free will* (Alquist, Ainsworth and Baumeister, 2013; Gross, 1977a; Stillman, Baumeister et al., 2010) *Courage* (Bateman and Porath, 2003; Spreitzer & Sonenshein, 2003; Worline & Quinn, 2003); *Ego-strength* enabling *self-regulation* (Alquist, Ainsworth & Baumeister, 2013; Baumeister, Bratslavsky et al., 1998; Baumeister, Vohs & Tice, 2007; (or *self-management*, Spreitzer & Sonenshein, 2003); *Internal locus of control* (Avtgis, 1998; Rotter, 1966) *Intrinsic motivation* (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Bateman & Porath, 2003); *Meaning* (Spreitzer & Sonenshein, 2003); *Other-focus* (Spreitzer & Sonenshein, 2003); *Private self-consciousness* (Santee & Maslach, 1982); *Self-concept* (Imhoff & Erb, 2009; Rios, 2012); *Self-concordance* (Gross 1977a; Spreitzer & Sonenshein, 2003) *Self-efficacy* (Bandura 1977, 1982, 1989; Bateman and Porath, 2003; Spreitzer &

	Sonenshein, 2003) and *generalized self-efficacy* (Smith, 1989); *Tolerance for ambiguity* (Budner, 1962)
Referent power (French & Raven, 1959): influence because of the admiration or regard with which that individual is held; *Expert power* (French & Raven, 1959): influence because that person is held to have more knowledge in a particular area;	*Autonomy* and *Self-determination* (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000; Spreitzer & Sonenshein, 2003); *Conflictual validation* (Gross, 1977a; Gouldner, 1970); *Low social identification* (Tajfel, 1981); *Low public self-consciousness* (Santee & Maslach, 1982); *Low social anxiety* (Santee & Maslach, 1982)
Normative conformity (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955): the desire to fit in and gain social approval of others; *Risk of disapproval* (Hollander, 1975) *Ingratiational conformity* (Man, 1969): conforming to gain favour or reward; *Reward power* (French & Raven, 1959): influence through the ability to reward	*Self-concept* (Imhoff & Erb, 2009; Rios, 2012); *Self-concordance* (Gross 1977a; Spreitzer & Sonenshein, 2003)

environmental constraints they face to create extraordinary change is a topic for the future. The literature on non-conformity suggests that the dragons they slay on this journey identify their strengths, confirm their values, and build a unique sense of self and purpose. How they manage the boundary between the self and potential multiple social identities as they move from context to context and expand their world is of especial interest for future research.

Bringing together the Schools of Deviance and Non-Conformity

While a major stream of research in social psychology focuses on social influence, conformity and non-conformity, a major school in sociology focuses on deviance, and rarely the twain do meet. My nascent exploration of the concept of transcendent deviance allows a positive re-interpretation of Merton's sociological analysis of deviance (1938) as well as a linkage to social psychology definitions of conformity, anti-conformity and independence (Krech, Crutchfield & Ballachey, 1962); Willis, 1963), and the social psychological reactions

of compliance and internalization (Kelman, 1958). Further, I link how these mechanisms are relevant to management concepts of positive deviance, innovation, creating excellence, and finally, transcendent deviance and creating the extraordinary.

Merton identified two fundamental elements of the social structure: culturally-defined goals, and institutionalized methods of achieving these goals. Culturally defined goals are those goals, purposes, and interests considered norms or an "aspirational frame of reference" (Merton, 1938: 672) in a particular culture, whether this be the culture of a community, an organization, or a nation. The institutionalized methods of achieving those goals are those ways and means that are considered appropriate and normative for that particular culture, even if they are not the most efficient. For example, in most communities, if a cultural goal is to attain wealth, stealing would not be considered an institutionalized method for achieving it; rather, it would be a rejection of more conventional means to attain a conventional goal.

Merton identified five adaptations to these structural elements, stressing that individuals may shift from one adaptation to another depending on the situation. *Conformity*: accepting both the cultural goals and the institutionalized means. This is the path followed by most. *Innovation*: accepting the cultural goals and rejecting the institutionalized means. Note that innovation in this context does not necessarily have positive overtones: per the example above, crime, in Merton's view, is an innovative response to believing in cultural goals (e.g. wealth, success), but not having access to the institutionalized means. From this seed came Cloward and Ohlin's theory of opportunity structure (1960). *Ritualism*: rejecting the cultural goals but accepting the institutional means (not engaging with conventional cultural goals, but following the motions by carrying out conventional or institutionalized behaviors). *Retreatism*: rejecting both cultural goals and institutional means (dropping out, defeatism, quietism, escapism), and *rebellion*: cherry-picking from existing cultural goals and

institutionalized means, and creating new goals and means as necessary to create a new social structure.

Figure Two shows Merton's model, using four quadrants for the first four adaptations, with a fifth box for the outlier, *rebellion*. In the top left qaudrant, individuals accept culturally-established goals and standards and apply themselves to use institutionally accepted means. This is Merton's sociological definition of conformity, and fits the social psychology definition of conformity as well. Further, they have internalized these cultural goals and institutionalized means, and when they pursue these goals effectively and exceptionally, they create excellence. In the top right quadrant, individuals pursue culturally accepted goals, but reject institutionalized means, what Merton calls this innovation. Acharya and Taylor (2012), and Pascale and Sternin (2005) have previously identified positive deviance as sitting in Merton's innovation quadrant, as both accept culturally defined goals but find new ways to achieve them. Galperin (2012) situates constructive deviance there as well. I argue that innovation under this definition requires a combination of independence and conformity. When innovation is conducted positively and effectively, it enables continued excellence over time in a way that conformity does not.

In the lower left quadrant, individuals reject cultural goals, but by accepting institutionalized means, do not alter their behaviour from the norm. Merton calls this ritualism; social psychology would call it compliance: conforming in behaviour although not in spirit. In the lower right quadrant, individuals reject both cultural goals and institutionalized means. Merton calls this retreatism; social psychologists would situate anti-conformist attitudes and behaviors here. This begs the question, what about anti-conformists who are activists? Activism is not a retreatist behaviour. Although more research needs to be done, I propose that activists, although they may be initially catalysed by anger or rejection

Linking Transcendent Deviance with the Deviance & Non-Conformity Literatures
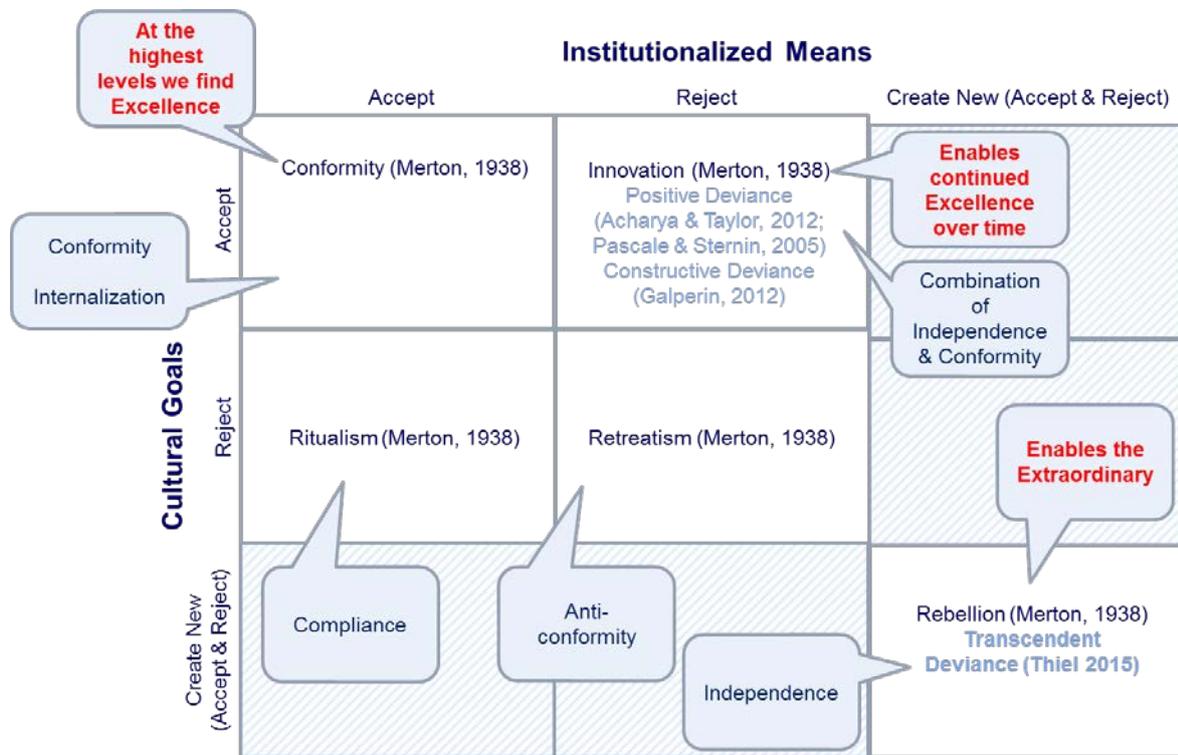
Building on Robert K. Merton's Deviance Typology (1938)

of an existing situation, are fuelled over time by a vision of what could be, or by values that need to be reinstated or generated. In other words, a positive reframing of future possibility provides the energy for continued, sustainable effort.

That positive reframing brings us to the fifth box, where the individual creates new cultural goals and means to achieve them, and preserves old cultural goals and institutional means when they serve to support the new cultural goals. Merton calls this rebellion. Bringing a 21st-century, positive lens to the fifth box, one could call it positive rebellion, but that suggest reactive, anti-conformist behaviour. I propose that this is the home of transcendent deviance and of social psychological independence. From a social psychology perspective, the individual thinks, acts and holds beliefs independently of current norms, conforming or anti-conforming when it serves its purpose, and taking independent views and lines of action when it doesn't. What occurs in this box creates the extraordinary.

Discussion

By introducing the concept of transcendent deviance I define an extraordinary outcome: an exceptionally positive outcome that deviates from previous norms, and thus redefines the boundaries of human achievement, or rewrites the rules and creates a new, revolutionary way of doing things. In doing so, it inspires us to redefine what is possible, and potentially changes the way we view the world. I show, through a review of the management literature how the path to the extraordinary differs from the path toward excellent outcomes, which is doing what everyone else does but doing it better. I show how perspectives in the deviance literature in sociology help delineate this difference, with the statistical perspective showing excellence as the outlier on the far right of the normative curve, whereas the reactive perspective shows the extraordinary as the outlier which breaks the paradigm, creating a potential new curve. By triangulating research on deviance in sociology, non-conformity in social psychology, and positive deviance in the management literature, I have created a new, integrated framework based on a positive revisioning of Merton's framework of deviance. This positive revisioning helps clarify further the difference between excellence, innovation and positive deviance, and the extraordinary and transcendent deviance. It also shows where social psychological concepts of conformity, anti-conformity and independence, as well as compliance and internalization, play their parts in creating excellence versus the extraordinary.

Having defined that the extraordinary entails deviance from norms, I investigated what social psychology literature says about non-conformity, also checking positive organizational scholarship on positive deviance, to understand what enables that deviation. Much of what I have written about possible enablers is necessarily tentative because transcendent deviance is a new concept, and I have had to extrapolate from the writing on

non-conformity and positive deviance. I have mapped out which psychological characteristics seem to help an individual prevail against the various social influences pushing an individual to conform, believing that this will help us understand the psychological mechanisms underlying transcendent deviance. This investigation shows that non-conformity is under-researched in social psychology compared to conformity, and that the psychological enablers and drivers of the two aspects of non-conformity, anti-conformity but especially independence, are not sufficiently understood (Hornsey, Majkut et al., 2003). Further, more research on non-conformity needs to be done using situations where the issues at stake are important to the participants for researchers to truly begin to understand what drives both aspects of non-conformity (Packer and Miners, 2013).

Research in positive deviance in the management field tends not to focus on the psychological traits or the psychological processes individuals go through as they take the first of several fateful steps toward positive deviance. Notable exceptions include Spreitzer and Sonenshein (2003) on positive deviance itself, and relevant ancillary studies of transcendental behaviour (Bateson & Porath, 2003), courageous principled action (Worline & Quinn, 2003) and virtuous deviance and moral imagination (Hartman, Wilson and Arnold, 2005). These studies, however, are theoretical rather than empirical, showing that much empirical research is necessary within both social psychology and organizational studies to fill in the gaps.

Further, the process of identifying an alternative path to the norms of one's referent group is still unclear. I borrow from Grove (1996) to call this the inflection point, identifying that there is a phase during which an individual realizes, "Things don't have to be this way." Research on prospection (Buckner & Carroll, 2007; Blouin-Hudon & Pychyl, 2015; Gilbert & Wilson, 2007; Seligman et al., 2013) is still in its infancy, but the ability to link theory with neuroscience to understand how people envision and believe in a future not yet realized

makes this an exciting new area. The literature on non-conformity suggests that issues of self-concordance (Spreitzer & Sonenshein, 2003), social identity (Tajfel, 1981), and identity work (Koerner 2014) are interwoven into this phase before and after the inflection point. This is an extremely rich area of inquiry. Clear questions remaining from this review include the relationship between private self-consciousness and public self-consciousness (Santee & Maslach, 1982), and the salience of each individually. Along the path to transcendent deviance, do individuals experience provisional selves (Ibarra, 1999), or develop bicultural identities (Bell, 1990) or multiple transcendent social identities (Roccas & Brewer, 2000)? Is social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981) relevant, but transcendent deviants choose an aspirational social identity group different from their referent group, much as Sotomayor did when she identified with the television character Perry Mason (Sotomayor, 2013)? Does weak-tie social network theory (Granovetter, 1973) help us understand how individuals might experiment with multiple social identities that allow them to diverge from their main social referent group? Koerner (2014) highlighted the importance of identity work in acts of courage, and maintains that how individuals manage multiple facets of their identity, or multiple social identities, is an important area of organizational research that needs expanding.

An area of transcendent deviance also not explored in this study is what it takes to overcome personal and environmental constraints to create extraordinary change. I expect that grit (Duckworth, Peterson et al., 2007), and resilience (Sutcliffe & Vogus, 2003) will play important parts here, but perhaps also some characteristics already identified, such as learning goal orientation (Elliot & Dweck, 1988) which allows experimentation and learning from trial and error, attitude strength (Rios, 2012), generalized self-efficacy (Smith, 1989), and prospection (Gilbert & Wilson, 2007) for living as if the future is as concrete a reality as the present.

The little research in non-conformity so far has been driven by the social psychology field, with a natural bias toward hypothesis-led laboratory experiments and multivariate statistical analysis. This has rendered some insights, but a comprehensive view is missing. There is a need for qualitative studies to really understand the phenomena as well as the process that take a person down the path of transcendent deviance. We need the richness of stories of the extraordinary such as Jane Kennedy's (Gross, 1977b) to be documented as case studies (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 1981, 1984), using rich ethnographic techniques (van Maanem, 1988) and variations on grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss and Corbin, 1990) so that scholars can bear witness to transcendent deviance, revealing detail and insights not possible in quantitative research, and as a complement and inspiration to further multivariate studies.

Why is this important? Why study the extraordinary, outliers and transcendent deviance? The organizational sciences have traditionally emulated the natural sciences in trying to discern natural laws of human behaviour from which we can predict future behaviour (Daft & Lewin, 1990). Studies strive to demonstrate reliability of an already existing idea by replicating a previous experiment, or the validity of an idea by creating the same outcome through a different experimental approach (Colquitt & Zapata-Phelan, 2007). Studies tend to reinforce or refine previous assumptions rather than challenging them: they build on existing literature by identifying gaps or further extending an existing theory (Davis, 1971; Sandberg & Alvesson, 2010). As a discipline we tend to be in pursuit of a statistically significant normal distribution: we are pushed to show representativeness, random selection, and large samples in our studies (Siggelkow, 2007). We endeavour to predict probabilities of outcomes between independent and dependent variables (Bacharach, 1989). When the research objective is to understand tendencies and norms in the current larger population, this approach serves us well. The underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions are that

there is an inherent stability in human behaviour over time which is knowable and measureable (Cooperrider, 2013).

Yet in fact, we know that the natural variability of human behaviour makes the subject of organizational science much less predictable than the laws found in the natural sciences (Pfeffer, 1993). In addition, we are recognizing increasingly through chaos theory that there is a fundamental unpredictability in human systems (Daft & Lewin, 1990). This variance and inherent plasticity in human attitudes and behaviour, while it complicates traditional social scientific inquiry immensely, also implies tremendous possibilities. Firstly, whether on an individual or organizational level, studying outliers offers significant insights not supplied by more traditional approaches (Daft & Lewin, 1990). There is precedent in the neurosciences for examining a sample of one, which has created great insights otherwise unobtainable (Ramachandran, 1998), and in the management field, with the use of case studies (Eisenhardt, 1989; Gibbert, Ruigrok, & Wicki, 2008; Yin, 1981, 1984).

Secondly, the variance and inherent plasticity in human attitudes, interactions and behaviour suggest that what we consider a norm in any given day and age may not be the norm in the future. We see this historically with drastic changes in attitudes toward women and different races – South Africa post-apartheid is a powerful example. Creating a new paradigm implies an ontological shift in imagination about what reality could be. Prediction based on a science which assumes stability only serves to reinforce the status quo, and ignores the extraordinary human capacity for change. How can we create theory that logically and compellingly describes what could be, rather than what is? How can this ontological and epistemological challenge be handled differently? Langer (2009) and Cooperrider (2013) advocate the study of positive outliers to generate a different theory of knowledge and being, not of stability but of possibility.

If we are to study outliers, we must ask ourselves what scholarship goals we set at the beginning of our study, as well as what the implications are for the research questions we choose to ask. What do we want to learn, and to what purpose? Our goal could be simply to document – to describe what has occurred, including our hypothesis on causal relationships, as a kind of historical artefact. We could assume that since it is an outlier it is not likely to happen again. That would be the assumption based on a science of stability, where outliers are by definition not replicable. Or, we could view outliers as what Weick calls "an existence proof – if something can happen once, it likely can happen again" (Weick, 2007, p. 14). Or, take Langer's view: "If I can make one dog yodel, then we can say that yodelling is possible in dogs." This is what she calls the psychology of possibility (2009, loc. 222).

If we can understand the causal relationships of a positive outlier, what implications does that have for what the world could be, of what human beings are capable? With this outlook we can reap the benefit of being scholars in a field where the complexity, variance and plasticity of human behaviour becomes not a hindrance to our scientific investigation, but an opportunity. What we ask opens up the parameters of what we are able to learn, and gives us the potential to create not just a psychology of possibility, but a potential scholarship of transformation (Langer, 2009; Cooperrider, 2013). How are positive outlier behaviors learnable; how are outlier attitudes formable; how are outlier actions repeatable and transferable? Researching outliers allows us to dig deeply into epistemological questions of what is knowable, and asks us to be clear about the potential of what we could find out with our research. Langer says, "The psychology of possibility first requires that we begin with the assumption that we do not know what we can do or become. Rather than starting from the status quo, it argues for a starting point of what we would like to be" (2009, loc. 255). I argue that outliers in fact give us precious, positive proof of what we can do or become. As scholars, can we contribute not just to our field, but also to society, by understanding what

conditions can replicate and create more positive outliers? Is there a transformative nature to the knowledge we may gain?

There is a further ontological implication, as researching outliers also forces us to ask more deeply what is possible – not just for our outlier, who has proved what is possible for a sample of one, but for greater sections of the population and the world as we know it. Langer writes, "Too many of us believe the world is to be discovered, rather than a product of our own construction and thus to be invented" (2009, loc. 297). Research into transcendent deviance has the potential to become a scholarship of transformation if we allow ourselves to recognize and grasp the potential and opportunity before us. To understand not just what stops people from doing extraordinary things, but what enables them, as Robert Kennedy said, to "dream of things that never were, and ask why not?"

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