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## Everett M. Rogers, an intercultural life: From Iowa farm boy to global intellectual

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### ABSTRACT

The present article describes and analyzes the key influences that shaped the lifework of Everett M. Rogers – the person, the scholar, the mentor, and the global intercultural citizen. Rogers' key theoretical and conceptual contributions to the social sciences are discussed, focusing especially on his seminal work on the diffusion of innovations. The article argues that Rogers' life journey represents the quintessential intercultural life: a poor, Iowa farm boy who became an internationally recognized global intellectual; a scholar, who theorized about both macro- and micro-aspects of social change and provided a heuristic framework with remarkable potential for field-based application; a sense-maker who remained solidly anchored in the field of diffusion of innovations, but who continually deepened and extended his curiosity to other areas such as communication networks, entertainment–education, and international, intercultural, health, and organizational communication; a prodigious mentor who affirmed, validated, and challenged his students to pursue unasked or intriguing questions; a genuine networker who understood the social capital advantages of learning from heterophilous others, affirming and embodying the value of diversity; a global citizen who traveled widely, learned other languages, lived for extended durations in faraway lands, and who maintained a sense of humanity and humility in his interactions with others.

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Any scholar could envy [Everett M. Rogers'] quartet of gifts: a keen sensitivity to relationships among clues... a yawning appetite for collecting and interpreting data; an eye for transformational questions. (Clarke, 2005, p. 306)

### 1. Introduction

A few months before he passed away, Everett M. Rogers sent me a note with his updated curriculum vitae: "To: Arvind Singhal. It seems you have been my closest collaborator." Signed "Cordially, Ev." My collaborative ride with Ev Rogers – on the path of communication and social change, diffusion of innovations, and the entertainment–education communication strategy – was spread over two decades, took us to 18 countries on six continents and yielded five co-authored books, 35 peer-reviewed essays, and scores of joint appearances and presentations. Less countable and even more meaningful were the numerous interactional opportunities afforded by our relationship as mentor–mentee, co-authors, co-travelers, colleagues, and friends.

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In writing this essay, I dig deep into my treasure trough of collaborative remembrances, sprinkled with nuggets from oral histories conducted with Ev Rogers (including Singhal & Domatab, 1993; Singhal & Law, 1997; Singhal & Obregon, 2005), published accounts by others who knew Ev Rogers' well (Backer, Dearing, Singhal, & Valente, 2005; Singhal & Dearing, 2006), and quotes from Ev Rogers' (2008) memoir, *The Fourteenth Paw: Growing up on an Iowa Farm in the 1930s*, published after his passing.

In the present essay, I describe and analyze the key influences that shaped Ev Rogers – the person, the scholar, the mentor, and the global intercultural citizen. I discuss his key theoretical and conceptual contributions to the social sciences, analyzing their influence and impact over time. As no canvas can be large enough to capture the rich hues of Rogers' scholarly palette, his seminal work on the diffusion of innovations earns the most paint and brush strokes. Other colorful dabs help illustrate the man behind the scholarship, who, I argue, lived and breathed a truly intercultural life. As a tribute to his intercultural life work, this essay is charted in five sections with five sub-headings: (1) son of the Iowa soil turned global intellectual, (2) connector of theory with practice, (3) anchored yet curiously adaptable, (4) nurturing gardener and natural cross-pollinator, and (5) in summation, an intercultural life.

## 2. Son of the Iowa soil turned global intellectual

When Ev was growing up on the family farm in the 1930s, his mother told him that the purpose of life was to leave this world a better place than when he arrived. (Shefner-Rogers, 2006, p. 246)

Ev Rogers was born on March 6, 1931 on the 210-acre family Pinehurst Farm in Carroll, Iowa during the Great Depression. Hard economic times meant a tough life for farm families, especially poor ones like the Rogers. Pinehurst Farm in the 1930s had no internal plumbing, heating, or electricity and in the sub-zero winters of Iowa, Rogers (2008, p. 113) recalled: “one's hands got red and chapped from wearing wet gloves or mittens while doing chores, and from milking the dairy cows.” Rogers attended Maple River #9, a one-room school a mile away from the farm, and returned home to a multitude of chores – feeding the hogs, tending the garden, and greasing the farm machinery.

This daily hard work ethic that Rogers learned early on an Iowa farm was to define his life-journey, shaping his professional life as a teacher, scholar, and researcher. Industrious, productive, and prolific, Rogers authored 37 books, 180 journal articles, 140 book chapters, and some 150 research reports in his five-decade career. The outputs of his fertile mind, akin to the loamy Iowa soil, shaped and influenced the field of rural sociology, communication, international development, marketing, and public health (see Box 1).

### Box 1: Everett M. Rogers' distinguished career.

Key recognitions bestowed on Ev Rogers:

Paul D. Converse Award of the American Marketing Association in 1975 and in 2004 for Outstanding Contribution to the Science of Marketing.

Distinguished Rural Sociologist Award, Rural Sociological Society (1986).

*Diffusion of innovations* designated as a Citation Classic by the Institute for Scientific Information, Philadelphia (1990); by *Inc.* magazine (in 1996, December Issue) as one of the ten classic books in business; and as a Significant Journalism and Communication Book of the Twentieth Century by Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly, 2000.

Outstanding Health Communication Scholar Award, International Communication Association/National Communication Association, 1999.

Lifetime Achievement Award, Division of Intercultural and Development Communication, International Communication Association, 2000.

First Fellows Book Award in the Field of Communication (for *Diffusion of innovations*), International Communication Association, 2000.

National Communication Association (NCA) Applied Communication Division's Distinguished Book Award (for *Combating AIDS: Communication Strategies in Action*, with Arvind Singhal, 2004) and (for *Entertainment-education: A Communication Strategy for Social Change*, with Arvind Singhal, 2000).

Source: Ev Rogers curriculum vitae.

Rogers' mother, Madeline, infused in the young Ev a love of books expanding his understanding of the world beyond the Iowa farm. However, Rogers was unsure about attending college. He wanted to be a farmer. Pep Martens, his high school teacher, drove him to Ames to see the Iowa State University (ISU) campus, encouraging him to apply. In fall 1948, armed with a tuition scholarship, Ev enrolled at ISU in Ames to pursue a degree in agriculture.

Iowa State in those years had a great intellectual tradition in agriculture and in rural sociology. Numerous agricultural innovations were generated by scientists at Iowa State. Rural sociologists, notably George Beal, who later advised Rogers' MA and PhD theses, were conducting pioneering studies on the diffusion of agricultural innovations – high-yielding hybrid seed corn, chemical fertilizers, and weed sprays. Questions were being asked about why do some farmers adopt these innovations, and some don't?

These questions intrigued Rogers because back on Pinehurst Farm, he saw that his father loved electro-mechanical farm innovations, but was highly resistant to biological–chemical innovations. Rogers Sr. resisted adopting the new hybrid seed corn for eight years, even though it yielded 25% more crop, and was resistant to drought. During the Iowa drought of 1936, while the hybrid seed corn stood tall on the neighbors' farms, the crop on the Rogers' farm wilted. Rogers Sr. was finally convinced. From his father's reluctance to adopt biological and chemical innovations, even though they brought monetary benefits, Rogers grasped that adopting innovations was not just a rational economic decision. More influential seemed to be the opinions of neighboring farmers, especially those that his father respected. Adopting innovations seemed to be a social process, involving exchange of ideas, persuasion, and personal influence. These social aspects of innovation diffusion formed the basis of Rogers' graduate work at Iowa State.

Completed in 1957 and titled, *A Conceptual Variable Analysis of Technological Change*, Rogers' doctoral dissertation was a diffusion study of 155 farmers in Collins, Iowa, focusing on the adoption of a dozen or so agricultural innovations. The data-analysis focused on predicting variance in agricultural innovativeness, the degree to which an individual is relatively earlier in adopting new ideas than others (Rogers, 1958). Rogers found innovativeness to be normally distributed (much like height or IQ) and hence could allow the possibility of creating a standardized adopter categorization: from innovators, to early adopters, to early majority, to late majority, to laggards. In 2000, when asked about the key contribution of his dissertation, Rogers noted: "I brought standardization to adopter categorizations, utilizing the mean and standard deviations from the mean to specify the percentage of individuals in each category" (personal conversation, March 23, 2000).

Rogers' dissertation committee liked the elegant multiple regression predicting innovativeness but were more intrigued by his review of literature chapter. In reviewing hundreds of diffusion studies of all kinds of innovations – agricultural, educational, medical, and marketing – Rogers found many similarities: innovations tend to diffuse following an S-Curve of adoption; that the most innovative teachers, doctors, and farmers were more cosmopolitan, more connected.

This review of literature chapter, greatly expanded, became the basis for Rogers' 1962 book, *Diffusion of Innovations*. The book abstracted a general model of diffusion based on empirical work from various disciplines (Dearing & Singhal, 2006). His opus provided a comprehensive theory of how innovations (not just agricultural innovations) spread in a social system.

When the diffusion book was first published, Rogers was a 30-year old Assistant Professor of Rural Sociology at Ohio State University. Although young in years, his reputation as a diffusion scholar was rising rapidly on the regional (in the mid-West) and national stage. The publication of the diffusion book would catapult it to the world stage. The book's timing was uncanny, and its appeal was global. In the 1960s, national governments of newly independent countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America were wrestling with how to diffuse agriculture, nutrition, education, and public health innovations. The newly published book provided a useable framework.

At the 1962 meeting of the American Sociological Association in St. Louis, MO, Rogers' path crossed with Orlando Fals Borda, Dean, Faculty of Sociology, Universidad Nacional, Bogota, Colombia (Singhal & Obregon, 2005). Fals Borda encouraged Rogers to apply for a Fulbright lectureship to teach in his Faculty. The only catch: Rogers would need to learn Spanish, and quickly. He did. In a 2000 oral history interview, Rogers reflected: "My Fulbright year in Colombia marked my entrance into international work. I went from doing agricultural studies in Iowa and Ohio to being concerned with the world. The time spent in Colombia gave me confidence that I could learn any language, go any place, and survive" (personal conversation, March 23, 2000).

The publishing of diffusion of innovations also marked Rogers' move from being based in a department of rural sociology to one in the rising discipline of communication (Table 1). Steve Chaffee, a colleague and long-time friend of Rogers, astutely noted (1991, p. 21): "By organizing and synthesizing several thousand studies of diffusion around a set of conceptual distinctions and empirical generalizations, Rogers founded an entire sub-discipline within communication research." He did so by arguing that the diffusion of innovations was fundamentally a social and communication process.

### 3. Connector of theory with practice

If diffusion is about change and destruction and uncertainty, then interpersonal networks and opinion leaders were about stability, normative influence, and the measured appraisal of new ideas. (Dearing & Singhal, 2006, p. 23)

To fully appreciate the value of Rogers' 47-year scholarship on the diffusion of innovations one must acknowledge that diffusion was one of the few social theories that persuasively linked macro and micro-level social change phenomenon. Consequently, its macro- and micro- generalizations held immense heuristic value for field-based application.

Rogers defined diffusion as "the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system" (Rogers, 2003, p. 5). An innovation is "an idea, practice, or object perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption" (Rogers, 2003, p. 12). Diffusion research is distinctive from other kinds of communication research in that the messages are perceived as new by the receivers. In communication research that is not the diffusion of innovations, the messages are usually expected, familiar, or anticipated. This novelty in the diffusion of innovations necessarily means that the source of the message must be more knowledgeable, or expert, than the receiver. That is, by definition, diffusion represents an intercultural communication encounter involving heterophilous (or dissimilar) individuals. Further, the individual who perceives the idea, object, or practice as new experiences a high degree of uncertainty in seeking information about, and deciding to adopt an innovation (Rogers, Singhal, & Quinlan, 2009).

**Table 1**  
Key events in Ev Rogers' life.

March 6, 1931	Born, Carroll, Iowa
1944–1948	Carroll High School, Carroll, Iowa
1948–1952	Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa, B.S., Agriculture
1952–1954	United States Air Force, Second/First Lieutenant, Korean War
1954–1957	Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa, MS and PhD, Rural Sociology
1957–1963	Assistant Professor and Associate Professor of Rural Sociology, Ohio State University
1962	<i>Diffusion of Innovations</i> (first edition) published by Free Press
1963–1964	Fulbright Lecturer, Faculty of Sociology, National University of Colombia, Bogotá
1964–1973	Associate Professor and Professor of Communication, Michigan State University
1973–1975	Professor of Population Planning in the School of Public Health, and Professor of Journalism, University of Michigan
1975–1985	Janet M. Peck Professor of International Communication, Institute for Communication Research, Stanford University
1981	Fulbright Lecturer, French Press Institute, University of Paris, Paris, France
1985 to 1992	Walter H. Annenberg Professor of Communication, Annenberg School for Communication, University of Southern California
1991–1992	Fellow, Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, Stanford, CA
1993–2004	Professor and Chair, Regents' Professor and Distinguished Professor, Department of Communication and Journalism, University of New Mexico
1996	Ludwig Erhard Professor, University of Bayreuth, Bayreuth, Germany
1998	Wee Kim Wee Professor of Communication, School of Communication Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore
1999–2000	Visiting Professor, Center for Communication Programs, School of Hygiene and Public Health, Johns Hopkins University
2000 and 2001	Nanyang Professor, School of Communication Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore
2004	Distinguished Professor Emeritus, Department of Communication and Journalism, University of New Mexico
October 21, 2004	Died, Albuquerque, New Mexico

Source: Ev Rogers' curriculum vitae.

Diffusion of innovations theory gained widespread popularity because it provided a basis to understand how social change occurred, i.e., through the adoption of new ideas, objects, and practices by individuals and society at-large. Rogers' research and writings helped to greatly enhance our understanding of how the macro process of system change was linked to micro (individual and group) level processes. Marketing scientists, epidemiologists, sociologists, demographers, and political scientists embraced the macro system-based perspectives represented, for instance, by a logistic S-shaped diffusion growth curve (Dearing & Singhal, 2006). Behavioral psychologists and interpersonal communication scholars were more taken by micro-level adoption decisions, including the role of personal influence in bringing about attitude and behavior change. Rogers' scholarship showed both how micro-level units of adoption (individuals) were influenced by system norms, as well as how system change was dependent on individual action (Dearing & Singhal, 2006).

Ronny Adhikarya, who was a Fellow at the East-West Center in Hawaii in the 1970s, noted the global impact of Rogers' diffusion scholarship: "Between 1972 and 1977, I personally witnessed the widespread applications of diffusion theory in family planning communication programs in 26 [developing] countries" (2006, p. 174). Diffusion theory, Adhikarya emphasized, provided insights on how to diminish the entrenched "tabooness" associated with family planning methods, making them more "talkable." It also brought attention to harnessing social networks in influencing adoption decisions.

Adhikarya, who later earned his doctoral degree at Stanford (Rogers was his PhD advisor) and later served with the United Nations further applied and operationalized the diffusion framework in designing and implementing strategic communication campaigns for agriculture extension, population control, and environmental education in dozens of developing countries. He found Rogers' writings on the different stages of adoption process and the characteristics of the S-curve as being the theoretical guide for audience segmentation and targeted message design strategies. Diffusion theory was directly applied by Adhikarya (2006) and others to work with small community-based groups to stimulate contraceptive adoption (Rogers & Kincaid, 1981); in designing incentive systems for change agents; in recruiting traditional midwives to reduce heterophily gaps between medical doctors and clients (Rogers & Solomon, 1975); in harnessing peer influences of social networks; in integrating mass and interpersonal communication channels (Singhal & Rogers, 2003); in piggy-backing onto other people's networks, a precursor to social marketing; and in strategically using small, folk, or traditional media with rural audiences, a precursor to the entertainment–education communication strategy (Table 2).

#### 4. Anchored yet curiously adaptable

In the weeks prior to his passing, Ev said that he was surprised that he had devoted some 47 years of his life to the study of the diffusion of innovations. . . . He always found something new to think about, write about, and test. He found his reward in the useful application of diffusion theory in a variety of academic fields and social endeavors. (Shefner-Rogers, 2006, p. 245)

When I asked Ev Rogers in my oral history interview "how he could toil in the field of diffusion for so long?" he replied: "My one foot has been anchored in diffusion but I have hopped all over with my other foot" (personal interview, March 23, 2000). For instance, when Rogers moved to Stanford University in 1975, he became deeply interested in studying technological innovations, many of which were being generated in his backyard – Silicon Valley. A few years later, in characteristic Rogers'-style, he would co-author a best seller out of this research (Rogers & Larsen, 1984).

**Table 2**

Contributions of Ev Rogers to the field of communication and beyond.

Primary areas <sup>a</sup>	Conceptual contributions	Key publications
Diffusion of innovations	General model of innovation diffusion, predictors of innovativeness, and adopter categorization	Rogers (1957, 1958, 1962, 1983, 1995, 2003) and Rogers and Shoemaker (1971)
Communication networks	Opinion leadership, personal influence, and critical mass	Rogers and Beal (1958), Rogers and Cartano (1962), and Rogers and Kincaid (1981)
New technology and technology transfer	R&D collaboration, information society, Technopolii, technology transfer, adoption of microcomputers and Internet, and public electronic networks	Dutton, Rogers, and Jun (1987), Gibson and Rogers (1994), Rogers (1986), Rogers and Larsen (1984), and Rogers, Collins-Jarvis, and Schmitz (1994)
Development communication, health communication, and entertainment–education	Modernization and development, family planning communication, health campaigns, HIV/AIDS communication, media agenda-setting, and the entertainment–education communication strategy	Backer, Rogers, and Sopory (1992), Dearing and Rogers (1996), Rogers (1965, 1973, 1976), Rogers et al. (1999), Singhal and Rogers (1999, 2003), and Singhal et al. (2004)
International communication and media systems	Cross-border television flows, comparative media systems, information revolution in developing societies, and national audience surveys	Antola and Rogers (1984), Rogers and Balle (1985), Rogers, Zhao, Pan, Chen, and Beijing Journalists Association (1985), Singhal and Rogers (1989, 2001) and Waterman and Rogers (1994)
Intercultural communication	Homophily and heterophily, digital divides, equity gaps, and intercultural history and founding fathers	Rogers (1999), Rogers and Bhowmik (1969), Rogers et al. (2002), and Rogers and Steinfatt (1999)
History of discipline and boundary-spanning	History of communication, integration of interpersonal and mass media communication, and role of empirical and critical schools	Reardon and Rogers (1988), Rogers (1981, 1994), Rogers and Chaffee (1983), Rogers and Hart (2001), and Valente and Rogers (1995)

<sup>a</sup> As one would expect, considerable overlap exists among and between Rogers' primary areas of contribution, conceptual explication, and publication.

In a similar vein, beginning in the mid-1970s, Rogers became intrigued by the potential of diffusing pro-social innovations through media characters in popular entertainment narratives. From a diffusion perspective, in contrast to educational media, which garners a limited audience, entertainment media genres reached a wider and more receptive (or less resistant) audience. Not only did soap operas and *telenovelas* (“television novels”) earn high audience ratings (and thus were commercially viable), they were known to engender high degrees of audience involvement. Could this entertainment potential not be tapped more systematically?

When I began my doctoral program at the University of Southern California (USC) Annenberg School in the fall of 1985, Rogers encouraged me to pursue this line of work. Our collaboration over the next two decades would be anchored in an area that came to be known as the entertainment–education (E–E) communication strategy (Singhal & Rogers, 1988, 1999, 2002). Entertainment–education is defined as the process of purposely designing and implementing a media message to both entertain and educate, in order to increase audience members' knowledge about an educational issue, create favorable attitudes, shift social norms, and change overt behavior (Singhal & Rogers, 1999). While the E–E strategy, especially in its formative years, represented a theory-based extension of diffusion of innovations thinking, it has since evolved and expanded to become a more multi-disciplinary field of scholarship and practice that draws upon the arts and literature, the humanities, and the social sciences (Singhal & Rogers, 2002; Singhal, Cody, Rogers, & Sabido, 2004).

What are certain points of theoretical convergence between diffusion of innovations and entertainment–education? Diffusion research explained how mass media effects occurred through a two-step (or multi-step) process. Opinion leaders glean new ideas from the mass media and pass them forward to their followers through personal influence. Here an intermediary opinion leader plays a crucial role in diffusing new ideas at the level of the social system or community. However, was this intermediary opinion leader, in flesh and blood, always necessary? Research on social cognitive and social learning processes, notably by psychologist Albert Bandura (a colleague of Rogers at Stanford for a decade), had demonstrated that carefully crafted media role models could directly influence audience attitudes and behaviors without the need for influential intermediaries (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 2006).

During his many visits to Latin America, including his Fulbright year in Colombia in the early 1960s and a faculty appointment in Mexico's Universidad Iberoamericano in the 1970s, Rogers witnessed first-hand the audience popularity of *telenovelas*, long-running daily serial dramas with engaging storylines featuring a cast of protagonists – both heroes and villains. Through one of his Mexican students at Stanford, Rogers learned about *Simplemente María*, a 1969–1971 Peruvian telenovela, which influenced its viewers to enroll in literacy and sewing classes, modeling their behaviors after María, its protagonist. María, a rural–urban migrant who works as a maid, undergoes a Cinderella-type rags-to-riches transformation by working hard and through her skills with a Singer sewing machine (Singhal, Obregon, & Rogers, 1994). Unbelievably, sales of Singer sewing machines rose sharply in Peru and in other countries of South and Central America, fuelled by the audience popularity of María, a role model for upward social mobility (Singhal & Rogers, 1999).

By the mid-1970s, Rogers also became aware of the pioneering work of Miguel Sabido, a producer–director–writer at Televisa, the Mexican commercial network, who had been inspired by the audience effects of *Simplemente María* to establish

a theory-based framework for producing entertainment–education *telenovelas*. Sabido's framework was deeply anchored in Albert Bandura's theory of how audience members develop long-running emotional relationships with television characters. The 100–180 chapters in a typical *telenovela* allowed audience members to emotionally bond with the characters and identify with their aspirations and perseverance. They observe the consequences (rewards and punishments) that the models face and may be reinforced about what actions to take (or not take) toward improving their conditions (Bandura, 2006). Only in-house evaluation research on the effects of Sabido's *telenovelas* had been conducted in Mexico, and these studies had not found their way into the mainstream of communication science literature.

In my first semester of doctoral work at USC in 1985, Ev Rogers showed a 3-min videotape of the popular Indian soap opera, *Hum Log* [We People], illustrating its purposive combination of entertainment and education as a means of promoting social change. I was intrigued. Within six months, Rogers and I secured a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation to conduct an evaluation of *Hum Log*.

Our research (Singhal & Rogers, 1988, 1989) showed that many *Hum Log* viewers felt that they knew the television characters, even though they had never actually met them, suggesting a high degree of parasocial interaction – the seemingly face-to-face interpersonal relationships between a viewer and a mass media personality (Horton & Wohl, 1956). Many young women viewers wrote to Badki, a role model for gender equity, to tell her that she should resolve her indecision about marrying her boyfriend, Ashwini. The day that Badki and Ashwini got married in the television soap opera, shops and bazaars in North India closed early for the audience members to celebrate. My pre-dissertation research paper at USC, a multiple regression analysis of pro-social learning from each of the ten main *Hum Log* characters, indicated that viewers reported learning pro-social behaviors from characters of the same sex, age, and socio-economic status (Singhal, 1988). In diffusion parlance, a television character's homophily with an audience member significantly predicted their potential for influence.

From those early years of dabbling in E–E in the 1980s, today, a whole field of practice and research on entertainment–education has emerged, and a map of the world would show E–E almost everywhere. Ev Rogers deserves credit for seeing the potential vested in E–E scholarship and its practice, and in fostering global E–E applications that integrated social learning from mass-mediated characters with social diffusion theory (Bandura, 2006). He led many evaluations of the diverse personal and social changes fostered by this approach. Using experimental and control regions in E–E field experiments, and implementing controls for other possible determinants, Rogers and his colleagues verified the substantial impact of radio and television soap operas on increased use of family planning services, adoption of contraceptive methods, and condom use to curtail the spread of the AIDS virus (Rogers et al., 1999; Vaughan, Singhal, Rogers, & Swalehe, 2000).

Working with Rogers in those early years of E–E, I had little idea how rapidly E–E would diffuse, evolve, and continually reinvent itself as a communication strategy. Today, at any given time, highly melodramatic stories purposely portray people's everyday lives, helping viewers to see a better life and providing the strategies and incentives that enable them to take the steps to realize it (Bandura, 2006). While E–E serials continue to tackle complex social topics such as gender violence and equity, small family size, environmental conservation, AIDS prevention, racial harmony, and a variety of life skills, several new entertainment genres, riding on new digital platforms, are rapidly emerging on the E–E landscape (Wang & Singhal, 2009). Transmedia storytelling, E–E webisodes, and social media platforms (like Facebook and Twitter) provide new interactive E–E vehicles to connect audiences across vast distances. E–E Messages can now be highly tailored and targeted, and blogs and tweets can spur conversations on social topics in real and asynchronous time, in private and public, and in real and virtual spaces (Singhal, Wang, & Rogers, 2012).

## 5. Nurturing gardener and natural cross-pollinator

Ev also had a remarkable gift for bringing together people and institutions. . . he was the best example in the world of the kind of natural networker he studied in his research. Backer (quoted in Backer et al., 2005, p. 291)

Between March 4 and 6, 2011, several dozen former students and colleagues of Ev Rogers gathered in Athens, OH to celebrate what would have been his 80th birth anniversary and 50 years of the publishing of the first edition of *Diffusion of Innovations*. Notable at this meeting were the use of farm metaphors to describe Ev Rogers' mentorship: A gardener, who fulfilled his students' and mentees' intellectual, personal, and spiritual needs with the same attentiveness that he bestowed on his radishes, onions, and tomatoes. When Ev Rogers was once asked in August 2000 in a meeting in Phoenix about his secret sauce of mentorship, this son-of-the-Iowa soil noted: "All my life I have planted little acorns and watched them grow into trees." Rogers grew young scholars and ideas by preparing the soil, planting the seed, and providing nutrients. He also kept the weeds at bay.

Rogers' genuine and deep attention to his students' intellectual, emotional, and spiritual needs provides a simple explanation of how this one man could have so many small world encounters. In 2001, while Rogers and I were conducting research for our book titled *Combating AIDS: Communication Strategies in Action*, we visited five countries – South Africa, Kenya, Thailand, India, and Brazil. In almost every city we visited, we ran into former Rogers' students and acquaintances. In Nairobi Kenya, I arranged for us to visit Dr. Mary Ann Burris, a Ford Foundation official for the Eastern and Southern Africa region. When I tried to introduce Professor Rogers to her, she said: "I was Ev's student in a freshman class at Stanford 27 years ago." Our research meeting was quite productive.

Ronny Adhikarya (2006, p. 175) provides reasons for Ev's expansive, crisscrossing, cross-pollinating global connections and influence: "At Stanford, I witnessed how Ev developed personal networks, partnered with his collaborators, and coached his students. Despite his 'star' status as professor, he was approachable and informal." Added Adhikarya: "He was also a very engaging storyteller – hugely popular with his students, colleagues, and friends."

Ev Rogers' style was highly personable – more of a coach than an instructor. Adds Adhikarya (2006, p. 175): "Ev was a pro at building student trust and confidence, making learning comfortable, and memorable. The questions he asked were not intended to cross-examine but to solicit useful ideas, opinions, and advice. . . He used similar rapport-building techniques in dealing with policy makers, donors, development practitioners, colleagues, and subordinates."

Over the years, many people have employed the following monikers to describe Ev Rogers: "Guru," "Sage," and "Zen". Others describe his effect as "whirlwind," "blown away," a "vortex". My colleague Jim Dearing (quoted in Backer et al., 2005, p. 294) eloquently elaborates:

Hundreds of times, I have seen professionals, businesspeople, students, and faculty startled, excited, and privileged at Ev Rogers' attention to them. We all know individuals who are self-absorbed. Ev's orientation was the opposite of that. . . With the stranger, the acquaintance, the guest, the foreign visitor, the public health counselor, the destitute on-again off-again drug user, he was predictably attentive and gracious, even consumed. This rote behavior, so atypical for most of us, was a means of learning for him.

Not only did Ev Rogers understand the social capital advantages of heterophilous relationships, he nurtured all relationships as a gardener would, and cross-pollinated them through his vast network of personal connections.

## 6. In summation: an intercultural life

As a young boy, I read books by Rudyard Kipling. . . Only years later when I spent time in India I learned the degree to which Kipling had glorified the British in India and denigrated Indians. (Rogers, 2008, p. 142)

In summation, one may argue, that Ev Rogers' life journey represents the quintessential intercultural life. If being intercultural is about involvement in, relating to, and experience of multiple worlds or cultures, Ev Rogers has few equals: a poor, Iowa farm boy with no aspiration to earn a college degree becomes an internationally recognized global intellectual; a doctoral student in rural sociology, who synthesized research findings from multiple disciplines to abstract a general theory and, in so doing, established an entire sub-discipline within the field of communication; a scholar, who theorized about both macro- and micro-aspects of social change and, in so doing, provided a heuristic framework with remarkable potential for field-based application; a sense-maker who remained solidly anchored in the field of diffusion of innovations, but who continually deepened and extended his curiosity to other areas such as communication networks and technology transfer, entertainment–education, and international, intercultural, health, and organizational communication; a global citizen who not only conducted comparative and social research in multiple countries, but one who traveled widely, learned other languages, and lived for extended durations in countries such as Colombia, Ecuador, Brazil, Nigeria, India, Mexico, Singapore, and Germany.

More directly and substantively, Rogers was also one of the first few professors who taught courses in intercultural communication. In 1968, when his three-country (India–Brazil–Nigeria) diffusion project was coming to a close, he began teaching an undergraduate course at Michigan State University called "Cross-Cultural Communication." He also regularly facilitated the MSU/USAID seminars in the 1960s that trained change agents from developing countries prior to their return home (Hart, 2005). In the mid-1990s, Rogers established a new PhD program at the University of New Mexico, focusing specifically on the study of intercultural communication – a natural fit with the Hispanic, Native American, and Anglo populations of the State. He authored an intercultural communication textbook (Rogers & Steinfatt, 1999), a book on the role of the State of New Mexico, especially its legendary Navajo Code Talkers, who played a key role in the Allied Victory over the Axis powers in World War II (Rogers & Bartlit, 2004), and authored several essays on the history of intercultural communication study, focusing on the pioneering work of Georg Simmel (Rogers, 1999) and Edward T. Hall (Rogers, Hart, & Miike, 2002).

Further, Rogers' scholarly life represents a model of exacting intercultural humility, especially in light of the face of his "star" status and distinguished professorships. While his early scholarship on diffusion of innovations strengthened the postulates of the dominant modernization paradigm of development, he was one of the first to admit the problems with the earlier models and theories in development and communication (Rogers, 1976). He redefined the meaning of development, moving away from the technocratic, overly materialistic, and deterministic models to include the notion of equity, active grassroots participation of people, self-determination of local communities, and an integration of endogenous and exogenous elements to address peoples' needs in their local environment (Melkote, 2006).

Until the very end, while coping with an end-of-life cancer diagnosis, Ev Rogers' jottings point to an embodied intercultural life: "In a [doctor's] waiting room. . . I found it easy to talk with other cancer survivors, even those who were ethnically or socioeconomically different. . . Navajo people tend to be suspicious of Caucasians. . . In talking with Navajo cancer survivors, I gained an intimacy not experienced previously" (2008, p. 126).

A week after Ev Rogers passed away, I accompanied his wife, Corinne to return his ashes to the family Iowa farm. The son of the soil, after leading a rich intercultural life, had come home.

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