Experiencing Engagement: Stories from the Field

Frank A. Fear, Karen Bruns
Louise Sandmeyer, Ann M. Fields
Stephen Buhler, Byron Burnham, and Gail Imig

Abstract

How do people experience engagement? We explore this question by interpreting stories of engagement, stories associated with projects undertaken in conjunction with the W. K. Kellogg Foundation's Leadership for Institutional Change (LINC) initiative. The stories convey a sense of what it means to be and feel engaged: it is a resonant experience, enabling participants to gain deeper understanding about themselves, others, and their work. By engaging in dialogue about the stories and exploring images embedded in stories, LINC project directors gained insights into the nature of engagement as a catalytic force for leadership and change. Organizing in a special form of learning community, a "community of practice," they experienced an engaged form of leadership—relational leadership—and experimented with the community of practice form as a vehicle for change. The directors' learning experience has implications for the future direction of the engagement movement.

The W. K. Kellogg Foundation's Leadership for Institutional Change (LINC) program is designed to foster institutional change through engagement in U.S. public higher education. For example, by emphasizing transparent communication, respectfulness, and organization around issues of shared concern, Oregon State creates an engaged work environment for students, staff, and faculty. Cross-campus dialogue on engagement at Ohio State stimulates new outreach initiatives. The Leadership in Public Service program at Clemson includes an initiative for undergraduate involvement in community service.[1]

The purpose of this paper is to extract meaning about engagement from LINC experiences. The lessons come from stories told by LINC participants and the images of engagement associated with those stories. Conversations about stories and images helped LINC project directors understand engagement's robust nature. The directors' learning journey is "a story within a story"—a subtext about engagement worth noting—and the subject of concluding comments.

Approach

LINC project directors meet several times a year to deepen their understanding of leadership for institutional change. In organizing this way, they formed a special type of learning community—what Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder call a *community of practice:*

> Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis. . . . These people don't necessarily work together every day, but they meet because they find value in their interactions. As they spend time together, they typically share information, insight, and advice . . . [and] . . . ponder common issues, explore ideas, and act as sounding boards. . . . Over time, they develop a unique perspective on their topic as well as a body of common knowledge, practices, and approaches. *(2002, 4–5)*

To supplement dialogue about their campus work, the directors read scholarly literature and invited selected authors to visit with them *(Daloz, et al. 1996; Hock 1999; Palmer 2000)*. This strategy helped them deepen their understanding of engagement, leadership, and change and develop a vocabulary for use in dialogue and writing.

The idea of soliciting and discussing "stories of engagement" emerged as the centerpiece of the directors' conversations. Stories are evocative—a genre well suited to capturing the richness associated with LINC projects. The decision was made to prepare "LINC stories" similar in vein to the popular Chicken Soup for the Soul series *(see Canfield, et al. 1999)*. In taking this approach, the directors moved—in the words of the late Donald Schon *(1995)*—from the "high, hard ground" of the way professional work is supposed to be done to the way professional work actually unfolds. To do that, they purposefully sought the stories of everyday people engaging in everyday work.

The point of departure for storytelling was the maxim "Good things happen when people lead and learn together." In taking this position, the directors engaged in *appreciative inquiry (see Cooperrider, et al. 2000)*. Fear, Lillis, and Desmond view appreciative inquiry as "both worldview and practical tool, a process in which people affirm the 'good things' happening in their lives. . . . It stands in contrast to the conventional approach—symbolized by a glass half empty—accentuating problems that require fixing" *(2002, 24)*.

Stories were written in the first person and about LINC collaborators. In both approaches, storytelling became an interpretive

tool. As Coles has advised, the first step is listening carefully to others' stories. Then "in telling our version of their version of their lives . . . we can make our guesses . . . [and] . . . indicate our sense of things" *(1989, 27)*.

Example Stories

The collected stories were portraits in context, a way of sensing LINC's impact and visualizing (through the mind's eye) how LINC may be making a difference in peoples' lives.[2] First-person stories from two collaborator-participants are presented and interpreted here: Andrea, a staff professional; and, Paula, an executive academic administrator.[3] Andrea, like many staff members across LINC institutions, was involved in designing the leadership and change initiative on her campus. Paula enabled and then participated in a new learning experience (for her and others) at her institution.[4]

Andrea shares a thought-provoking perspective about leadership and change in higher education:

Everyone talks about the need to "change" and when they do, it seems to strike fear into the hearts of the people who are expected to change. Sometimes it seems like the order of the day within an institution to hear about all the massive changes we are about to undertake. But the "preachers" are looking to the "choir" as the ones who will be doing the changing. That's not the way it works if you really want to see change.

I don't think institutions change. It's people who change the way things are done at institutions. When people are encouraged to look within to see who they are and what they do as having real value, then change happens. There is something personally at stake.

I still run into people, lots of them actually, who think the word LEADER equates to "higher administration." When they hear the words "the leadership of this University" they think it only means people with titles like Vice President or Dean. When I have the opportunity, I tell these people. . . . That's not what Leadership means. YOU are a leader. You can live without your Vice President, but your Vice President can't exist without you.

Paula, an executive academic administrator, wrote about a "stretch learning" experience—an international community service project. Note the feeling with which she describes learning in situ:

> It was the most uniformly powerful learning experience I have ever observed. The students and their faculty mentors learned an incredible amount about themselves, each other, another community, and the world at large. They observed a number of different leadership styles from the gentle guiding hands of the building site manager to the committed, visionary leadership of the mission director; the self-taught, inspired leadership of the community pastor; the brave, bold leadership of the local children; and what they could do themselves with hammer and nails and planks and chicken wire and tar.
>
> We debriefed each night. At first the conversations lasted less than an hour. Later, nights went on for hours. Teary eyes were commonplace as new and deeply felt understandings emerged, insights were shared and questions posed. Many of these students had taken courses on leadership theory before, and many others had volunteered service to their communities, but all of them approached this venture with a limited, hierarchical view of leadership.
>
> It wasn't until the house was nearly complete that a new wave of understanding began to wash over them, that leadership could be shared and that they had done it. There wasn't a dry eye at the house dedication ceremony. I think there was such a huge unspoken feeling of accomplishment in having done something good, having done it well, and having done it together. We could not find the words to express our feelings. We took pictures. We cried. We sang. And we will remember, always.

Themes and Images

Ten stories were discussed over several directors' meetings. As the conversation evolved, a question emerged: Taken together, what do these stories tell us? Over time, it became apparent that the stories revealed a common theme, namely, that LINC *enables*—unlocking the door of discovery through engagement and then encouraging people to walk through that door onto the path of personal transformation *(see Brookfield 1994, 1995; Mezirow 1995)*. A LINC collaborator described it this way:

I see people who want to learn, grow, and change. I see people who want to be part of something "larger than self." I see people who want to make a difference in their work. I see people who are gaining deeper understanding—about themselves, their relationships with others, and their work.

To further explore the nuances of how LINC enables and stimulates transformative change, the directors turned to imagery as an interpretive method. Parker Palmer writes expressively about the power of imagery: "It comes to us rough and raw and full of psychic energy, unedited by the conventions of the rational mind" *(1993, 12)*. What images emerge from the stories? As presented in Table 1, the images are rich in reference to dimensions of the human experience, such as seeing anew, stretching and growing, and having faith and hope.

Interpretations

What might we learn about engagement from the stories and associated images? Three interrelated responses are offered here: first, we decipher the meanings ascribed to engagement; second, we discuss a way of knowing associated with the ascribed meanings; and third, we explore the impact that storytelling and imagery had on the LINC directors' practice community.

"[T]he stories revealed . . . that LINC enables—unlocking the door of discovery through engagement and then encouraging people to walk through that door onto the path of personal transformation."

The meaning of engagement: The meanings ascribed to engagement stand in contrast to the reformist tone of the national conversation about engagement, namely, that higher education needs to become more engaged on and off campus *(Kellogg Commission 2002)*. While that may be the reason for engagement, it tells us nothing about the engagement experience. What about the nature of engagement that comes through the LINC stories and images? One interpretation is the power associated with "being and feeling engaged." It can be a whole-person experience that envelops the senses *(see Fear, Bawden, Rosaen, and Foster-Fishman 2002)*.

Table 1: Images Associated with Experiencing Engagement

SEEING WITH FRESH EYES	*" . . . provided opportunities for staff to see and participate in an educational experience that they would otherwise never see during their daily job experiences."*
EXPERIENCING THE COMMONS	*"When you start to see yourself and what you do in relation to the organization as important, unique, and valuable, there is a shift that takes place. It's moving from doing something because it's your job to doing something because you really care about it."*
SEEKING TRUTH	*"This type of learning—acquiring a sense of indigenous theology and integrating scientific and religious precepts—has proven transformative and will inform my practice as teacher, researcher, and community collaborator."*
LEARNING AND GROWING	*"I was frankly nervous & wasn't sure what the students would learn or how they would adapt to . . . [new and different] conditions."*
EMBRACING VIRTUOUSNESS	*"I firmly believe that the key ingredients that are so easily overlooked in an academic environment are virtuous, that is, love, hope, loyalty, and servant leadership. Others may say higher education needs more communication, organizational change, etc., and this, too, is true. But without the virtues— what makes us truly human—other things hold little promise."*
PROMOTING ENABLEMENT	*"To be frank, for the past few years, I have sometimes heard the notion of collaboration used as a popular buzzword by people in leadership positions. . . . I have discovered that truly collaborative leadership enables people to contribute their best to a common purpose."*
BUILDING CAPACITY	*"With each of these stories, there is a common theme: a theme of citizens working together to better the quality of life in the places where they live. Yet, there is also an unspoken common connection in these communities, the work of a true statesperson who has helped cultivate peoples' capacity to address challenges and create opportunities."*

Tacit knowing as a way of understanding engagement: What the philosopher Michael Polanyi *(1983)* calls *tacit knowing* conforms well to the type of understanding ascribed to engagement in the stories and images. Tacit knowing is highly personal and interpretive. It is deeply felt, rooted in experience, and often difficult to express—a blend of explicit understanding, ideals, values, intuition, and emotion. In *Leading in a Culture of Change (2001)*, Michael Fullan expresses the belief that tacit knowing represents deep knowing—understanding emanating from visceral experience.

> *"What we learn by way of tacit knowing is that the value of engagement extends beyond 'doing the work.'"*

Having said that, tacit understanding is often a matter of "knowing more than you can say about something." That's because tacit knowing includes but extends beyond cognitive understanding. More expressive ways of communicating—storytelling, metaphor, and analogy—are among the ways to verbalize what is understood and felt *(Sallis and Jones 2002, 13)*.

What is the general value of making tacit understanding explicit? In *Knowledge Management in Education: Enhancing Learning and Education (2002)*, Edward Sallis and Gary Jones contend that considerable wisdom is to be gained by "mining" tacit knowing. The first step is what they call "tacit to tacit interaction" as people engage in conversations about their experiences. Converting tacit to explicit knowledge comes when we codify underlying meaning, themes, and points of emphasis *(Fear, Barratt, and Rosaen 2003)*. Tacit understanding involves learning in context. When made explicit it helps newcomers better understand what it's *really* like to engage in practice and for experienced practitioners to gain fresh insights into their work.

Tacit understanding is what we have in the LINC stories. *We discover what engagement is—what it feels like, is understood as, and comes to mean—in personal terms.* What we learn by way of tacit knowing is that the value of engagement extends beyond "doing the work." Engagement is also a deeply resonant experience—a force befitting its name.

Impact on the LINC community of practice: Storytelling began with the directors reading and interpreting others' stories. That was a safe way to begin—separating self from subject. It was a productive way, too, as the directors "learned their way" into exploring a story's deeper meaning and connecting meaning across stories.

Only one director wrote a personal story, and his was the third story to be considered by the group. He wrote and spoke expressively about his LINC experience—how he and others had created a model of engagement that was different in intent and form from the way business is typically done in the broader university setting. The model seemed to align with the image of the *collegium* depicted by John Bennett in *Collegial Professionalism: The Academy, Individualism, and the Common Good (1998)*—academic relationships grounded in invitation, hospitality, and respectfulness. The director's engagement model was a hybrid creation, blending bureaucratic and highly personal aspects—productivity, accountability, relationship building, even forgiveness—characteristics not typically found in a single organizational situation.

Robust discussion ensued. It was the "residue" from the experience that mattered. Two effects are worth noting. The first was the catalytic effect. Stimulated by the story, three other colleagues wrote and published a manuscript on leadership for change in higher education *(Fear, Adamek, and Imig 2002)*. The second effect was the influence on future interactions in the directors' practice community. During the next two gatherings, three directors shared riveting accounts of intensely personal experiences. The stories included commentary about moral dilemmas that required ethical choice making. By sharing and discussing their personal stories, the directors discovered themselves to be "engaged persons" much like the protagonists in the stories they had commissioned.

Experiencing Engagement in a Community of Practice

Organizing as a community of practice had instrumental value for the LINC directors, enabling them to learn more about the consequences of their campus engagement efforts. With time and reflection, the directors recognized that participating in a community of practice is a form of engagement, too. In effect, the directors studied engagement and experienced it, both at the same time. With that insight, the directors' attention turned from analyzing stories of engagement to interpreting their own experience in a community of practice. What insights emerged as a result?

Exceptional collaborative learning: Fear, Bawden, Rosaen, & Foster-Fishman *(2002)* assert that collaborative learning is the cornerstone of engagement. According to Tobin Hart, truly exceptional collaborative learning occurs when learners organize "around the pursuit of knowledge of self and subject, structured around learning

goals" *(2001, 54, 55)*. This interpretation reflects what happened in the LINC community of practice: the subjects were engagement and leadership for change; the goal was to understand how engagement was experienced; and insights into subject and self were informed by reading, engaging in dialogue, and writing. As with any meaningful group learning experience, the LINC experience conformed to the ideals portrayed by Stephanie Ryan—a "collective process . . . sustained by commitment . . . on matters people care deeply about" *(1995, 280)*.

In creating their space for collaborative learning about engagement, LINC directors discovered how important it is for them to create like spaces back home. As one director concluded, "Does leadership in higher education promote the idea of a commons—the idea of safety, access, conversation, shared experiences, and compassion? Campus leadership needs to promote learning pertaining to challenges not faced before."

Relevance and Resonance: Hart observes that interest in a subject is activated when emotion is engaged. "Emotion awakens attention, which drives learning and memory" *(2001, 7)*. Hart believes that relevance and resonance activate interest: "Relevance implies that we are conscious that an idea or topic relates to us. . . . Resonance is more subtle. . . . The word literally implies that something vibrates. . . . We often find its pulse within us" *(23, 25)*.

> *"By sharing and discussing their personal stories, the directors discovered themselves to be 'engaged persons' much like the protagonists in the stories they had commissioned."*

For communities of practice to be meaningful and functional, people must be drawn to the table and maintain their participation. That cannot possibly happen unless there is a strong connection to the subject (relevance) *and* colleagues find great value discussing the subject together (resonance). Both dimensions were galvanized in the LINC experience. As one director put it: "In the beginning, each LINC director wanted to showcase his/her project, expounding on its virtues and accomplishments. When we started examining stories and the heartfelt change of the authors, I began to see the other directors as collaborators—not as people with titles and university representatives. Because I valued others' experiences, I felt they valued my experiences."

Being together on 9/11/01 was a defining experience, too. Another director observed: "We accepted the diversity of responses—rational and affective—and gave each other support, privacy, and room for expression."

Taking risks and connecting theory with practice: With stories as a frame of reference, LINC directors shared intensely personal beliefs about engagement and leadership. A conversation among peers ensued—as did an internal conversation with self—as participants engaged in a "safe space," speaking about thoughts rarely discussed in public. A director expressed it this way: "Through conversation we can experiment with and test beliefs and values in a public setting. We must internalize them to a level that can withstand challenge. The stories were a valuable means of engaging people in this type of conversation."

Conversation about stories of "real people engaging in real work" also fosters valuable connections between theory and practice. A director remarked: "As Paolo Freire stresses in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1968)*, analysis or reflection without practice is empty. At the same time, practice with analysis and reflection is generative, productive, and potentially transformational. Such meta-awareness through stories can honor and encourage constructive action because it avoids the abstraction often responsible for theoretical sterility."

Communities of practice as emergent systems: Communities of practice have "lives of their own," going where they will go, and doing what they will do. To prescribe an agenda or overlay predetermined outcomes is anathema to their unique value. Consistent with this way of organizing, LINC directors "made it up" as they went along. A summary of the experiences is presented in Table 2. Unlike a road map—used as a destination guide—the information in Table 2 looks through a rearview mirror, helping travelers see the road just traveled.

The problem with Table 2 is that it portrays a linear process. The actual journey had loops, each activity both influencing and being influenced by other activities: stories from the field, literature read, insights gained from interactions with authors, dialogue, and writing connected dynamically. As a LINC observer put it: "The metaphor of a rear-view mirror leads me to think about seeing things in the past (but still in some kind of sequence). The metaphor of viewing a landscape from an airplane as it increases in altitude helps us to see discrete formations as a whole and to

Table 2. Sequencing of Learning in the WKKF-LINC Project Directors' Community of Practice

Establish a community of practice

    Select and read key literature

        Engage in dialogue with key authors

            Invite stories of engagement from the field

                Interpret stories

                    Distill images from stories

                        Interpret images

                            Draw conclusions

                                Share results

***

better understand how mountains, valleys, rivers and the sea fit together."

Relational leadership and networking as a change strategy: Fear, Bawden, Rosaen, and Foster-Fishman *(2002)* believe that strategies used to advance an "engaged institution" should reflect the ethos of engagement. Otherwise, paradigmatic straddle occurs—unengaged techniques used to achieve engaged visions. When considered this way, inviting others into conversation may be interpreted as an engaged form of leadership. Daniel Yankelovich calls it *relational leadership*—an emerging model of leadership with emphasis on "conducting dialogue . . . and developing networks of relationships" *(1999, 172)*. He continues:

> In the command-and-control model, power is a zero-sum game: when you give power to others, you diminish your own power. In the relational leadership model, you do not diminish your power by sharing it. Indeed, power is not at issue. The objective is not to get recalcitrant people to follow orders; it is to invite them to take ownership of a vision, a strategy, a set of values. . . . Until recently, the trend toward more cooperative, relationship-building, dialogic models of leadership has had a fringe-like, New Age

character. But mainstream companies and other institutions are now moving tentatively in this direction." *(173, 172)*

This recognition motivated a LINC organizer to write: "I found myself thinking about the culture of our institutions. It is a culture that often alienates colleagues from each other and from any sense of common ground. I think it will take new forms of leadership focused on relational skills to foster movement toward culture change."

This newer form of leadership connects to a newer form of organizational change—different from the conventional approach of initiatives led by management, and designed to reform or replace formal processes and structures. The alternative involves activating and nurturing the development of interpersonal networks embedded in formal systems. Fritjof Capra views these networks as "the living organization" *(2002, 110)*. An institution's generativity—what Capra calls "the emergence of novelty"—can be strengthened by nurturing these web-like patterns of relationships. With that as background, Capra makes a case for communities of practice as an instrument of change.

Implications for the Engagement Movement

Although not a conventional expression in higher education, communities of practice align with higher education's collegial culture and are consistent with the image of engagement portrayed in this article (i.e., engagement as felt experience). Communities of practice represent a populist and egalitarian form—people engaging as peers and crafting shared agendas. What if academic and administrative leaders embraced communities of practice as an institutional change strategy for engagement? Although this is already happening *(see Fear, Barratt, and Rosaen 2003)*, communities of practice are not viewed broadly as a credible change strategy.

What advice might we offer to those willing to experiment? For that, we turn to Meg Wheatley, who has written recently on the power of conversation: "For conversation to take us into . . . [a] . . . deeper realm, I believe we have to practice several new behaviors:

- · We acknowledge one another as equals.
- · We stay curious about each other.
- · We need to become better listeners.
- · We slow down to think and reflect.
- · We remember that conversation is a natural way to interact.
- · We expect it to be messy at times." *(2002, 29)*

What is higher education to do with Wheatley's advice? Following it will propel adherents smack into a confrontation with business as usual—the penchant for conceiving change programs centrally and then implementing top-down change strategies. That path—the path we typically travel—is to consider how a new idea (like engagement) can help us improve higher education and/or fix what's wrong. We focus on the part of the system that we want to change, isolating the problem and attending to the remedy. We have change targets in mind, measure progress along the way, and "steer the ship" skillfully until the destination is reached.

This is not what we believe Wheatley has in mind. She invites us to consider a "simpler way," as she describes it. The path is paved while walking. Outcomes are the fruit of synergy, as people create together. The future emerges as a collective expression of spirit, conviction, and resolve. People actually "make it up as they go along."

> *"What might happen if colleagues on our campuses had an opportunity to imagine and act on their imagination?"*

What might happen if colleagues on our campuses had an opportunity to imagine and act on their imagination?

Wonder with us. Imagine boldly. Engage.

References

Bennett, J. 1998. *Collegial professionalism: The academy, individualism, and the common good.* Phoenix: Oryx Press for the American Council on Education.

Brookfield, S. 1994. Tales from the dark side: A phenomenography of adult critical reflection. *International Journal of Lifelong Education* 8: 203-16.

Brookfield, S. 1995. *Becoming a critically reflective reacher.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Canfield, J., M. V. Hanson, K. Kirberger, and D. Clark. 1999. *Chicken soup for the college soul.* Deerfield Beach, Fla.: Health Communications.

Capra, F. 2002. *The hidden connections: Integrating the biological, cognitive, and social dimensions of life into a science of sustainability.* New York: Doubleday.

Coles, R. 1989. *The call of stories: Teaching and the moral imagination.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Cooperrider, D. I., P. F. Sorensen, S. Whitney, and T. F. Yaeger. 2000. *Appreciative inquiry: Rethinking human organization toward a positive theory of change.* Champaign, Ill.: Stipes Publishing.

Daloz, J. L., C. H. Keen, J. P. Keen, and S. D. Parks. 1996. *Common fire: Lives of commitment in a complex world.* Boston: Beacon Press.

Fear, F., M. Adamek, and G. Imig. 2002. Connecting philosophic and scholarly traditions with change in higher education. *The Journal of Leadership Studies* 8: 42–52.

Fear, F. M. Barratt, and C. Rosaen, 2003. Nurturing the work: Fostering interdisciplinary discovery through communities of practice. Paper presented at the 2003 annual conference of the American Association for Higher Education, March, Washington D. C.

Fear, F., R. Bawden, C. Rosaen, and P. Foster-Fishman. 2002. A model of engaged learning: Frames of reference and scholarly underpinnings. *The Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement* 7: 55–68. Fear, F., S. Lillis, and M. Desmond. 2002. Beyond convention: An Irish-American collaboration in the West of Ireland. *Céide* 5: 24–26.

Freire, P. 1968. *Pedagogy of the oppressed.* New York: Seabury.

Fullan, M. 2001. *Leading in a culture of change.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Hart, T. 2001. *From information to transformation: Education for the evolution of consciousness.* New York: Peter Lang.

Hock, D. 1999. *Birth of the chaordic age.* San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities. 2002. *Renewing the covenant: Learning, discovery, and engagement in a new age and different world.* Washington, D.C.: National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges.

Linde, C. 1993. *Life stories: The creation of coherence.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Mezirow, J. 1995. *Transformative dimensions of adult learning.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Palmer, P. J. 1993. Good talk about good teaching. *Change* 25: 8–13.

Palmer, P. J. 2000. *Let your life speak: Listening to the voice of vocation.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Polanyi, M. 1983. *The tacit dimension.* Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith.

Ryan, S. 1995. Learning communities: An alternative to the "expert" model. In *Learning organizations: Developing cultures for tomorrow's workplace,* edited by S. Chawla, and J. Renesch, 279–92. Portland, Ore.: Productivity Press.

Sallis, E., and G. Jones. 2002. *Knowledge management in education: Enhancing learning and education.* London: Kogan Page.

Schon, D. 1995. Knowing-in-action: The new scholarship requires a new epistemology. *Change* 17: 27–34.

Wenger, E., R. McDermott, and W. Snyder. 2002. *Cultivating communities of practice.* Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

Wheatley, M. 2002. *Turning to one another: Simple conversations to restore hope to the future.* San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Yankelovich, D. 1999. *The magic of dialogue.* New York: A Touchstone Book.

Acknowledgments

Notes

1. LINC projects are located at the University of California, Davis; Clemson University; Iowa State University; the Mid-Atlantic Consortium Leadership Development Initiative (University of Delaware, lead institution); the University of Nebraska—Lincoln; Northern Lights—LINC (University of Minnesota—Twin Cities, lead institution); the Ohio State University; Oregon State University; the Pennsylvania State University and Cheney University of Pennsylvania; the Southern Food System Education Consortium (Alcorn State University, lead institution); and the Texas Collective Leadership for Institutional Change in Higher Education (Texas A&M University, lead institution). For more information on LINC, go to http://www. fspe.org/.

2. Writers were encouraged to tell stories about LINC that accentuated "continuity of the self, especially continuity of the self over time (including discontinuity); relation of the self to others; and reflexivity of the self (treatment of the self as 'other,' including moral evaluation of self)" *(Linde 1993, 100)*. Writers were also encouraged to present their stories in ways that invite readers' to visualize, emote, and think. Good stories paint a picture as readers create mental images from the writer's words; speak to the emotions as readers forge an empathic connection with the protagonist and story line; and make readers think by, among other things, reframing conventional wisdom, simplifying complexity, deepening understanding, questioning uncritically accepted assumptions, and unmasking myths.

3. Pseudonyms are used throughout.

4. Quotes from LINC collaborators–participants are presented in italics.

About the Authors

• Frank A. Fear (Ph.D., Iowa State University) is professor of resource development and a faculty member in the Liberty Hyde Bailey Scholars Program at Michigan State University. He is especially interested in exploring forms of engagement in teaching, research, and service. He is a frequent contributor to the *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement.* He has also published recently in *Innovative Higher Education, The Journal of Leadership Studies, Encounter—Education for Meaning and Social Justice, The Journal of College and Character,* and *Metropolitan Universities.*

• Karen S. Bruns (Ph.D., the Ohio State University) is leader for OSU CARES and Outreach/Engagement with Extension and

University Outreach at the Ohio State University. She is active in fostering and developing partnerships across the university to more effectively engage the university with the citizens of Ohio. In addition, she has served as project coordinator for the OSU-Kellogg Leadership for Institutional Change initiative.

• Louise Sandmeyer serves as executive director of the Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment at the Pennsylvania State University. The Office facilitates the university's planning, quality, and assessment initiatives by using quality principles to help administrative and academic units develop strategic plans, improve key processes, and assess performance. She currently serves as the Chair of the Executive Committee of the National Consortium for Continuous Improvement and co-convenes the PSU-Kellogg Leadership for Institutional Change initiative.

• Ann M. Fields (Ph.D., Iowa State University) is program co-director of the ISU-Kellogg Shared Leadership for Institutional Change initiative, a university-wide leadership development program for faculty and staff. She also teaches in The School for Working Adults and the College of Business and Management Science at William Penn University.

• Stephen M. Buhler (Ph.D., UCLA) is professor of English at the University of Nebraska—Lincoln, where he teaches courses on Renaissance literature and on the place of English studies in the larger community. His publications include a book, numerous journal articles, and multiple book chapters. He has been a research fellow at the Folger Shakespeare Library and the Huntington Library. He also serves as the convener for the UNL-Kellogg Leadership for Institutional Change initiative. His outreach activities include commentaries on cultural and social issues aired over the Nebraska Public Radio Network.

• Byron R. Burnham (Ed.D., University of British Columbia) is professor and department head of instructional technology at Utah State University. He also serves as an evaluation specialist for cooperative extension. He has taught courses in instructional design, evaluation and research methods, and adult education, and has extensive experience as a consultant in the areas of evaluation and leadership development.

• Gail Imig (Ph.D., Michigan State University) is a program director at the W. K. Kellogg Foundation. She has responsibility for work being undertaken in the Foundation's Food Systems and Rural Development program, sharing leadership for the Food and Society Initiative; and overseeing the People and Land program in Michigan. Prior to joining WKKF, she served as extension/outreach director at Michigan State University and for the University of Missouri System.