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ABSTRACT

This paper is the report of a conversation among the authors that centered on their shared interest in alternative methods of inquiry and evaluation in agriculture. The conversation was initiated at the W. K. Kellogg Foundation and has evolved through a series of long distance conversations. Though not a verbatim transcript of the conversations, the paper represents a composite of both the face-to-face conversation and the stream of dialogue over the preceding year. Central to the discussion is an exploration of the parallels between the paradigm shift that occurred in evaluation in the early 1980s and the current agricultural paradigm shift being promoted by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation. In the course of this conversational paper, the researchers suggest not only that evaluators and researchers cultivate their capacity to hear and tell stories, but also that agricultural programs and their long-term impacts could benefit from different kinds of evaluation efforts. From this perspective, the evaluation or research report is no longer an attempt to mirror reality, but rather it is an evocative story that asks the reader to engage the storyline morally, emotionally, aesthetically, and intellectually, as well as from a social impact perspective. The hope is that the paper will serve as what P. Lather called an "incitement to discourse" in the disciplines of agriculture and evaluation. (Contains 2 tables and 19 references.) (Author/SLD)

The Storied Nature of Agriculture and Evaluation: A Conversation

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Abstract

This paper is a report on a conversation held between the authors centered on their shared interest in alternative methods of inquiry and evaluation in agriculture. The conversation was initiated at the W K Kellogg Foundation and has evolved through a series of long distance conversations. Though not a verbatim transcript of our conversations, this paper represents a composite of both the face-to-face conversation and our stream of dialogue over the past year. Central to our discussion is an exploration of the parallels between the paradigm shift that occurred in evaluation in the early 1980s and the current agricultural paradigm shift being promoted by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. In the course of this conversational paper we suggest not only that evaluators and researchers should cultivate their capacity to hear and tell stories, but also that agricultural programs and their long-term impacts could benefit from different kinds of evaluation efforts. From this perspective the evaluation or research report is no longer an attempt to mirror reality, but rather it is an evocative story that asks the reader to engage the storyline morally, emotionally, aesthetically and intellectually, as well as from a social impact perspective. It is our hope that this paper will serve as what Lather (1993) has called an "incitement to discourse" in the disciplinary fields of agriculture and evaluation.

Key Words: agricultural evaluation, local food systems, narrative, inquiry paradigms,

participatory inquiry, social change, story

Vitae/Biography

Yvonna S. Lincoln: Yvonna S. Lincoln is University Distinguished Professor of Higher Education and the Ruth Harrington Chair of Educational Leadership in the Educational Administration and Human Resource Development Department at Texas A&M University. She holds a baccalaureate from Michigan State University, a Master's degree (History) from the University of Illinois, and an Ed.D. from Indiana University. Her research interests include higher education leadership, program evaluation, and the application of qualitative research methods in the disciplines more broadly. She is the co-author of Fourth Generation Evaluation and Naturalistic Inquiry, and the co-editor of the Handbook of Qualitative Research, 1st and 2nd Editions. She is also the co-editor of the journal Qualitative Inquiry.

Laurie G. Thorp: Laurie Thorp is Director of the Residential Initiative on the Study of the Environment (RISE) at Michigan State University. RISE provides students from five colleges within the university the opportunity to study environmental issues in an interdisciplinary setting. Thorp is also Faculty Scholar for the Liberty Hyde Bailey Scholars Program in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources. She holds a Ph.D. in Agricultural Education from Texas A&M University. Her research interests reside at the intersection of alternative food systems, sustainable agriculture, elementary education, and participatory research methodologies.

Craig Russon: Craig Russon is Evaluation Manager at the W.K. Kellogg Foundation in Battle Creek, Michigan. He works with the Foundation's program staff to monitor and measure the results of funded projects and activities. He partners with staff in the Food Systems and Rural Development and the Social and Economic Community Development program areas to provide program evaluation and dissemination activities. Russon earned his Doctorate in Agricultural Education, as well as his Master's degree in educational psychology from the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign. In addition, he holds a Masters of Business Administration from St. Ambrose University in Davenport, Iowa. He is co-editor of The Annotated Bibliography of International Programme Evaluation.

The Storied Nature of Agriculture and Evaluation: A Conversation

Laurie: Craig, you and I began this conversation around alternative forms of evaluation in agriculture about a year ago during a breakout session at the Food and Society Conference. At the time I sensed that most academicians in agriculture just didn't have the appropriate language or alignment of methodology to make this shift that the W.K. Kellogg Foundation is calling for, that is, "Local Enterprises—Global Visions." Seems we have the language of big, global production agriculture down pat, you know, the highly numerate language of science; however, we are timid and quite uncomfortable to the language of small, local stories in agriculture. In order to make this shift, to live in both worlds so to speak, we must become bilingual. If we are to hear these stories and *tell* these stories, we will have to cultivate our capacity for boundary crossing, for nurturing relationships, for evaluation designs that are emergent (Guba and Lincoln, 1989), performative, (Denzin, 2002), and sensitive to what we don't know, to our wonderfully messy, complex, dynamic communities. But I get ahead of myself here. Why don't you give our readers a little background to the initiative?

Craig: Since 1993, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF) has been directly funding efforts to increase the sustainability of the U.S. food system. Resources have been directed through two initiatives, the Food Systems Professions Education (FPSE) Program and the Integrated Farming Systems (IFS) Program. Both initiatives have been driven by a vision at WKKF of:

> A food system that provides access for all segments of society to a safe and nutritious food supply grown in a manner that produces profit, protects the environment, and that adds economic and social value to rural and urban communities.

Food and Society (FAS) is a new and emerging initiative at WKKF that is building on the outcomes, impacts, networks, and relationships from FPSE and IFS.

> The purpose of FAS is to enable and empower organizations, institutions, and projects to effectively address barriers to achieving the WKKF vision in the areas of agricultural profitability and sustainability, environmental stewardship, science and technology, higher education, and diet-health connections.

FAS focuses on four food systems elements:

- Food and agricultural sustainability—A sustainable agriculture is one that continues to provide not only food and fiber to society, but also provides economic opportunity for farmers, farm suppliers, independent processors, and their families, and supports viable rural communities.

- Food and environmental stewardship—FAS presents an opportunity to inform policy and engage the power of the marketplace to reduce negative environmental impacts, and reward environmentally sound practices;
- Food, science/technology, and higher education—Public education and research institutions play a major role in developing and disseminating technologies that drive the food system and train food systems professionals. There is a need to broaden their scholarly work to a greater focus on the multiple benefits and functions of our food production systems. Institutions of higher education also have a responsibility to provide leadership in creating a broad-based public discourse about emerging food systems technologies prior to widespread adoption of those technologies.
- Food, diet, and health status—It is an opportune time to develop a multidisciplinary program that can bring health and diet concerns together with food production, nutrition, and food safety in the pursuit of wellness.

During the conference one of the themes was the shift in the dominant paradigm of agriculture to a new paradigm that features locally owned and controlled, environmentally friendly, health promoting, community-based enterprises. Laurie and I started talking about this shift in models of thinking about agriculture and we noted that the evaluation profession, a number of years ago went through a similar shift in paradigms; one of the people who is most responsible for that shift is Yvonna Lincoln. Because you have a close personal and professional relationship with Yvonna, Laurie, you reminded me of the axioms that Lincoln and Guba outlined in their seminal work *Naturalistic Inquiry* (1985), and in their earlier work on a new model for evaluation, Effective Evaluation (Guba and Lincoln, 1981). I scratched out a matrix (see Table 1.) summarizing what I saw as the similarities between the two paradigms.
[Table 1 here]

Analysis of Table 1 shows some broad similarities between the rationalistic and "big agriculture" paradigms and between naturalistic and FAS paradigms. Rationalistic and big ag paradigms are based on grand theory, a single reality, environmental independence, freedom from social context, and secularism. Naturalistic and FAS paradigms, on the other hand are based upon petite (local) theory, multiple realities, environmental dependence, attention to social context, and spirituality. So now that we know the correspondence between rationalism and big ag paradigms and naturalism and FAS paradigms, what do we do with it? How can we utilize it? How do we make the shift in our minds to thinking in a vastly different way?

I think Yvonna might be best qualified to speak to how evaluation's paradigm shift can inform the agricultural paradigm shift. Laurie would be best qualified to speak to the alignment between alternative methods of inquiry and alternative and locally based agriculture programs, and I'll speak to the role of the foundation in mediating and supporting this paradigmatic shift.

Laurie: What really grabbed my attention at the FAS conference was the comment made by Rick Foster, WKKF Vice-President, for the need to "catalyze a new language" around food and its role in society. For me, that is what Yvonna Lincoln and Egon Guba have accomplished in

the last 20 years; they've catalyzed a new language in evaluation. This language is now pervasive in the social sciences, in nursing, in psychology, in communication studies, in education, in medicine, in architecture; but it has not permeated agriculture yet!

So I heard Rick Foster talk about catalyzing this new language, and then over and over again at the conference I heard people talking about the power of "story." This is one of the ways that we can capture what's happening to agriculture in a much more meaningful way, in a much more local sense, using the vernacular of our communities in rural America to tell the story of what has happened to both the people and the processes of creating food. I mentioned to Craig that, this is what happened in evaluation as Lincoln and Guba twenty years ago said, 'The time has come for a new language, a language to capture these complex phenomena that aren't being communicated in the language of conventional science.'

Yvonna: Yes, one of the problems with evaluation efforts that look at large-scale effects is that they fail to look at local impacts: families moving off the land, losing farms, whether or not the 'programs' for large-scale agribusiness growing practices will ultimately degrade the environment, and what is happening with respect to the food supply for hungry families right here in America. I'm concerned that in getting "large-scale" pictures, we are losing sight of local impacts, and local hunger, and the tragedy that the working poor cannot get—or get to—sources of high-quality nutrition for themselves and their families.

Craig: I think that is where the Foundation might play a role. WKKF is about supporting social change and that mission required that we develop the capacity to hear stories, to come away from our projects with a deep understanding, an understanding that we may not be capturing with traditional evaluation. Yvonna, what have you learned about this?

Yvonna: Well first I want to say that I've been thinking about our food stories and I thought, what is wrong with the food stories that we hear? The answer is A) they are not stories, and B) they are by and largely presented as abstracted knowledge. When people talk about food these days they are really talking about a commodity. They might as well be talking about steel prices. They hardly ever talk about how it connects to all of us--to nutrition, to availability, to culture, to health, to hunger, to ensuring that the world has a system that shares the nutritional "wealth". I think this is a critical distinction to make. We never hear about food as a cultural symbol.

Laurie: I agree, you know the native peoples of the Americas had the 3 sisters *milpa*, and at the heart of the *milpa* is maize. Corn represents much more than food to these people. It represents the intersection of food, land and community. Gustavo Esteva (1994) talks about this as the complex cultural concept of *comida.* Difficult to translate, *comida* is the safe space where there is no threat of scarcity. This is why you will find corn depicted in the sacred art of these peoples—it is a deeply embedded cultural symbol. It has a moral dimension.

Yvonna: Yes, and this is a framework for meaning that I am not hearing in our food commodity stories. Hayden Whyte has said the narrative form "summons us to participate in a moral universe." Through the process of emplotting events, a story entails the inclusion of human agency. These decontextualized food stories are missing this human moral dimension as well as the dimension of 'community', and so I would position our current agricultural crisis as a moral

dilemma. It is a moral dilemma of hunger, but it is also a moral dimension in terms of our roles as caretakers of the environment.

Craig: We've funded Growing Connections, The Boston Youth Project, Alice Waters' Edible Schoolyard, and stories come out of these projects, but I don't think we know what to do with them. I think we have been tempted to aggregate the stories, in order to bring the stories forward, but have never done it. And I'm not so sure it's a good idea. Because aggregating seems to me to be kind of a rationalistic paradigm thing to do. Aggregating would be something "Big Ag" would do.

Yvonna: Yes, what you are on to here is an important distinction that is often passed over. But let's not confuse aggregated data with an amalgam. Conventional data analysis collapses the particularities into a homogenized lump. Aggregate data is additive; eventually the small stories reach a 'tipping point', a point where change is poised to occur, seemingly naturally, or eventually you see the pattern that connects the stories. So what you are saying is that our current evaluation paradigm in agriculture is theoretically inconsistent with FAS.

There are, however, ways of aggregating case study data in such a way as to learn from the insights of all of them. That way, we preserve the 'local stories', which are compelling, but we also have larger insights which point the way to policy changes.

Craig: Yes, but say we aggregate all these small stories; you end up with a crate full of stories—that's unmanageable. Who's gonna read those stories? I mean the board is not going to read these.

Yvonna: To be perfectly honest we don't have super ways of aggregating data, but we do have some ways, although I think it somehow misses the point. Individual stories can stand on their own. Egon and I argued this with our concept of transferability as opposed to generalizability. Bob Stake (1978) had a similar idea when he articulated his concept of naturalistic generalization. What we are putting forward is that truth lies in particulars. What becomes useful is a full and thorough knowledge of the particular, and that includes this moral dimension that is missing in most conventional agricultural evaluation. We have to find a way for the individual stories to get out, in a variety of ways, to a variety of practitioners and policy makers.

Laurie: It's a sin of omission isn't it? If we are to support and nurture connectivity and locality in our food systems, we must evaluate these initiatives with connectivity and locality of language and then get the stories out there. Attending to the stories that reside in our rural communities offers an appropriate alternative to conventional evaluation. I think hearing individual stories is theoretically consistent with the FAS initiative.

Yvonna: Yes, but we can also closely examine the local stories for commonalities which run through them, and which point to policy initiatives which Kellogg and other foundations might wish to pursue...

Craig: Can you give me an example?

Laurie: Sure, I can tell you that my current research with children and their schoolyard garden started out as a straightforward qualitative study and as I grew to know these teachers and children I began to relinquish control of the research process. I began to hear their questions were far more important than my research questions. *I began to listen and give voice to their story, not mine—it was a conscious choice I made.* Suddenly I saw that I don't just want to understand what is going on and represent it, I wanted to help these people make change in their lives. I wanted to give voice to women and children in a system where it is mighty difficult to be heard. That is the power of participatory inquiry. An evaluative statement is made every time a sweaty little hand drags me out into the garden. Do you know that over 50% of the children I work with are on the Federal Free and Reduced Lunch Program? That means most of these kids do not have the luxury of eating fresh vegetables on a daily basis; it's just too darn expensive. The children I work with stand out in the garden in August and September and eat cherry tomatoes like they were candy because they are so hungry. It breaks your heart, and hopefully moves you to action. Maybe one of the things we could think about is the role of community gardens, gardens at schools, in vacant lots, in places where the land could work, and wants to work, but has not been working.

Yvonna: This gets back to the agricultural crisis as a moral dilemma. The hungry are among us, here, amid all this wealth and abundance. Over the past 40 years agricultural scientists have pledged to end hunger and feed the world yet this goal eludes the scientific community. Why? In part because our statistical evaluations do not tell the complete story. Don't even scratch the surface. So I and many others (Lather, 1986; LeCompte, 1993; Harding, 1987) offer narrative as a critique of the positivist project—that science and technology are an unmitigated good. "Science", for instance, tells us that worldwide, there is enough food to feed everyone on earth, and that the real problem is 'distribution.' Well, one way to mitigate 'distribution' problems is to have food sources in local communities. Much as Habitat for Humanity can build sturdy, reliable, but inexpensive housing for low-income families, we ought to be able to find or build or create locally-owned and –operated food-growing coops for groups of families which would address these problems.

Laurie: Craig, doesn't the foundation have a stated mission of improving people's quality of life?

Craig: Yes, absolutely and it appears to me that the foundation employs a systems theory approach to carrying out its stated mission. We often operationalize this approach through the use of logic models. The elements of a simple logic model are: inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, impacts. The foundation helps to provide the inputs into the system by providing funding. Our grantees carry out activities that lead to outputs and, eventually, outcomes and impacts. Inputs, activities, and outputs are very amenable to quantification. However, outcomes, and especially impacts, are more difficult to represent with numbers. That's where I see a role for stories. I mean a community portrayal does a pretty nice job of capturing impact. It's much more compelling than a table of numbers. Do numbers move you to act? Not very often. What moves you? A compelling story.

Laurie: I think your matrix needs a new column. We need to include Participatory Action Research, Action Research and all the other forms of liberatory inquiry that are concerned with creating movement or change as part of the research process. This may be an even better fit with FAS.

Yvonna: I'd agree. As action researchers the research text or evaluation report is no longer a neutral attempt to mirror reality. Here we are suggesting it is an evocative story, asking readers to feel the truth of their story. We engage the story line morally, emotionally, aesthetically and intellectually. And in the end this story should move you to action. If the story is very, very good, it should also point to forms of action which are culturally appropriate and likeliest to lead to positive social change.

Laurie: It must have, what is it Patti Lather calls it? Catalytic validity. Are participants empowered by the process to make change in their lives?

Craig: That sounds like the capacity building that we look for in our projects. Okay, so our comparison matrix might look like what you see in Table 2.
[Table 2 here]

Laurie: You know when we began this conversation we mentioned the importance of developing a new language and by that I mean the ability for evaluators to *hear* what these small stories are saying. Are we proposing that evaluators become skilled in narrative analysis? I'm thinking about Howard Brody's (1994) work in medicine and see many similarities. He proposes that the joint construction of narrative between doctor and patient plays a significant role in healing.

Craig: So as an FAS or "new paradigm" evaluator, one might play an active role in the healing of our agricultural crisis?

Laurie: Yes, perhaps we might listen for the "narrative wreckage" and as Arthur Frank (1995) suggests, offer the storyteller hope for new author-ity, to regain sovereignty over their experience. From this perspective we aren't just *listening to* stories, we are *being with* stories. I see this all the time in my work with children and teachers; there is great transformative power in the simple act of listening. My sense is that there isn't much listening going on in the world anymore. Reminds me of this wonderful quote from Stephen Crites (1971): he says that, 'When we give up the story we give up a condition for moral human existence.' See, problem is, listening to a story takes time, and everybody is running around time-crunched, aren't they? And I think that is where foundations and universities must take the lead in saying, "Okay we understand the value of the story to society at large, not just in the product but in the *process* of storytelling." Big, corporate agriculture has had the effect of an anti-narrative narrative. It smothered the small stories that were our rural cultural fabric.

Yvonna: Big agriculture is not really an anti-narrative narrative. Rather, it is the natural end of the idea of modernist upward progression. More food means more land under production, more land means more 'scientific' cultivation—which only big corporations can manage—more intensive cultivation means more and swifter degradation of the land, more environmental damage. It is the ultimate modernist narrative, written on the face and in the waters of the land.

What we have to have is a new set of criteria for evaluating agricultural production. Perhaps big agriculture will never go away entirely. But another kind of agriculture must be created which will flourish alongside it—a form of locally-controlled agriculture which has as it criteria for success the FAS guidelines: it has to be environmentally sustainable, it has to be economically viable, and it has to be socially just. And socially just means more than simply land ownership, as it might mean, for instance, in Latin America. Here, it means that the poorest among us have equal access, at reasonable cost, to high-quality nutrition in the form of fresh fruits and vegetables.

But there is another point here, too. It is not enough to say we must tell stories. That leaves us mostly where we were before—with no idea of how to move forward. I think we need to talk not just in romantic terms, but in specific pragmatic and political terms. The question which has kept arising is, "How do we get the stories out?" It's here we need to do some targeted strategizing. We already know, Laurie, that your story of the garden at the school populated largely by low-SES, immigrant, bilingual and at risk children has gotten some good press. Word of mouth has been powerful, and a local newspaper story has made some forcible impact. We also know that the story you tell of the garden has stunned and mobilized professional agriculture audiences in conferences around the country. We know, for instance, that they have begun to talk about evaluating programs in agriculture in a very different way. We know, at my university, that professors who work with agrarian populations in Latin America and Africa are beginning to think about the work that they do differently. We know students who have begun to engage in research which is very, very different from that of a decade ago. Those are all forms of mobilization which have begun to occur. That should suggest some important avenues for having the stories be heard.

Laurie: Yes, it does. It means that all of us involved in this effort have to make the effort to get on conference programs, and present the stories our work has generated. It probably means that we have to be more proactive in pressing our written stories on professional journals even when it means they may not "count" toward tenure and promotion.

Craig: As well as in local and community-based publications. Maybe the regional and state farm and agriculture publications, too? We should be seeking a whole variety of outlets for these stories, some of them written in short form, some longer pieces, as well as agricultural education journals.

Laurie: Yes. As I understand Yvonna, one of the problems with many of the good action research projects is that those who work on them rarely write them up, and so the community of participatory action researchers has far too few models on which to base their own practice. We shouldn't be ignoring any of the written media: the Agricultural Extension services, the farm journals, newspapers, and even television and other media. We shouldn't make the same mistake that the participatory action researchers made and fail to create the conditions for vast social change. Print and visual media are critical; this means that we are also going to have to be "public relations" specialists, Craig.

Yvonna: Now, I think you're thinking locally and globally. Communication of this work will be critical to seeing that the stories are heard, and that people see how to take action on the stories in

their own communities. The evaluation community more broadly has always tried to speak to the policy community—and indeed, the policy community is often the group which funds evaluation work. Laurie, you and Craig, as the representative of the WKKF Foundation, need to see yourselves as practitioner and policy group. Both of you can speak simultaneously to work toward change. Carol Weiss said, a long time ago, that evaluation competes to be heard among a large number of other competing voices in the policy arena. The point here might be to make certain that the evaluations—the real stories of community change—need to be heard in many places, in order to be heard at all. It may be less "how" to tell the story, as "to whom", "when" and "how often".

Craig, you might also think not about amalgamating all those stories, but also about putting them together into a really beautiful publication, and making them available to a set of policy audiences, key people around the country—or even around the globe—as a way of helping people begin to think about a new agricultural 'story' for their communities and stakeholders.

Craig: I think I'm beginning to see how we can move FAS forward into a more direct policy arena, where ongoing debate and dialogue, and yes, even storytelling can begin to take place. Laurie, what do you think about this?

Laurie: I'm seeing possibilities I didn't really think about before. We must get these various stories on the agenda, and try to do so where policy makers will be hearing them. We definitely have some work to do—and so little time to do it. Did you know we are projected to lose nearly 50% of our farms in Michigan by the year 2040? Those farms will either be gobbled up by corporate farming or sold off for commercial development. Those of us in privileged places of power have an immense responsibility. But it is more than a responsibility for me. It is about protecting this life sustaining land I hold so dear. I think Wendell Berry says it best, that is, "...maybe one enters these battles not because of will or choice, but rather, because in loving the things one loves, one has no choice."

Coda

Craig: Laurie and Yvonna are you there?

Yvonna: Yes, hello Craig I'm on, is Laurie there?

Laurie: Hello dears. I'm here.

Yvonna: Well as you saw by my email we received the reviewers' comments back from Richard Haynes. Reviewer 1 and 4 said accept it with no revisions, however we need to address reviewer 2 and 3.

Craig: Well I had a strong reaction to reviewer 2 but this will force us to tighten up our argument. Sharpen the saw a bit.

Yvonna: Shall we address these issues in footnotes or endnotes as Richard has suggested?

Laurie: I'm hesitant to disrupt the flow of our conversation as it is reported, that just seems contrary to what we are committed to, that is, reporting lived experience in a more accessible form.

Craig: How about we continue to represent our conversation, and when necessary supplement our argument in footnotes?

Laurie: I say we go with it. Okay by you Yvonna?

Yvonna: Sounds like a plan. How about we go over these line by line? We first need to address the reviewer's issue of how telling stories will better inform responsible local action. Do you see where I am? Second paragraph?

Laurie: Didn't we already talk about how story re-inserts the moral dimension? In telling a story stakeholders regain the author-ity of their situation, rather than being written on from the outside. Jerome Bruner (1991) says that story is the most fundamental meaning making human experience. For the teller it holds the potential to bring order out of chaos, or perhaps to hook up their lifestory to a new or different storyline and that is pretty darn empowering to our research participants. The big ag narrative smothers this primary sense making device which in turn stifles human agency.

Yvonna: Yes, and I also think that we need to make clear that what it is we are drawing parallels with here are the agricultural practices themselves—which often get expressed in terms of bushels produced, rather than in foot-acres of water which have been polluted. It is the statistical model of food production, and the statistical model of evaluation which stand together in tandem, in parallel. And what we have been trying to make clear is that these big models for understanding social life miss the critical elements of "social life"—which is life experienced by individuals and families.

Craig: You know some evaluation methods promote explanation, other promote understanding. Stories are a method that promotes action that is consistent with Kellogg's shift from grantmaking to CHANGE making.

Yvonna: Narrative provides clarity, and when people are clear about issues they will take action. When there is understanding people make choice. Narrative informs discretion in the true Jeffersonian sense. The problem with policy development is that choices are not always clear. As an example, there was a time in the 60s when we were ambivalent about Viet Nam, then the Kent State story helped clarify the choices and we saw the nation do a mental turn about.

Craig: Well reviewer 3 says big ag and biotechnologists have a story to tell the world—the feed the world story. This reviewer questions how to tell the "good guys" from the "bad guys" and wants to know what our preferred story is, or if there is a middle ground.

Yvonna: Clearly local story offers a counterbalance to the hegemony of the dominant scientific paradigm—that if it is scientific, it is progress. We are not arguing for narrative alone; we are arguing for a more balanced representation in our evaluations. The point being, who controls the

discourse? And I might add there cannot be a middle ground if we are compromising our clean water, air, and soil. Good stories are sensitive to the preservation of our fragile ecosystems so threatened by unrestrained development. At present, although there have been calls for a "new discourse to be catalyzed", there is one dominant discourse, and it is promulgated and controlled by agribusiness interests. I am very concerned, for example, that a handful of seed companies are patenting genetic material taken from natural eco-systems which have been in continuous use for a thousand years. I am very concerned that private wealth is buying up water rights throughout Texas (and in other parts of the world). I believe we can live with a coffee cartel, or an oil cartel, but I do not believe we can live with a food cartel, or a water cartel. These stories need to become a part of our policy processes, and powerful organizations like Kellogg can be forces for shaping the new discourse.

Laurie: Yes, and I want to say that when stories are good they are intensely personal, nuanced, idiosyncratic, unique. I cannot tell your story, nor can you tell mine. And yet that is what has happened with agriculture. In the last 20 years there has been a gross concentration of power. The sanctioned storytellers are the elite, the scientists, the 5 big seed companies, the 2 major chemical companies and so on. They hold the power to punish by creating scarcity in a world of abundance. I am interested in the stories of the underrepresented, the voiceless. I want to hear the stories of CSAs, of Indian rice growers that now are forced to pay royalties on patented Basmati rice, of my student at MSU who is struggling to keep his family apple farm afloat amid the sea of cheap imported apples.

Craig: To my way of thinking the big ag biotech "story" is actually a marketing ploy. Some genetically modified crops are being marketed as a way of eliminating vitamin deficiencies in developing countries. However, it is my understanding that it would be necessary to eat inhumanly large quantities in order to obtain the desired benefits.

Laurie: Yes, I agree. The corporate control of food and the globalization of agriculture is all a big sell. And it is being done under the Mother-and-apple-pie guise of "progress". It is a terribly compelling piece of propaganda which is being sold to us.

Yvonna: Okay, we've got a reviewer here that proposes a good logic model can be seen as one concise way of telling the story of a program. Craig, do you want to address this?

Craig: The W. K. Kellogg Foundation just released its logic model development guide and we do promote them as a programming and evaluation tool. However, a logic model is no more or less than a way of operationalizing our systems thinking. It is far too concise to be considered a story. Logic models are for the most part linear, stories are often recursive.

Laurie: Further, how do you locate voice in a logic model? Once again we are back to the voice from everywhere the voice from nowhere, aren't we?

Yvonna: Okay p. 10 line 267 the review asks in what sense were these academic audiences mobilized, what would we find them doing as a result. Shall I share with our readers the poem that was sent to me following our performance ethnography at AERA?

Laurie: Go for it.

Yvonna: Here it is:
"Dear Professor Lincoln,
I was spellbound by your session. I remember you cited someone who used the term "feeling tone". I will be very grateful if you could email the reference to me. Also I would like to thank you and your colleagues for a very stimulating session. Your session awakened a part of me that I am often told is best left untouched.

I came to your presentation
to see the people behind two famous names.
Little did I know the session would
fuel my thoughts that I dared not accept

Did I get it right?
Did I hear the message
it is okay to harness my emotions?

All my life
I have known that I am driven by my emotions.
For long I have been told to present my rational self.
To be successful, we must come across as logical beings.

I am good at mathematics.
They say it means I have a logical mind.
I feel nervous because I doubt if it is true.
Sometimes I solve problems because I feel them,
I feel I can do them.
Sometimes I can't solve problems
because I run scarce of my emotional strength.

I am a teacher.
I am taught about the cognition and meta-cognition.
This scares me: have I done it all wrong?
It is not the logic that motivates me.
The feelings:
Yes! my learning is guided by how I feel.

Did I hear someone validate
the power of feelings?
Does this mean I am not all wrong?

I am excited for I feel
I was in a room full of men and women
who believed in their emotional selves.

I am nervous:

did I misconstrue what was going on?
Did I impose my own emotions on what happened there?

I walked out of your session
dancing with joy.
As I tried to share this joy with colleagues,
I received skeptical looks.
I wonder again,
did I get the session right?" (Harsh Suri, Personal E-mail, 2002)

Yvonna: How's that for mobilization?

Laurie: Stunning. May I also mention that I see the graduate students I work with mobilized in a similar fashion. When I share my work with experimental texts and visual representation they are moved to challenge the status quo of academic research. Ellen is completing an autoethnographic dissertation dealing with land development, Susan has employed photo elicitation in an evaluation project she is involved with, and Sara has committed to a participatory methodology for her thesis.

Craig: Excellent. Shall we move on to reviewer 3's comments? This reviewer wasn't persuaded by our organizing framework that posits a parallel between the field of evaluation and agriculture.

Yvonna: I think the table makes that pretty clear, I don't see any reason to dwell on that one. But my earlier comments should make it plain that we are talking about a set of agricultural practices (evaluands) which are being evaluated by a set of complementary evaluation practices. And we believe that switching the evaluation practices will force us to look at the agricultural practices in a very different way, too. This is where Doug Horton's work becomes so important (Mackay and Horton, 2002; Horton, 1997), because he has begun to talk about the same kinds of issues in program evaluation, as they specifically apply to agricultural research.

Laurie: What about this comment we have concerning a 'cheerleader' ending? I've been called a lot of things in my day, but I've never been called a "cheerleader!" Damn straight I'm cheerleading. I'm cheerleading for foundations and funding agencies that will help break the positivist stranglehold on agricultural program evaluation by calling for alternative evaluation in their RFPs. Academia isn't going to change the way they do business until the grant dollars force the issue. We should cite David Greenwood's (Greenwood and Levin, 2000) work; his critique of academic research is scathing and speaks directly to this point. With government and large corporations investing heavily in academic research the agenda is set with very little say from society. Research and evaluation proposals that threaten the dominant paradigm and subsequent control by the elite are not funded—a hermetically sealed circle of power.

Yvonna: Well I think that about covers all the comments line by line.

Laurie: What next?

Craig: We each go back to our notes and take a stab at capturing this conversation.

Laurie: Okay, I'll try and get something back to you by beginning of next week.

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Table 1. Evaluation and Agricultural Paradigm Axioms

Evaluation Axiom:	Rationalistic	Naturalistic	Agricultural Axiom:	Big Ag	FAS
Reality	Single, tangible, convergent, fragmental	Multiple, intangible, divergent, holistic	Economic base	Globalism; commodities; mass markets;	Community-based; context of place and culture
Inquirer/respondent relationship	Independent	Inter-related	Relationship to environment	Exploitative; unsustainable	stewardship, sustainable
Nature of truth statements	Context-free generalizations	Context-bound working hypotheses	Social	Inequitable; hierarchical; concentrated wealth	Equitable, non-hierarchical, dispersed wealth
Attribution/explanation of action	Real causes, temporally precedent of simultaneous; manipulability; probabilistic	Attributional shapers; interactive; non-manipulable; plausible	Health	No health protection	Protects the health of farmers, families, neighbors, consumers
Relation of Values to Inquiry	Value-free	Value-bound	Values	Secular	Spiritual

*Material in the first three columns comes from Guba and Lincoln (1981; 1989).

Table 2. Expanded Evaluation and Agricultural Paradigm Axioms

Evaluation Axioms	Rationalistic	Naturalistic	Participatory	Agricultural Axioms	Big Ag.	FAS
Nature of Reality	Single, tangible, convergent, fragmentable	Multiple, intangible, divergent, holistic	Multiple, pluralistic	Economic base	Globalism; commodities; mass markets;	Community-based; context of place and culture
Inquirer/respondent relationship	Independent	Inter-related	Co-participant	Relationship to environment	Exploitative; unsustainable	stewardship, sustainable
Nature of truth statements	Context-free generalizations	Context-bound working hypotheses	Critical subjectivity, Living knowledge	Social	Inequitable; hierarchical; concentrated wealth	Equitable, non-hierarchical, dispersed wealth
Attribution/explanation of action	Real causes, temporally precedent of simultaneous; manipulable; probabilistic	Attributional shapers; interactive; non-manipulable; plausible	Collaborative action, political participation, primacy of the practical	Health	Minimal health protection considerations	Protects the health of farmers, families, neighbors, consumers
Relation of Values to Inquiry	Value-free	Value-bound	Value-bound formative	Values	Secular	Spiritual

*Material in the first three columns comes from Guba and Lincoln (1981, 1989, 1994)

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