The Handbook of **Communication Engagement**

Edited by Kim A. Johnston and Maureen Taylor

The Handbook of
Communication Engagement

Handbooks in Communication and Media

This series aims to provide theoretically ambitious but accessible volumes devoted to the major fields and subfields within communication and media studies. Each volume sets out to ground and orientate the student through a broad range of specially commissioned chapters, while also providing the more experienced scholar and teacher with a convenient and comprehensive overview of the latest trends and critical directions.

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Maureen Taylor

WILEY Blackwell

This book is dedicated to my family – David, Taylah, and Tom – who surround me with love and inspiration. I also acknowledge my colleague, Dr Anne Lane, who provides unwavering support and encouragement for all of my crazy ideas.

—Kim Johnston

This book is dedicated to my advisor, Carl Botan and my advisees who teach me something new every day. I also thank my partner, Michael Kent, for his support. To quote Kenneth Burke's dedication to *A Grammar of Motives*: "Without whom, not."

—Maureen Taylor

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Engagement as Communication
Pathways, Possibilities, and Future Directions

Kim A. Johnston and Maureen Taylor

The term "engagement" is everywhere and has been used to describe just about every type of interaction. When the term engagement is everything, as a consequence, it is nothing. Engagement has become embedded within the discourse of many disciplines and practices, often as a placebo substituting a continuum of responses from complete ignorance to complete involvement. The enduring use and interest in engagement signifies its importance, yet theoretically, engagement remains undeveloped. This Handbook signals the beginning of a unified conceptualization of engagement as communication and provides a contemporary consideration of engagement in all its forms, functions, and frameworks across communication disciplines. Following Taylor and Kent (2014), it is through engagement that organizations and publics can make decisions that contribute to interpersonal, organizational, community, and civic social capital. Engagement will continue to evolve and be influenced by diverse contexts such as culture, technology and world events, and public expectations. Through its evolution, engagement offers a relevant, conceptual, and applied framework to understand and respond in meaningful ways to real-world problems.

The journey for this book started with an acknowledgment that everyone used the term but it was misunderstood. In 2011, after talking with Karen Russell, then editor of *Journal of Public Relations Research,* she was open to the vision of considering engagement within the communication fields, specifically public relations, offering the first special issue on Engagement and Public Relations in 2014. The interest in the special issue laid the foundation for a preconference at the 2014 International Communication Association conference in Seattle, where scholars came together to conceptualize and operationalize engagement. This conference meeting set us on a path to formally conceptualize and complete this Handbook.

Our goal was to cast a wide net to represent the most up-to-date conceptualizations of engagement across a variety of communication-related disciplines. The response to the call for chapters was overwhelming and revealed the diverse perspectives that are drawing upon communication engagement in fields such as information sciences, architecture and design, neuroscience, social media, public diplomacy, media, and social impact.

This Handbook conceptualizes and operationalizes engagement advancing psychological and behavioral dimensions at the individual level and extrapolating these as group-level influences at social levels relevant to organizations and societies, to provide a comprehensive examination

Figure 1.1   Inductive themes—select engagement definitions presented by authors in the Handbook of Communication Engagement (Johnston & Taylor, 2018).

of engagement theory and research to advance current thinking in engagement theory, strategy, and practice.
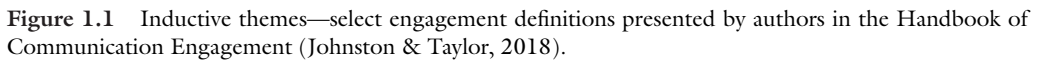
Each author in this Handbook has made a contribution to further the conceptual, empirical, and theoretical development and the application of engagement. While discipline and contextual imperatives find unique applications and influences on the antecedents, processes, and outcomes of engagement, an inductive content analysis of the definitions presented in this Handbook reveals three key themes emerge. Strong connections and intersections are present between each theme (i.e., no theme operates exclusive to the other themes), identifying the dominance of these across conceptualizations of engagement works to advance future research to understand this complex and multidimensional concept. These themes are illustrated in Figure 1.1.

1   The first theme highlights the **social and relational focus of engagement** and recognizes the socially situated nature of communication engagement within a social setting. Much of engagement is situated within a relational setting—with actors represented by their interests, motivations, world views, and power characteristics. Within engagement definitions, key actors in the relationship are recognized as organizations, stakeholders, consumers, employees, community, users, partners, parties, social institutions, and so on; each operating within a distinct or discrete social setting. The potential influences from social setting and group level outcomes suggest the nature of engagement is responsive to a context, setting, or discipline lens. Engagement as a social and relational activity therefore becomes about facilitating diverse relationships for engagement outcomes.

2   The second theme that emerged from the definitions presented in the Handbook focuses on **engagement as interaction and exchange.** Engagement is conceptualized as an iterative, dynamic process, where participation, experience, and shared action emerge as central components of engagement. It is through interaction and exchange that meaning is cocreated, such as described in the dialogic nature of engagement, to achieve understanding. The focus on interaction and exchange also highlights strong connections to the relational and social nature of engagement, for example, relationships emerge as an outcome to, or part of, an interaction. Engagement is also conceptualized as a discourse or discourses, reflecting the exchange of narratives about how and why engagement is undertaken and the outcomes of engagement for individual and social benefits. It is these social benefits, and the opportunity to build better societies and remind organizations that they operate as an instrument or reflection of a social entity, that make engagement so important to fully functioning societies (Heath, 2006). Engagement in this sense contributes to the building of social capital, cocreation of meaning and enhanced outcomes. Lest we be naïve, it is important to acknowledge that while engagement has been generally aligned with positive affectivity and outcomes, we believe challenging overly positive framings of engagement outcomes is a necessary part of scholarship and practice. Just as scholars look to understand how it contributes to individuals, groups, organizations, and societies, we must also look at the negative side of engagement as well as explore unintended consequences from engagement processes.

3   The third theme present in the authors' definitions of engagement highlights the **dynamic and multidimensional** nature of engagement and acknowledges the historical legacy of engagement's psychological foundations as cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. The significance of the psychological foundations emphasizes a process orientation to engagement, for example, as a state, process, orientation, or strategy and signal the relevance for a range of settings and contexts, and the complexity of engagement as a human communication phenomena. The dynamic nature of engagement opens up new opportunities for further research to understand the role of communication and experience in influencing each of these.

Underpinning all of these themes is the central role of communication in engagement—to create, nurture, and influence outcomes. Table 1.1 presents select definitions that reflect the three themes presented earlier found within the contributing definitions toward advancing engagement.

Measures of Engagement—Three Tiers

This Handbook makes significant contributions to advance the conceptualization of engagement. Aligned with this activity is work to advance the measurement of engagement in meaningful ways, yet there is still a lot of work to be done. Engagement is challenged by the lack of measurement tools, such as empirically reliable scales and variables, and presents an opportunity for future research to focus on advancing measurement and move away from descriptions and settings.

We see three tiers of potential measurements of engagement (Table 1.2). The tiers include low-level manifestation, mid-level understanding and connecting, and at the higher level action and impact.

Tier 1 is the lowest level of engagement and measurement will indicate activity is present. Possible measures of activity include counts and amounts, social media impressions such as page likes and visits, and monitoring of both traditional and social media—all indicating that individuals are interacting with the content at a low level. While many claim this is an indicator of engagement, we argue this indicates a potential for engagement—but it is a low level of engagement.

Table 1.1 Definitions of engagement—by theme

Social and relational: Engagement definition themes	*Author/page*
Engagement is defined as a dynamic multidimensional relational concept featuring psychological and behavioral attributes of connection, interaction, participation, and involvement, designed to achieve or elicit an outcome at individual, organization, or social levels.	Johnston, Chapter 2, p. 18
Social level engagement is defined as a *collective state* of engagement that can be represented in behavioral forms (collective action, group participation), cognitive (shared knowledge) and affective forms (orientation, intention, and experience) and is an outcome of a dynamic, socially situated system. The notion of social level engagement is derived from the idea of collective action and outcomes.	Johnston, Chapter 2, p. 26
Engagement is the ultimate relational decision-making tension between individuals of all types and levels of generality (whether human or artificial, organizations, groups, associations, businesses/industries, communities, and societies).	Heath, Chapter 3, p. 33
Community engagement is defined as a relational process that facilitates understanding and evaluation, involvement, exchange of information and opinions, about a concept, issue or project, with the aim to build social capital and enhance social outcomes through decision making.	Johnston, Lane, Hurst, and Beatson, Chapter 12, p. 173
A participatory process that is led with a bottom up approach and that is distinguished by the sharing of knowledge as an indispensable component for community participation in social innovation projects. This process is stimulated by the coproduction of knowledge among all participants, and where the forms of community engagement and of community participation is determined and shaped by its context.	Chamorro-Koc and Caldwell, Chapter 20, p. 301
Engagement in the individual logic rests on the relational premise that individual entities are separate and autonomous and, therefore must initiate the process of creating and building relations with others…. Engagement in the relational logic is based on the relational premise that individuals are inherently bound to others. Engagement focuses on defining, strengthening and maintaining relational bonds…Engagement in the holistic logic centers on the relational premise that individuals are part of a larger relational constellation, and thus engagement requires a sensitivity to integrating diverse elements into the whole and maintaining the balance and integrity of the whole.	Zaharna, Chapter 21, pp. 317, 320++
Virtual engagement as the social enactment of ICT [information and communication technology] as part of a larger relational context in which one connects with social, information, and resource networks in order to affect change, cocreation, and commitment toward a particular engagement object.	Chewning, Chapter 30, p. 441
Interaction and exchange: Engagement definition themes	
User engagement is a quality of user experience that is characterized by the depth of an actor's cognitive, temporal and/or emotional investment in an interaction with a digital system (O'Brien, 2016).	O'Brien and McKay, Chapter 6, p. 73
Engagement is viewed as a dynamic process rather than a static organizational state…Engagement is frequently seen as serving a utilitarian function of providing a conduit for information exchange and communication between an organization and elements of its social environment…Engagement is held to represent processes of social interaction that link essential and significant "stakeholders" in the social environment of the organization to the organization.	Everett, Chapter 7, p. 92

Table 1.1 (*Continued*)

Social and relational: Engagement definition themes	Author/page
This chapter views "shareholder engagement" as both an orientation and an approach…leading to interactions between shareholder activists groups and corporations. These interactions on social and environmental issues, then, trigger a positive change in corporate behavior…	Uysal, Chapter 11, p. 150
…engagement in conflict is a process of equal, voluntary, constructive, and deliberative dialogue and argumentation designed to elicit full understanding and shared meaning between two or more parties with the goal of resolving conflicts through shared decision-making and problem-solving.	Harrison and Wendorf Muhamad, Chapter 13, p. 188
A network view of engagement … is about both community level social structures in relation to interactions among partners that make up that community.	Doerfel, Chapter 16, p. 237
Engagement is a balanced act of purposeful interaction among two or more participants who are willing to exchange resources in return for own benefits. This definition may apply to engagement at macro, meso and micro levels, in which participants may vary from individuals to social institutions who engage with one another on territorial or virtual space for mutual benefits. Media engagement can, thus, be defined as a balanced act of purposeful interaction through formal (e.g., news, feature, columns) or informal (e.g., social media posts, comments) contents between content creators and users who exchange resources (content, time, money) in return for mutual benefits.	Yousuf, Chapter 17, p. 261
The dynamic interplay of stakeholder and organizational actions designed to define the communicative nature and parameters of joint decision-making efforts.	Coombs and Holladay, Chapter 18, p. 280
Different levels of engagement embedded in the concept of public diplomacy as discourses of engagement: participation (actors engaging in the dynamic dialogic process), interaction (actors interact and mutually influence each other), cocreation (actors trying to impose certain discourses that are ultimately cocreated).	Dolea, Chapter 22, p. 334
Deliberative engagement is therefore positioned as a collective, discursive, reflective, iterative, problem-focused, and action-orientated form of stakeholder engagement which requires power and decision-making to be dispersed amongst the participants.	Willis, Tench, and Devins, Chapter 26, p. 384
Engagement as a term that signals the kinds of human interactions and social conditions which make connectedness with the world possible. Such interactions and conditions understand young people as complex social beings that bring a rich array of cultural capital … and funds of knowledge … to their schooling experiences.	Mackey-Smith and Banfield, Chapter 27, p. 398
Engagement should be construed as composed of two main components … the brand experience (thoughts and feelings about relevance to personal life goals) and brand behaviors out of which experiences arise. Experience lives in the consumer's mind while behaviors concern what the consumer physically does, such as writing a comment.	Malthouse and Calder, Chapter 28, p. 414
Negative engagement manifests through the active and spirited spread of negative word-of-mouth recommendation, co-opting others to adopt a particular attitudinal and/or behavioral position about a provider, the development of deeply negative attitudes, as well as potential retaliation and revenge behaviors. Negative engagement has a target, making it of central relevance for brands, organizations, and individuals.	Lievonen, Luoma-aho, and Bowden, Chapter 36, p. 533

Table 1.1   (*Continued*)

Social and relational: Engagement definition themes	*Author/page*
Dynamic and dimensional: Engagement definition themes	
Engagement is made up of three key elements according to organizational psychologists involving: (a) a psychological bond formed through a combination of cognitive processing of information and *affective commitment* …; (b) *positive affectivity*, which involves a deeper level of positive emotional response beyond liking or attraction …; and (c) *empowerment* of those engaged.	Macnamara, Chapter 9, p. 117
Engagement can be defined as the orientation, process, or state of commitment toward, and/or in, CSR and its communication.	Hurst and Ihlen, Chapter 10, p. 137
…CCO puts emphasis on engagement as a product of social, interactive sense making processes …. Engagement is constructed in a process where the employee him- or herself acts as a communicator or dialogue partner.	Heide and Simonsson, Chapter 14, p. 210
Corporate diplomacy is an engagement strategy for MNCs in nonmarket business environments. Engagement as a strategy is conceptualized as managing risks in the nonmarket business environment and engaging with the diverse set of stakeholders.	Kochhar, Chapter 23, p. 347
… engagement as both a psychological and behavioral phenomenon that involves the interaction of an audience with a content that he chooses to consume via a branded media platform.	Chan-Olmsted and Wolter, Chapter 29, p. 423
Consumer engagement—an interactive, relational, mental, and behavioral exchange between a specific brand (i.e., engagement *object*) and an individual consumer (i.e., engagement *subject*), who can be a former, current or potential customer but also a critic of the brand.	Weitzl and Einwiller, Chapter 31, p. 456
Examining various definitions of consumer engagement in marketing and public relations, the concept has three dimensions: cognitive dimension (thoughts), emotional dimension (feelings), and behavioral dimension (action or interaction).	Chen, Chapter 32, p. 476
Consumer engagement—"a consumer's willingness to make cognitive, emotional, and behavioral investments in interacting with the service brand or branded product itself, the specific brand community, or specific networked agents/individuals."	Bowden, Conduit, Hollebeek, Luoma-aho, and Solem, Chapter 33, p. 493

Tier 2 is a mid-level of engagement. Measurement will indicate connections and relationships but at the individual level of analysis. Possible measures of connecting and understanding include relationship indices, for example, levels of trust, legitimacy, and satisfaction, while interaction quality can be measured by outcomes from an interaction such as long-term consumer cognitive/affective or behavioral outcomes.

Tier 3 is the highest level of engagement with measurement focusing on action and impact at a social level of analysis. Measurement of engagement at this group level could include civic indicators (social capital/community based); participation by disempowered or silent groups in community-based programs; or indicators of social change, action as a result of engagement.

While engagement outcomes at each tier are not exclusive, programs designed for communication engagement should aim toward higher (Tier 2 and 3) level outcomes (Table 1.2).

Table 1.2   Conceptual tiers for measuring engagement

Tier	*Possible measurements*

1. Low level
  • Presence
  • Occurrence
  • Manifestation
	• Indicator of activity
	• Counts and amounts of interactivity
	• Social media likes, page visits, click-through
	• Monitoring—social media and traditional
	• Reading/viewing/visiting/impression/awareness

2. Mid-level
  • Understanding
  • Connecting
	• Indicators of relationship qualities
	• Trust, reciprocity, credibility, legitimacy, openness, satisfaction, understanding
	• Interaction quality
	• Diffusion—patterns and networks
	• Dialogue
	• Voice
	• Indicators of engagement dimensions at individual level measuring affective/cognitive/or behavioral outcomes, for example, user-generated effects or neuroscience/unobtrusive/implicit measures
	• Antecedent and outcome

3. Higher level
  • Action
  • Impact
	• Indicators of social embeddedness
	• Of self and others
	• Social awareness and civic (greater good) indicators
	• Acknowledgment of other (diversity/empowerment)
	• Indicators of action, change, and outcomes at social level
	• Engagement in ecological system
	• Recognition of diverse perspectives
	• Social capital
	• Agency and coordinated action

As evidenced in both scholarship and practice, social media counts (likes) is often termed engagement, views of webpages is termed engagement, counts and amounts is equated to engagement. And it is—but it is a low level. We are challenged to move to higher levels of measuring engagement—to document relational, social, and civic measures of engagement. The prevalence of engagement across communication professions is a key limitation, for example, when it is everything to advertisers, marketers, or businesses, it is also nothing.

As a concept, we should proceed with caution and care that engagement does not become instrumentalized—that companies do not use it just when they want to get something out of others (tokenism—see Arnstein, 1969). The notion that power can buy, direct, and influence the outcomes of engagement remains a central challenge, and many of the scholars in this Handbook, particularly Pieczka (Chapter 37), provide advice on how to respond to these challenges now and in the future. Developing higher level measurements of engagement may help to protect it from being relegated to counts and amounts of things. We encourage authors in the Handbook and scholars across disciplines to join us as we work to further conceptualize and operationalize engagement.

The Organizing Framework of the *Handbook of Communication Engagement*

The book is organized into six parts presenting original conceptual, empirical, and practical approaches to engagement from theoretical, organizational, network, global, digital, and future

perspectives. The following summarizes each part and each chapter's contribution to engagement.

Part 1—theoretical foundations and guiding philosophies of engagement

The chapters respond to the question asking if there is a unifying theory of engagement. What would it look like and how would it be studied? In which disciplines would it be studied or could such a theory be broad enough to guide all fields interested in questions of engagement? The first part of the Handbook provides insight from leading scholars across the engagement literature as they theorize about engagement. These theoretical and philosophical chapters provide the foundation for the rest of the Handbook.

Chapter 2 by Kim A. Johnston entitled "Toward a Theory of Social Engagement" presents a multilevel model of social engagement as a coherent theoretical framework to build on individual engagement dimensions and broaden understanding and knowledge of engagement beyond a binary process. The chapter recognizes the important role of communication interventions (dialogue, advocacy, and interaction) at individual and social levels, and the influence of social conditions on the outcomes of individual, and social, levels of engagement.

In **Chapter 3,** "How Fully Functioning Is Communication Engagement If Society Does Not Benefit?", Robert Heath explores engagement as a relational decision-making tension between individuals, groups, businesses, industries, communities, and societies. Heath argues that societal value of engagement is judged by both pragmatic outcomes and moral standards. The chapter discusses whether communication engagement can be fully functioning if society does not benefit. Heath argues that engagement presumes the capacity and logic of decision-making to enlighten collective choice. He reminds us that transparent and authentic engagement can prevent crisis because it gives voice to actual and potential victims of risk. Heath concludes that engagement leads to individual and collective agency, social capital, and trust necessary for a fully functioning society.

Chapter 4, "Philosophy and Ethics of Engagement" by Petra Theunissen, explores engagement as a philosophical and ethical concept. She discusses the effect of language and establishes engagement as a concept that is comprised of both rational and emotional dimensions. She provides a clear conceptual framework for engagement that can transcend fields of practice and lays out a philosophical argument about the value of engagement.

Anne Lane and Michael Kent describe "Dialogic Engagement" in **Chapter 5.** Dialogue and engagement have been linked together across academic areas, and Lane and Kent provide a model to explain the overlapping synergy between dialogue and engagement. They present a practical component for professional communicators to help practitioners understand the sequencing of stages to conducting dialogue as part of engagement.

The final chapter in the theory part, **Chapter 6,** entitled "Modeling Antecedents of User Engagement" by Heather O'Brien and Jocelyn McKay, explores user engagement from an information science perspective. Today, many engagement interactions are mediated through systems. User engagement in human–computer interactions is constructed through content, design, and what people bring to digital interactions. O'Brien and McKay offer ideas for evaluating and designing digital engagement experiences. This chapter is both theoretically and practically useful as organizations move to engagement systems for such processes as customer relationship management, information retrieval, and networking.

Part 2—engaged organizations

A major theme in the research about engagement considers how organization can engage employees, publics, or consumers. Part 2 explores engaged organizing/organizations as they engage employees, stakeholders, shareholders, activists, and consumers. It presents work

situating the role of engagement by, and for, organizations from diverse discipline, stakeholder, and organizational perspectives. Part two of the Handbook starts from an ecological perspective of the role and nature of engagement to allowing organizations to operate within its social environment. Chapters address the role of engagement in engaged society. Dominant, management-centered perspectives on employee engagement are challenged in this part, while engagement processes and conditions that influence stakeholder engagement strategies are also explored. This part provides a range of pieces that explore engagement's role in social impact and social license to operate and engage in conflict.

The first chapter in this part, **Chapter 7,** "Toward a Cultural Ecology of Engagement" by James Everett, situates engagement in the cultural ecology of evolving (CEOE) organizations. Everett applies the CEOE model to describe the cultural ecology of engagement.

Chapter 8, "Reconceptualizing Public Relations in an Engaged Society" by Maureen Taylor, reenvisions public relations engagement away from a functional corporate activity to a cocreational activity where individuals, groups, organizations, and community cocreate meaning through discourse. The outcome of engagement is social capital that provides resources for organizations, communities, and ultimately, society.

In **Chapter 9,** Jim Macnamara focuses on a key element of organizations—that is how and how well organizations listen to their stakeholders and publics. The chapter entitled "The Missing Half of Communication and Engagement: Listening" draws readers' attention to the concept of listening, a *two-way* dialogue, speaking and listening process. The chapter proposes an *architecture of listening* that requires and recognizes the culture, politics, policies, technologies, resources, and skills required for organizational listening.

Chapter 10 by Bree Hurst and Øyvind Ihlen, "Corporate Social Responsibility and Engagement: Commitment, Mapping of Responsibilities, and Closing the Loop", attempts to answer the question—how do organizations engage for the societal good? This chapter proceeds from a CSR perspective to highlight why engagement is not only a foundational concept to CSR but also shows that engagement is necessary for CSR to succeed. The chapter focuses on three forms of engagement in relation to CSR: commitment, mapping of responsibilities, and closing the loop and identifies new directions in CSR research.

Investors are a key stakeholder public to engage. **Chapter 11** by Nur Uysal, "Engaging Shareholder Activists: Antecedents, Processes, and Outcomes", looks at investor engagement through the lens of shareholder activists. Shareholder activists include people and groups who purchase shares of publicly traded companies and then engage the corporation through the shareholder resolution process to change its behavior. This chapter analyzes the engagement process between shareholder activists and publicly traded corporations and argues that engagement is both a means and an end for shareholder activism and that corporate social performance can be both an antecedent to engagement and an outcome of engagement.

Community engagement has historically been practiced by civic organizations with the aim of incorporating representative opinion into public policy decisions. **Chapter 12,** entitled "Episodic and Relational Community Engagement: Implications for Social Impact and Social License" by Kim A. Johnston, Anne Lane, Bree Hurst, and Amanda Beatson, offers a conceptualization of community engagement as being relational, helping organizations to maintain and enhance their relationships with community members, and episodic, focusing on the making of organizational decisions. Both of these approaches are integral to understanding the social impact of organizational decision-making and the achievement and maintenance of organizational social licenses to operate.

Conflict is often present in relationships, organizations, and systems, and it is often a process and outcome of engagement. **Chapter 13** by Tyler Harrison and Jessica Wendorf Muhamad on "Engagement in Conflict: Research and Practice" provides both a theory-driven and practical guide to engagement in conflict contexts. They draw on dialogic and argumentation models to define engagement in conflict as a process of equal, voluntary, constructive, and deliberative

dialogue and argumentation designed to elicit full understanding and shared meaning between two or more parties with the goal of resolving conflicts through shared decision-making and problem-solving. Issues of power, relational distance, and interpretive frameworks facilitate or create barriers to conflict engagement. Yet, they acknowledge that conflict can also be used to create engagement in organizations and communities.

Is engagement by organizations always a positive thing? **Chapter 14,** "Coworkership and Engaged Communicators: A Critical Reflection on Employee Engagement" by Mats Heide and Charlotte Simonsson, challenges the dominant, management-centered perspective on employee engagement and outlines an alternative perspective in which the perspective of coworkers is put in the center. The authors apply the CCO perspective to suggest a coworker-centered approach that provides a broader understanding of the phenomenon of engagement in organizations.

Engaging stakeholders matters a great deal. **Chapter 15** by Aimei Yang entitled "Conceptualizing Strategic Engagement: A Stakeholder Perspective" looks at the external publics of organizations and argues that advancements in digital media technologies and the global diffusion of corporate social responsibility norms and standards have made stakeholder engagement an important task for organizations. This chapter identifies three engagement factors that influence stakeholder engagement and proposes a model that examines stakeholder engagement strategies to guide future empirical engagement research. Yang offers testable propositions that can guide engagement researchers' future studies. This chapter provides steps forward in measuring engagement.

Part 3—engaged networks and communities

This third part presents chapters focusing on engaged networks and communities. Castells (2009) argues that we live in a network society. Networks are made possible by both face-to-face communication and technologies that shape interactions, meaning, and relationships. Engagement in these networks will influence the outcomes of the interactions. How can engagement be facilitated in networks?

Chapter 16 by Marya Doerfel entitled "Engaging Partnerships: A Network-Based Typology of Interorganizational Relationships and their Communities" offers a theoretical framework of organization and community levels of engagement using social networks concepts. A social networks approach emphasizes relational activities that facilitate communication flows and influence. A focus on engagement expands interorganizational networks from a weak–strong tie continuum to one of engaged communicative processes.

Media networks hold groups and networks together. **Chapter 17** by Mohammad Yousuf entitled "Media Engagement in Networked Environments: An Ecological Perspective" proposes a conceptual framework for understanding media engagement in a changing media landscape. Yousuf integrates both ecological and network perspectives to define media engagement as purposeful interactions among media organizations, users, and other populations in a media ecosystem meant to exchange resources with one another for mutual benefits. The chapter also suggests that populations must balance their relationships in ecosystems to minimize conflicts of interests.

Indeed, active publics are a key part of real engagement. **Chapter 18** "Activist Stakeholders Challenging Organizations: Enkindling Stakeholder-Initiated Engagement" by W. Timothy Coombs and Sherry Holladay looks at a new phenomenon called hashtag hijacking. Hashtag hijacking occurs when social media users take over a company or brand hashtag and use the platform to criticize the organization. The authors suggest these cases provide input into stakeholder motivations and emotions that underlie the engagement. This chapter argues that hashtag hijacking is a form of stakeholder-initiated engagement where stakeholders take what is meant to be a basic form of marketing engagement (have customer engage a message) and attempt to create pressure on the organization to change its operations. Hashtag hijacking engagement seeks to affect organizational decision-making and actions.

Social and interpersonal networks are made possible by engagement. **Chapter 19** "The Outcomes of Engagement in Activism Networks: A Co-creational Approach" by Adam Saffer presents a conceptual framework for studying the outcomes of engagement in activism networks. Engagement is conceptualized from an issues-centric perspective where publics, groups, and organizations are stakeholders to each other as well as to issues they are engaging and being engaged by. Saffer studies shared meaning and social capital in activism networks and argues that shared meaning and social capital are two outcomes of engagement.

A recurring theme in the Handbook is that citizen engagement matters a great deal. **Chapter 20** explores how the ways in which engagement is structured will also influence outcomes. "Designing for Viable Futures: Community Engagement as Social Innovation" by Marianella Chamorro-Koc and Glenda Caldwell explores engagement from the perspective of design disciplines. In this chapter, readers will learn how design of community projects influence the amount and type of citizen engagement. The authors explore four aspects in community-based design-led projects: a bottom-up approach, shared and assembled knowledge, a focus on community in-place, and participation and coproduction process. The findings suggest that how we design engagement influences the outcomes.

Part 4—toward an engaged world

The fourth part of the Handbook looks at engagement in contexts around the idea of an engaged world. The field of public diplomacy is premised on the idea that people-to-people engagement will build international relationships. **Chapter 21** entitled "Global Engagement: Culture and Communication Insights From Public Diplomacy" by R.S. Zaharna explores engagement as a relational concept. Zaharna considers how different culturally inspired understandings of the nature of "relationship" can spawn different assumptions about what is engagement and what makes it meaningful to global publics. The chapter outlines the relational premises and salient features of three distinctive, overlapping logics of engagement: individual, relational, holistic. Public diplomacy cases from Sweden, Cuba, China, and the Vatican illustrate the differing logics of engagement.

Alina Dolea authored **Chapter 22,** "Public Diplomacy as Co-constructed Discourses of Engagement". Dolea argues that the recent critical turn can open new avenues for engagement study and practice. Building on a sociological and dialogic approach to engagement, Dolea conceptualizes public diplomacy as constructed discourses of engagement. She argues that engagement is both a dynamic, dialogic *process* and, at the same time, *an outcome* of the interactions and negotiations between state and nonstate actors. This theoretical discussion is illustrated with a case study of the campaign, "Why don't you come over?" where Romanian organizations create their own public diplomacy activities outside of the government sphere to address British criticisms and concerns about Romanian migration to the United Kingdom.

Nations are not the only entities enacting public diplomacy activities. **Chapter 23** "Corporate Diplomacy as an Engagement Strategy of the Nonmarket Business Environment" by Sarab Kochhar conceptualizes corporate diplomacy as an engagement strategy of the nonmarket business environment. Drawing on an interdisciplinary literature, engagement is conceptualized as managing risk and dependence on stakeholders. It helps organizations manage a highly disparate and complex nonmarket business landscape. The case study of ArcelorMittal illustrates corporate diplomacy as an engagement strategy and provides a clear set of guiding principles to effectively deal with the interests, institutions, ideas, and issues that fall outside of market domains.

Civil society and social capital appear as recurrent themes in the Handbook of Communication Engagement. **Chapter 24,** "Habits of the Heart and Mind: Engagement in Civil Society and International Development" by Amanda Kennedy and Erich Sommerfeldt, looks at engagement as the center of civil society theory and international development practice. This chapter reviews

the growth of civil society theory, links civil society and engagement to democracy, and explicates different treatments of engagement in the civil society and development literature. The chapter also explores critical and feminist approaches to engagement providing alternative perspectives to consider engagement theory.

Government–citizen communication can create significant implications for internal and external relationships. **Chapter 25,** "Political Engagement, Communication, and Democracy: Lessons from Brexit", by Ian Somerville critiques the notion of "civic engagement" arguing that it has serious conceptual flaws. Somerville applies Gidden's concept of "life politics" and Arendt's emphasis on the importance of "reflective judgment" to understand problems of political engagement in representative liberal democracies. The chapter explores the idea of political engagement in relation to "direct democracy" to explore the 2016 Brexit vote and the key issues it raises for engagement, communication, and democracy today.

Some social problems span nations and continents, and these problems will require multiple engagement approaches. **Chapter 26** "Deliberative Engagement and Wicked Problems: From Good Intentions to Practical Action" by Paul Willis, Ralph Tench, and David Devins, explores deliberative engagement as a collective, discursive, reflective, iterative, problem-focused, and action-orientated form of stakeholder engagement which requires power and decision-making to be dispersed among the participants. The chapter considers specifically the role and implementation of deliberative engagement in the context of wicked problem-solving (complex problems with no clear answer).

Education provides a foundation to an engagement orientation. How do people learn how to engage? **Chapter 27** "'Changing Worlds' Through Intentional Dialogic Engagements" by Kerrie Mackey-Smith and Grant Banfield looks at engagement in the field of education. This chapter argues that traditional approaches to engagement are no longer sufficient. Education policies and practices must create experiences directed to fostering dialogic engagement. Mackey-Smith and Banfield propose that education should be viewed as a conduit for dialogue between young people and their communities so that they are empowered to be active participants in their present and future changing worlds.

Part 5—virtual engagement

A cross-cutting theme in the Handbook considers the role of digital communication on engagement. How is virtual engagement similar to or different from face-to-face engagement? **Part 5** provides chapters that identify the potential and challenges for organizations and communities in digital engagement.

Edward Malthouse and Bobby Calder present **Chapter 28** entitled "From Advertising to Engagement" to explore digital engagement in advertising. The authors highlight a shift from persuasive messages to storytelling and the growing movement toward participative brand contact points and customer experiences. The chapter discusses the effects of engagement, distinguishing between effects on the person engaging versus those exposed to user-generated content. It discusses how to measure engagement in advertising and marketing contexts.

Chapter 29 by Sylvia Chan-Olmsted and Lisa-Charlotte Wolter, entitled "Emotional Engagement in a New Marketing Communication Environment", offers insight into the exciting opportunities in applying neuroscience to engagement. Chan-Olmsted and Wolter explain various neuroscientific measurement tools that can be used to provide implicit measurements of engagement. Unobtrusive measurements of emotional engagement can show both the positive and negative aspects of emotions across digital communication platforms. The authors conclude that one form of neuroscientific engagement research, facial coding, can provide more accurate insight into consumer attitudes about brands and products. This line of research is in its infancy, and the chapter provides a foundational discussion and application of this neuroscience approach.

Lisa Chewning's **Chapter 30** entitled "Virtual Engagement: A Theoretical Framework of Affordances, Networks, and Communication" considers engagement opportunities as more and

more aspects of our lives move online. This chapter offers a theory of virtual engagement that considers user goals and motivations, the interaction of the individual with the technological interface, and the social and communicative affordances offered by technology.

Online consumer engagement presents great opportunities for both consumers and brands. **Chapter 31** by Wolfgang Weitzl and Sabine Einwiller entitled "Consumer Engagement in the Digital Era: Its Nature, Drivers, and Outcomes" explores how the concept of consumer engagement has gained momentum in both the marketing and consumer research. The chapter reviews the current consumer engagement concepts and presents a holistic understanding of the complex and multifaceted digital consumer engagement phenomenon.

Engagement will vary across cultures and systems. **Chapter 32** by Regina Chen entitled "Consumer Engagement in Social Media in China" explores how social media enables individuals to communicate and interact with organizations and other individuals. This chapter describes consumer engagement in social media in China from the strategic communication perspective. Chen presents the results of research into the antecedents and consequences of consumer engagement in social media in China and also explores how these findings may apply to other global contexts.

Engaged networks are everywhere and these networks will shape both consumer and brand experiences. **Chapter 33** entitled "The Role of Social Capital in Shaping Consumer Engagement within Online Brand Communities" by Jana Lay-Hwa Bowden, Jodie Conduit, Linda Hollebeek, Vilma Luoma-aho, and Birgit Solem, reminds us that today's consumers are no longer passive recipients of brand-related cues. They are proactively cocreating brand communications through online brand communities (OBCs). OBCs provide platforms for consumers to articulate their views, opinions, and feelings relating to brands. At the same time, OBCs can enhance social capital and provide brands with an opportunity to shape consumer engagement. This chapter provides a critical review of the literature on engagement within OBCs and offers a conceptual model on positive and negative engagement expressions; manifestation of engagement with the brand versus OBC; and valence spillover effects between objects.

How does an idea, produce, or service diffuse across a society? What roles can engagement play in diffusion? Ruth Avidar in **Chapter 34** entitled "Engagement, Interactivity, and Diffusion of Innovations: The Case of Social Businesses" explores how interactivity contributes to positive relational outcomes and organization–public relationship building. The Internet and social media have opened up new opportunities for interaction and engagement between individuals, publics, and organizations. Using social businesses as a case study, this chapter integrates interactivity and engagement with the Rogers' diffusion of innovations (DOI) theory to explore the importance of interpersonal communication and opinion leaders in the social processes involved in engagement in an online environment.

Chapter 35 entitled "New Media Challenges to the Theory and Practice of Communication Engagement" by Greg Hearn, Caroline Wilson-Barnao and Natalie Collie explores the evolution of digital media spaces raising questions about the theorization and practice of communication engagement, and dialogue as a normative ideal. The authors suggest three axes around which communication and technologies are coevolving most intensely, and which pose particular challenges to the practice and theorization of engagement: new social architectures, algorithmic processes, and the changing phenomenology of authentic communicative experiences.

Part 6—challenges for engagement

The first five parts of the Handbook provide real-time analysis and data about engagement in a variety of contexts. The final part, **Section 6,** identifies future challenges for engagement as theory and practice and suggests ways forward to further the discussion and application of engagement in real-world contexts.

Chapter 36 "Negative Engagement" by Matias Lievonen, Vilma Luoma-aho, and Jana Lay-Hwa Bowden explores the darker side of engagement. The authors argue that the existence of a highly visible digital networked information economy has made negative stakeholder

engagement toward organizations and brands possible. Negative engagement narratives emerge as drivers for stakeholders to engage in negative engagement behaviors. Lievonen *et al.* conceptualize and define negative stakeholder engagement in the context of brands and identify the process and the outcomes of negative engagement. The chapter ends with a discussion of the implications of negative engagement for both researchers and communication professionals.

There are both opportunities and challenges ahead for engagement research and practice. In the final chapter in the Handbook, **Chapter 37** by Magda Pieczka entitled "Critical Perspectives of Engagement" explores engagement as a discourse and analyses its three variants: public engagement (discourse about governance); employee engagement (discourse about employees' relation to work), and stakeholder engagement (moral discourse about business). The chapter shows how engagement is constructed in discursive practices shared by engagement experts and articulated in prescriptive texts that constitute and regulate it. In each case, discourses articulate their own visions of the world, offer justifications for their own role and legitimacy, and identify actors and assign them to particular roles. The chapter provides a roadmap for thinking about future engagement in society.

Future Research Directions

This Handbook has identified ways forward for future engagement research. The multidimensional and multilevel nature of engagement presents challenges in the way it is described, the way engagement is communicated, and how it is measured. Further work needs to be done in advancing qualitative and quantitative approaches to the scholarship of engagement. Contributing conditions or antecedents of engagement, how these interact and sustain engagement, and the relationship between these variables also offers many opportunities to understand how engagement comes about and how to influence its effectiveness. Focusing on the agents in engagement, such as government, consumers, publics and stakeholders, their motivations, affective state, and behaviors, particularly drawing from neuroscience, can open new pathways into how to engage with hard to reach groups—at an individual and group level.

A key challenge for organizing, organizations, and society remains how to engage the disengaged and how to ensure the efforts from engagement, such as cocreated meaning, are meaningful and ethical. The contextual and cross-disciplinary nature of engagement has found many commonalities in the practice, shared interests, and outcomes of engagement as evidenced in this Handbook. Tensions remain, however, at the intersection of political, social, and organizational outcomes and these tensions open up opportunities for collaboration across disciplines and units of analysis, to understand the role of engagement in a civil society, the role and contribution of the engaged citizen or consumer, the nature of social activity and engagement, and the differences and influences from cultural approaches to engagement, participation, inclusivity, and communication through traditional, social, and digital channels. Scholars in this Handbook have identified many of these opportunities. It is now up to the readers of the Handbook to seize these opportunities and pursue engagement research in their own way, through their own methods, and in their unique contexts.

Concluding Thoughts

This is the first book dedicated to communication engagement. The authors of the chapters in this Handbook have evolved their understanding of engagement through an extensive peer review process, and we believe their contribution to engagement theory and practice has been strengthened by the iterative review process. The Handbook joins a series of existing and forthcoming Wiley handbooks providing both in-depth and broad perspectives of communication topics.

We are pleased with the result. The Handbook brings together discipline perspectives, founded in communication, presenting a cohesive volume of knowledge on engagement to advance theory building and practice. The Handbook also brings together diverse cultural perspectives of engagement representing scholars from across the world including Latin America, North America, Europe, Asia, South Asia, Asia Pacific, and the Middle East. These perspectives provide a channel for future discussion about engagement as it is practiced in diverse contexts and settings across the world. We aimed to deliver a balanced narrative of conceptual, empirical, and applied in many of the chapters offering frameworks for the implementation of engagement in day-to-day lives, in organizations, and in society.

We hope that you enjoy this Handbook and consider your unique contributions to engagement theory and practice. What do you know that can push the theory forward? What types of experiences have you had that can enrich our understanding of engagement as an interpersonal, group, organization, network, community, or societal phenomenon? The chapters in this book provide an initial foray into future theorizing in engagement. We hope you will join us as we consider engagement as a uniquely human communication experience that creates meaning, builds social capital and allows us to work toward better relationships, networks, organizations, communities, and a better world.

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Part I

Theoretical Foundations and Guiding Philosophies of Engagement

2

Toward a Theory of Social Engagement

Kim A. Johnston

Introduction

Engagement is a contemporary and socially responsive approach to organizational communi-
cation practice, with outcomes aligned with concepts of a fully functioning society (Heath,
Chapter 3), ethical decision-making (Theunissen, Chapter 4), and the building of social capital
(Taylor, Chapter 8). Engagement is defined as a dynamic multidimensional relational concept
featuring psychological and behavioral attributes of connection, interaction, participation, and
involvement, designed to achieve or elicit an outcome at individual, organization, or social levels.
As a concept, engagement emerged more than three decades ago as a psychological construct
comprised of affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions associated with employee roles and
their workplace (Kahn, 1990). This early cognitivist approach (see Greene, 1984) emphasized
individual-level outcomes of *engagement as a state,* or those outcomes associated with stimulus–
response mechanisms found in settings such as consumer, education, and employee engage-
ment. Since this time, scholarship has incorporated more interpretivist perspectives (Willis,
2007), acknowledging the socially situated nature of engagement (Heath, 2014), associated
roles for dialogic engagement (Taylor & Kent, 2014) and relational perspectives on engagement
(Johnston, 2010, 2014). This scholarship moves beyond emphasis on the *attributes* of an engage-
ment state, that is, what it means to be engaged and what an engaged state looks like—
cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally—to understand the nature, process, and outcomes of
engagement at an organizational and social level.

Interpretivist and constructionist approaches to engagement focus on *engagement as a process*
where meaning is created, or cocreated, through communication. As a socially situated process,
the journey of engagement as process is theoretically as important as the outcomes of engage-
ment. The transfer of engagement attributes from individual to social level is not well under-
stood, as social influences have the potential to transform attributes of engagement through social
processes.

Social processes are communicatively and culturally bound within groups, settings, and con-
texts, representing socially embedded influences to effect meaning, through interaction and
connection. In practical contexts, such as employee, consumer, stakeholder, student, commu-
nity, and civic settings, engagement describes attributes of connection, interaction, participation,
and involvement, framed with favorable outcomes, from both instrumental and interpretivist

perspectives. Both perspectives highlight connection, participation, and involvement. An individual level of engagement is often positioned within a binary relationship, while at a social level, engagement is represented as a dynamic social process involving influences and outcomes for stakeholders and organization alike. Instrumental perspectives perceive engagement as a way to achieve organization-identified goals with outcomes related to engaged employees (perform better), engaged consumers (more likely to endorse a product), and engaged students (exert more effort toward their learning). In an organizational setting, stakeholder engagement is regarded as a tool to facilitate a range of organizational relational goals with outcomes tied to financial, social, and reputational objectives (see Hurst & Ihlen, Chapter 10).

From an interpretivist perspective, engagement transcends managerialism to situate the organization within an ecological framework. In this framework, engagement can facilitate what Putnam (2002) views as a critical component of democracy, offering a conduit of voice, representation, and collective-level influence into government decision-making. Greenwood (2007) reminds us, however, that stakeholder engagement can often be seen as an instrument for coopting and manipulating, or as a means to develop consent or cooperation. This warning, echoing the earlier seminal work on participation by Arnstein (1969), recognizes the potential for tokenism and reflects the ongoing tension between managerialism legacies to maintain power and control, and the pressure to be socially responsive. Heath (Chapter 3) terms this tension as a "relational decision making tension" describing what is essentially an effort to balance diverse perspectives in decisions and actions by organizations through degrees of responsiveness. Responsiveness can either recognize diverse perspectives across planes of voices symbolizing empowerment and representation of disempowered, or it can recognize the embodiment of imposition and powerlessness. As Heath (2014) argues, engagement requires an understanding of power relations and a commitment to dialogue and community-building discourse (see also Lane & Kent, Chapter 5). In this sense, social-level engagement can be conceptualized as a parallel union of organizational strategy scaffolded from community-led values. Power and control underpin all organizational–social relationships and require clear guidelines to reduce the ambiguities surrounding authentic stakeholder engagement and power asymmetries (Dawkins, 2014). Shifts in stakeholder expectations about such power present an opportunity-threat dichotomy to engagement practice (Harmeling *et al.*, 2017).

Generating authentic, appropriate, and timely responses to social expectations continues to be a priority for organizations seeking beneficial relationships with stakeholders. For stakeholders (such as consumers, learners, users, and community members), the value of being engaged or the engagement outcome is generally framed as positive or beneficial, for example, more knowledge, stronger feelings, or intention to behave toward a product or service. For organizations, the value emerges as an outcome from engaged social relationships. This value may be represented as consumer loyalty, positive image and reputation, or perceptions of being a socially responsible corporate citizen. From a process perspective, certain conditions or interventions may influence engagement outcomes and the subsequent value of these outcomes at both the individual and social levels. The value as outcomes of engagement therefore can be better understood as a continuum of negative to positive effects (see Table 2.1). Taylor and Kent (2014) also note that organizations need to develop an engagement orientation, or an internal organizational culture, to allow the full value from engagement processes to be realized.

The current emphasis on engagement in practice and scholarship signals the opportunity to consolidate a theoretical framework to advance our understanding of, and research into, engagement. This chapter responds to this opportunity by providing a meta-analysis of discipline perspectives of engagement as a synthesis of share antecedents of engagement attributes, strategies, and outcomes. Discipline fields of marketing, education, public relations, and human resources provide contexts of and for engagement. The chapter then presents engagement as a system within a social structure—that is across individual and social levels. A social system framework of engagement is then proposed, and a model presented that provides a propositional substrate

to address the relationship and processes between individual-level attributes and outcomes of engagement and social-level processes and outcomes of engagement. The propositions are also offered to guide future research and contribute to the task of building a theoretical foundation for communication engagement. In conclusion, the model's potential contribution to engagement research and practice is discussed, and future research opportunities are identified.

Communication Engagement

Engagement operates within a social system that can be explored and understood through multi-level research (Hox, 2010). A system is generally held to be a collection of components organized for a common purpose. While the preceding discussion identified engagement in its many forms, this chapter offers a taxonomy of engagement as a state or process at individual (micro) levels and collective or social (macro) levels of analysis within a social system, as a way to progress a cohesive body of engagement theory. Figure 2.1 illustrates the relationship between each level, and how this maps to the concept of engagement as a state and process.

The following section presents engagement as a state, and discusses the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of an engaged state. Attributes of each dimension are presented, and a continuum of attribute states (Table 2.1) illustrating both high and low levels of attributes. A propositional substrate is then presented to explore the relationships of these levels for engagement.

Engagement as a state—individual level

Discipline perspectives on engagement situate individual-level engagement within a binary relationship that is characterized by interactional richness and shared meaning between the individual and the object, and subsequently influenced by both interpersonal and contextual variables (Barry & Crant, 2000), for example, consumer to organization, student to teacher, employee to organization, and stakeholder to organization. Kahn (1990) argued an individual must be engaged, or engagement needs to be psychologically present, to undertake or perform a role. At an individual level, engagement therefore is a state that encompasses cognitive, affective, and

	State	**Process**
Individual	Cognitive, affective, or behavioral, engagement dimensions measured at a point in time on an engagement continuum	Developmental states resulting from communication interventions to achieve engagement
Social	A collective, shared state of engagement represented by behavioral forms (collective action, group participation), cognitive and affective forms (orientation, intention, experience) oriented toward group outcomes	A structured program, of discourse and action, to achieve social representation of diverse community opinions and perspectives in decision-making to address social issues and create social capital

Figure 2.1 Levels of analysis in engagement—a taxonomy.

behavioral dimensions (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). The dimensions of engagement carry the following characteristics:

> *Cognitive engagement* describes an investment in attention, processing, or thinking skills to develop understanding or knowledge. Cognitive engagement embodies the idea of interest and immersion in a topic and a willingness to exert the effort necessary to comprehend complex ideas, master difficult skills, and determine what is seen and understood. Humans can know (have knowledge) either based on experience or based on reasoning (Spender, 1996), while understanding relates to comprehension. While also compared to motivation and self-regulation, cognitive engagement is defined in this chapter as an individual's investment in attention and processing to develop understanding or knowledge about a topic or an idea.

> *Affective engagement* encompasses positive and negative emotional reactions, such as enjoyment, fear, anger, support, and belonging. Affective engagement is often displayed as identification of belonging, or emotional reactions. Positive or negative valence engagement reflects an inherent attraction or repulsion to a topic, leading to conditions for motivation, interest, or concern.

> *Behavioral engagement* embodies concepts of participation, collaboration, action, and involvement. Behavioral engagement also includes intended and unintended behaviors that may be caused by, or result from, cognitive or affective engagement. At a primitive level, behavioral engagement is often equated to interaction (such as "likes" on Facebook), or a single experience (a visit to a webpage).

Cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions operate as a dynamic system to create a particular "state" of engagement. Each dimension is operationalized as an attribute within that dimension (i.e., understanding is cognitive, while motivation can be cognitive and affective). The interplay of engagement dimensions is not hierarchical but instead responds to contextual requirements of the setting.

Engagement as a state characterizes individual-level engagement at *a point in time* and can be operationalized as cognitive, affective, or behavioral dimensions on an engagement continuum. An "idealized" engagement state is represented by the uppermost levels of an engagement continuum. Negative or low engagement states are represented by increments of low to very low measures of construct/attribute state (see Table 2.1). Cognitively, an engagement state describes a high level of interest (personal/situational), knowledge, or understanding of a focal topic. An affective engagement state describes emotional states and reactions, incorporating both positive and negative emotional conditions such as enjoyment, fear, belonging, or repulsion. A behavioral engagement state captures activity associated with engagement, such as interaction, action, and participation. Engagement as a state also incorporates the notions of *disengagement* and *nonengagement*. Disengagement is where the individual state of engagement represents the lowest levels of cognitive, affective, or behavioral dimensions measured against the engagement continuum. Engagement on a continuum can therefore span from negative to positive levels of each dimension attribute.

Little consensus exists on how these dimensions interact or how much of each dimension attribute needs to be present for engagement to be achieved. More research is needed to understand the dynamic phenomenon or interplay of these attributes as part of engagement dimensions—specifically how different levels interact and contribute to achieving engagement as a state.

Calder, Malthouse, and Schaedel (2009), however, argue that cognitive or affective dimensions need to be present before engagement can be claimed at a behavioral level. This condition reflects a hierarchy, that is, that experience and interaction within a social context therefore is required to *activate* cognitive, affective, or behavioral engagement processes. However, more research is needed to establish this condition. This chapter proposes that activation (see Figure 2.1) of

Table 2.1 Continuum of engagement attributes: cognitive (C), affective (A), and behavioral (B) dimensions of engagement

Construct/attributes	Description	C/A/B	Disengaged-nonengaged	Engaged idealized
			Very low	Very high
Knowledge	Knowing—level of information/facts (deduced/induced/cocreated/experience based)	C	Unaware, uninformed, and unfamiliar	Knowing, aware, and informed
Understanding	Level of comprehension	C	Indifferent, misunderstand, and uncertain	Comprehension, recognition, and absorption
Attention	Level of notice and interest	C/A	Apathy, indifference, unaware, and disinterested	Interest, curiosity, awareness, and salience
Beliefs (internal)	Range of opinions, principles, and philosophies	C/A	Distrust, suspicion, skepticism, and doubtful	Trust, faith, consideration, and confidence
Attitude (expressed)				
Motivation	Range of intrinsic/extrinsic reason/cause	C/A	Uninspired, detached, and removed	Inspired, connected, and rationale
Connection	Level of actual/perceived relationship	C/A/B	Disassociated and detached	Association and bond
Experience	Level of encounter	B/A	Unwilling to encounter	Encounter and feeling
Involvement	Level of connection	A/B	No connection	Connection, contribution, attachment, and immersion
			Unwilling involvement	
Interaction	Level of contact	B	No contact	Contact, transfer, transmission (cocreation outcomes)
			No transfer	
Action	Level of action	B	No action	Deed, act, do, and accomplish
Participation	Level of participation	B	Uncooperative	Cooperate, combined, shared, two way, and mutual
			Nonparticipative	
Orientation	Level of disposition	C/A	No intention	Emphasis, tendency, and preference
			Lacks preference	

engagement dimensions (affective, cognitive, or behavioral) is achieved through communication-based interventions (featuring dialogue, intervention, and interaction) that work to mediate individual-level engagement outcomes.

Engagement as a state—social level

While cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions have been established as being dynamically present at individual-level engagement, at a social level, five key social engagement dimensions are proposed that represent collective levels of engagement, which then take form to contribute to operationalizing engagement at a social level. A social state of engagement characterizes a group's shared state of engagement, which can be represented in behavioral forms (collective action, group participation), cognitive and affective forms (orientation, intention, and experience). Each of these dimensions is summarized as follows:

- **Orientation** is defined as a collectively held philosophy (disposition) of beliefs and behaviors conducive to synthesizing meaning and value that evolves from dialogue, interaction, and connection with diverse stakeholder views and perspectives. An engagement orientation is culturally bound and endorsed within the social practices of the group, such as the organizational or group culture, or orientation of the organization (as noted in previous section) as an organizational philosophy conducive to synthesizing the meaning and value that evolve from diverse stakeholder views and perspectives (see Taylor & Kent, 2014).
- **Experience** is an interaction or connection, which is an antecedent to, or outcome of, engagement (see Calder *et al.*, 2009). Experience aligns with behavioral dimension of individual engagement but recognizes a social-level influence on the experience.
- **Participation**, as power, is the active involvement by community members to jointly develop meanings and negotiate solutions to an issue through dialogic processes in interaction with the focal organization (Johnston, 2008). Participation suggests an act of taking part, or sharing in an activity or interaction. Bishop and Davis (2002) argue participation involves an expectation by community members that they have a voice in the power-sharing process relating to any organizational outcomes.
- **Collective action** represents a shared consensus or agreed definition or salience of the topic. Adams and Hess (2001) note the importance of understanding community identities and values, as these underpin any sense of collective action motivated by a sense of consensus or thinking together (Flanagin, Stohl, & Bimber, 2006). It is through collective processes that individuals held views of the focal engagement topic emerge as a shared view within the social setting (Shiraev & Sobel, 2016).
- Finally, **intention** reflects intrinsic motivations or a "person's readiness to perform a behaviour" (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010, p. 39). Intention (to engage) or a readiness to act is determined by a preexisting attitude to that action, or "likelihood or perceived probability of performing a given behaviour" (p. 39).

At a social or collective level of engagement, these five attributes dynamically interact to create a social level of engagement within the group. More research is needed to understand how these interact and if all, or some, can contribute to a specific type of social-level engagement.

The preceding discussion of engagement as a state provides a foundation for a propositional substrate to guide future research and contribute to the task of building a theoretical foundation for communication engagement:

Proposition 1 *Engagement is characterized as a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions with particular attributes that work separately, or jointly, within a dynamic system.*

Proposition 2 *When engagement is characterized as a state, then dimensions of that state, as cognitive/affective/behavioral constructs, can contribute separately or jointly to an individual state of engagement.*

In summary, this section has presented engagement as a state and discussed dimensions of engagement (cognitive, affective, and behavioral) and attributes at individual and social levels as a continuum from disengaged to engaged. These dimensions and attributes as a state are argued to contribute developmentally within a system-level perspective of engagement; engagement as a process.

Engagement as a process—individual level

At an individual level, engagement as a process describes developmental states as an outcome of communication actions or interventions to achieve engagement. At an individual level, Johnston (2014) illustrated these developmental states as an equation with outcomes from interventions or communication actions (A) and the social outcome represented as the final goal of engagement (E). This notation can be expressed as $A1 + A2 + A3 = E$. For example, organizations may provide information, create events, and use opinion leaders to provide knowledge, experience, and motivate to achieve the outcome of engagement. Love and Tilley (2014) note a process of engagement as a "repertoire of skillful and time-tested communication, negotiation and relationship-building techniques" (p. 31). As a process, engagement uses foundational footings of communication—and action—such as interaction, participation, experience, to create, inform, excite, or motivate, to scaffold a foundation of meaning making and relationship outcomes. Engagement as a process therefore is founded in communication, has directionality, and acknowledges developmental stages that contribute to achieving engagement as a state or engagement goals. Directionality in this setting does not imply a linear movement, more so, a momentum of contributing states to achieve engagement. For example, an engagement process may feature a series of simultaneous or formative steps, such as building trust, providing experience, or gaining attention, as progressive levels oriented to achieving a stated outcome (such as a specific behavior, i.e., repeat purchase).

Engagement as a process—social level

At a social level, engagement as a process represents a structured program to incorporate representative community opinions and discourse into decision-making. A social-level engagement process describes a range of interactions and discourses as working collaboratively with community groups to address issues that impact the well-being of those groups. Engagement as a process may also operate as a framework that acknowledges conditions needed for engagement (such as practitioner knowledge and skills, or an engagement orientation), strategies to maintain engagement (such as dialogue), and engagement outcomes that can be evaluated as a consequence of the process. For example, Johnston (2010) proposed a typology of engagement as a relational framework, explicating engagement as a process within the context of public relations (See Taylor, Chapter 8, this volume). Within this work, antecedents, strategies, and outcomes contribute to engagement outcomes. Interventions therefore capture communication exchanges and actions.

The next set of propositions is drawn from the preceding discussion of engagement as a process:

Proposition 3 *Activation through communication interventions (characterized by dialogue, intervention, and interaction) will mediate an individual's state of engagement as an outcome of that process.*

Proposition 4 *Individual levels of engagement act as antecedent influences on social level of engagement.*

Proposition 5 *Outcomes of individual-level engagement will be determined by the nature, quality, and scope of the individual state of engagement.*

This section has addressed engagement as a state and process. While scholarship of engagement has historically focused at a micro level, for example, as an individual, binary process which is then generalized to a social level, little research has contributed toward understanding engagement as a social-level phenomenon. At an individual level, engagement dimensions and attributes dynamically coalesce to deliver a state of engagement that can be measured as a level on continuums of attributes. At a group level, however, social influences on engagement and the creation of shared meaning can be explored as a multilevel phenomenon from both stakeholder and organizational perspectives, within a social system, to understand the influence of social-level phenomena on engagement. Within a social system, engagement can be operationalized at both an individual (micro) level, and at a social or macro level. Historically, the relationship between how engagement is explored across individual and social levels has been done in distinct and separate ways. An individual focus on engagement explores intrinsic motivations, while a collective or social perspective on engagement focuses on extrinsic motivations and outcomes of engagement. The following section presents a macro, social-level perspective on engagement within a social system, and explores the nature and relationship of these levels for engagement.

A System Perspective: Social Engagement

Social-level engagement is defined as a *collective state* of engagement that can be represented in behavioral forms (collective action, group participation), cognitive (shared knowledge), and affective forms (orientation, intention, and experience) and is an outcome of a dynamic socially situated system. The notion of social-level engagement is derived from the idea of collective action and outcomes. At a macro level of analysis, this approach accounts for actions taken by a group who are seeking to achieve a common goal, and ultimately enhance the status of the group. Putnam (2002) situates engagement as a pillar of democracy-enhancing civil society through individual participation in civic organizations. For organizations, engagement represents the opportunity to reflect inclusive and democratic principles, and demonstrate to a range of stakeholders the value of the organizations engagement orientation. For community and civic populations, engagement is central to building social capital and contributing to social outcomes and democracy (Putnam, 2002) (see also Dolea, Chapter 22; Heath, Chapter 3; Saffer, Chapter 19).

Group level or collective effects on engagement recognize the importance of social influences within a setting. Slåtten and Lien (2016) regard collective engagement as a "climate-related construct" that describes, at the group level, employees' physical, cognitive, and emotional expressions in their role (p. 95). The social environment of any organization includes the perceptions and opinions held by individuals and groups that *touch* the organization's boundaries. Social capital and value evolves from the engagement process of identifying, understanding, and responding to diverse and disparate stakeholder perspectives (Sommerfeldt, 2013; Willis, 2012). Social-level engagement therefore occurs as a parallel union; as a strategy, held by an organization, and as an outcome realized by a community. Central to engagement as strategy, and as outcome, is the concept of power.

Power, by its very nature, resides with the more resourced, the more vocal, and the more organized. For engagement, power has the potential to marginalize the disempowered, and promote minority views as majority, or create uncertainty instead of collaborative discourse. It is at this level where participative processes may be confronting for those in need for organizational

certainty, and as Motion (2005) suggests, "efforts to minimize uncertain outcomes can, instead, be interpreted as simply a new and more subtle form of domination as expectations of particular outcomes are negated by a closed set of discursive options" (p. 511). Similar to Arnstein (1969), Love and Tilley (2014) argue that engagement may be simply a legitimizing device "for practices of engineering public consent" (p. 34). The focal influence of this power to engineer an outcome is noted by Motion (2005), arguing for the importance of power relations in engagement and the need for "engagement processes to acknowledge vested interests, recognize conflict, and encourage marginalized critical discourses" (p. 505). The centrality of power within engagement needs to be recognized as not a specific attribute of a dimension but as an enduring feature within a social system.

A system perspective (von Bertalanffy, 1969) of social engagement recognizes antecedents, strategies, and outputs in which the engagement system is situated. The following section discusses system elements (antecedents, strategies, and outcomes) for social engagement: antecedents as organizational goals, orientation, and resources; communication as levers of intervention and activation; and outcomes of social-level engagement.

Social engagement as strategy

Social engagement as strategy describes the organization's efforts to engage at the social or civic level, and recognizes organizations as contributors to the construction, maintenance, and enhancement of civil society (see Taylor & Kent, 2014). As strategy, engagement represents an organizational philosophy conducive to synthesizing the meaning and value that evolve from diverse stakeholder views and perspectives (Johnston, 2010). Organizations promoting an engagement philosophy recognize the relational value that emerges out of involvement (Johnston, 2014). Engagement therefore is operationalized through organizational resources and decision-making conducive to synthesizing meaning and value that evolves from dialogue, interaction, and connection with diverse stakeholder views and perspectives. An organization that holds an engagement orientation is more receptive to community concerns and aims to make enhanced decisions through building principled relationships with groups beyond direct stakeholders. Through embedding an engagement orientation, an organization's disposition to value engagement outcomes, both for the organization's stakeholders and for the organization itself, will be culturally bound within the social practices of the organization benefiting both strategic and social outcomes.

An engagement orientation is distinct from a state or a process, because an orientation refers to an organization's direction, intent, resourcing, and consideration of time to engage—in other words, a strategy. In a marketing context, Harmeling *et al.* (2017) recently referred to this as "engagement marketing," noting this as "the firm's deliberate effort to motivate, empower, and measure a customer's voluntary contribution to its marketing functions, beyond a core, economic transaction (i.e., customer engagement)" (p. 312). For an organization to realize engagement outcomes associated with collective levels of engagement, investments in cultural, communicative, and relational resources of the organization are needed. Return on investment of these investments can be measured in the creation of shared value, generation of meaning through dialogue and interaction, building of stakeholder relationships, and the ability of the organization to respond to expectations and demands of the social environment in which it is embedded. Yang (Chapter 15) identifies that salience, resources, and engagement orientation underpin an organization's capacity to use engagement as strategy. Social-level engagement practices build on individual-level engagement to facilitate stakeholder and community connection, participation, and involvement across and within organizational boundaries and stakeholder networks.

As a strategy, social engagement facilitates an adaptive mechanism for organizations over time in three ways. First way is through identifying, understanding, and responding to the

stakeholder's social opinion environment. Identifying and addressing these views and perspectives through engagement enact an organizational responsiveness that maintains an interdependence and relationship between the organization and its stakeholders. Authentic engagement is founded on virtues of trust, transparency, power sharing, and communication reciprocity, and addresses inequities of power in organization–stakeholder relationships. This perspective situates engagement processes within the prevailing interests and priorities of the organization's social setting. At this level, social engagement supports the organization's efforts to align with, and be responsive to, community expectations. Second, engagement facilitates representative stakeholder views within organizational decision-making founded on a key assumption that meaning and value evolve both for the organization and for the stakeholders from shared, diverse views and perspectives. An internal engagement philosophy requires reflexive management practices that emerge within a socially situated, relational, and collective process. Third, engagement offers organizations an ethical mechanism to respond to organization–stakeholder power imbalances and enhance corporate governance in the interests of a wider society (Heath, Chapter 3). Stakeholder demands for authentic engagement may address stakeholder-held views of perceived organization–stakeholder power deficits. Challenges exist, however, for corporate managers to provide relevant information and become responsive to diverse stakeholder interests. Arnstein (1969) cautions, however, that participative processes are perceived as tokenistic or manipulative when they feature one-way communication, or feedback loops from community interaction that are not considered within organizational decision-making.

Communication as levers of intervention and activation

Calder *et al.* (2009) argue, as noted earlier in this chapter, that cognitive or affective dimensions need to be present before engagement can be claimed at a behavioral level (see also Chapter 28). They put forward experience, and interaction is required to *activate* cognitive, affective, or behavioral engagement processes at the individual level. So while activation is required at an individual level, this chapter argues at a social level, activation also needs to occur. To facilitate activation, communication intervention (featuring dialogue, interaction, and advocacy) is argued as having a mediation effect on engagement outcomes at both the individual and social level. This view highlights the role and importance of social-level influences on engagement. Further research is needed to fully explore the nature of these effects.

Outcomes of social-level engagement

Outcomes from social level engagement emerge from, and reflect community based values. These outcomes therefore can be measured by the collective social benefit from being involved in the process (see Chamorro-Koc and Caldwell, Chapter 20). Community outcomes of social-level engagement can also be conceptualized as an empowerment construct (Cho & Moya, 2016), as it places the community at the center of community engagement processes and allows measurement of how community members have benefited. Organizational perspectives of social-level outcomes of engagement, however, measure values evolving from social-level engagement against strategic goals or organizational measures. The managerial perspective views social-level outcomes as the result of investing resources and actions (i.e. engagement as strategy) to achieve a community-based outcome aligned to an organizational goal, for example, demonstrating corporate social responsibility and gaining support for organizational decisions (Devin & Lane, 2014).

The following propositions are derived from the preceding discussion of engagement as a social-level phenomenon:

Proposition 6 *Social-level engagement attributes (collective action, orientation, experience, participation, and intention) will contribute separately or jointly to a social level of engagement.*

Proposition 7 *Intervention through programs (featuring dialogue, advocacy, and interaction) will mediate a group-/social-level state of engagement.*

Proposition 8 *Group-/social-level engagement will produce associated outcomes relevant to collective-level outcomes of engagement.*

Proposition 9 *Group-/social-level outcomes will influence cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of engagement within a dynamic system.*

Proposition 10 *Individual-level outcomes of engagement will influence cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of engagement within a dynamic system.*

Building on the preceding literature, a multilevel model of engagement can be built on the propositional substrate as a framework to explore a system perspective of social engagement.

A Multilevel Model of Engagement

The previous discussion introduced engagement as a state and a process, ranging from a dichotomous, binary concept that is generalized to a social level, to being an outcome of a complex social system influenced by group dynamics and shaped by social forces. A social level of engagement acknowledges the role and contribution of individual-level engagement and its contributions in various forms, and outcomes from being socially situated. The multilevel nature of a social environment, comprising individuals in dialogue, interaction, and influencing meaning making within a social environment, provides both relevance and context for a multilevel model of what is in essence, social engagement.[1]

A multilevel model of engagement (see Figure 2.2) is proposed as a coherent framework of communication that integrates state-based dimensions of engagement to reflect engagement as a socially situated systems phenomena. Engagement dimensions are presented with permeable
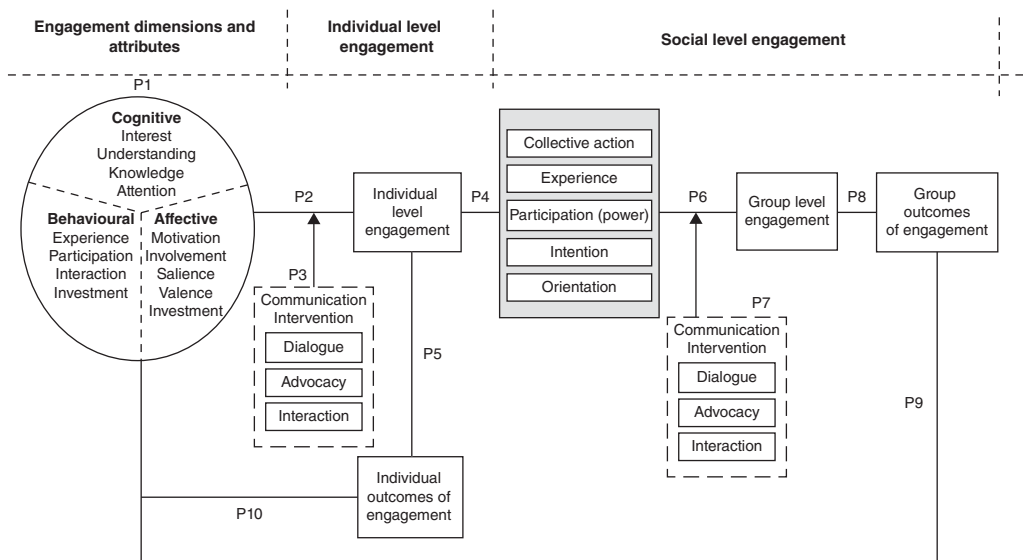

Figure 2.2   A multilevel model of communication engagement (developed by author for this chapter).

boundaries across cognitive, affective, and behavioral attributes. The permeable boundaries signal the context-based nature and influence of each dimension, recognizing both the variation and nature of contribution of each dimension's attribute levels to engagement. The three engagement dimensions operate as a dynamic system contributing to engagement states. At the individual level, interventions in the form of communication (messaging/dialogue) or interaction (behavioral) are argued as mediating the state of engagement at the individual level. At this point, an outcome for engagement can be either realized at the individual level, that is, a purchase/action, or will go on to contribute to a collective/group level of engagement.

At collective levels, individuals bring an individual level of engagement to cocreate with collective levels of action, experience, participation, intention, and orientation to contribute to a social level of engagement. At this level, communication interventions, through dialogue, advocacy, and interaction, will mediate the collective state of group engagement. Group outcomes of engagement will also feed back into engagement processes within the social system.

Implications of Social Engagement on Communication and Relationships

This chapter has presented a framework of social engagement that builds on individual engagement dimensions and situates these as antecedents in a process model. The goal of the chapter was to broaden the understanding of engagement beyond a binary process, and reflect engagement as a socially situated phenomenon within a dynamic system. Conceptualizing communication engagement within a dynamic social system allows (a) understanding of how individual level states, traits, and processes of engagement contribute to a social-level engagement; (b) recognizing the important role of communication interventions (dialogue, advocacy and interaction) at both individual and social levels as important mediators to engagement states; and (c) that outcomes of engagement at the individual and social level are influenced by a range of social, organizational, and environmental influences.

As well established in the literature (see Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004), engagement consists of a group of cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions—articulated as states, traits, attributes, or constructs—that are activated by a setting or an intervention. It is the very nature of what an individual brings—cognitive and affective dimensions—to a social setting that underpins is about what people think about a focal event/topic/agent, and ultimately what they do. At a social level, the outcomes of engagement should be significant—or have broader implications for a community or a social setting. As Heath (Chapter 3) argues, "engagement presumes the capacity and logic of collectively empowered decision making that is needed to enlighten collective choice by collective individuals." The foundation of collective empowerment gives rise to the idea of collective sense making and enactment.

Discipline perspectives on communication engagement are found to share core dimensions, constructs, attributes, and processes of individual-level engagement across settings and contexts. While some contexts make claim to unique characteristics of engagement, by conceptualizing engagement as a relational communication phenomena, with outcomes aligned to both organizational and social value, the centrality and influence of social processes acting on engagement outcomes is noted. At an individual level, the nature of social interaction aligns with Barry and Crant's (2000) notion of social meaning as an indicator of interactional richness and social meaning. At a collective level, this interaction has the potential to offer richer and more meaningful outcomes. As Everett (Chapter 7) argues, engagement offers "a conceptual fulcrum to describe outcomes to interactions of an organization's culture, components in its external social environment, and its adaptive dynamics over time."

For practice, visualizing the transition from individual to social levels not only allows both interventions to be planned and resourced but also accommodates a level of flexibility for the

natural phenomena of meaning making to evolve. Individual- and social-level outcomes of engagement can be articulated and supported by organizational resources and communication interventions as dialogue, advocacy, and interactions (experience/behaviors). Communication interventions accommodate individual, organizational, and social groups, for example, consumer-, strategic-, and civic-level outcomes. Interventions are designed to influence the process and outcome of states of engagement.

A number of future research opportunities emerge from this work as noted within the chapter. First, while the distinction of engagement as a state and process is identified, opportunities exist for researchers to empirically test how engagement dimensions change across individual and social levels. Further, affective, cognitive, and behavioral attributes as dimensions of engagement were presented as levels on a continuum ranging from positive to negative (see Table 2.1). More research is needed to understand how different levels interact and contribute to achieving engagement as a state, and the dynamic interplay of these attributes as engagement dimensions. Calder *et al.* (2009) also argued that cognitive or affective dimensions need to be present before engagement can be claimed at a behavioral level. More research is needed to understand how cognitive and affective dimensions of engagement influence behavioral engagement outcomes, and if indeed this is a hierarchy of effects, or a dynamic system of attribute levels each contributing to a state of engagement as proposed in this chapter.

Understanding the influence of interventions on group processes will provide greater insights into how these affect engagement outcomes in different ways. Engagement as a process features a range of contributing antecedents. There remains some inconsistency in the literature about the characteristics of antecedents, and future research is needed to allow empirical operationalization of engagement antecedents and to understand what conditions or interventions influence engagement antecedents and subsequent outcomes.

Finally, engagement is noted as conceptually supporting the empowerment of community members. More research is needed to understand the nature and task of engagement in empowering members and to understand internal and external barriers of involvement and representative participation to achieve engagement. For example, a deeper understanding of how engagement strengthens social capital and how the values of trust, relationships, and dialogue contribute to engagement.

Note

1   Social engagement in this context is a collective-level engagement.

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How Fully Functioning Is Communication Engagement If Society Does Not Benefit?

Robert L. Heath

Engagement is the ultimate relational decision-making tension between individuals (both human and artificial; individuals and organizations), groups, organizations, businesses/industries, communities, and societies. The motivating principle of engagement has pragmatic and moral/normative dimensions: Outcomes of engaged decision-making become intellectually better and more socioemotionally satisfying when self-interested parties engage with one another to align their interests in order to accomplish some common goal. The compelling question is this: Can an individual succeed, achieve agency, alone? To reverse that question, can collective agency be achieved without muting, stifling, or marginalizing some individuals' or organizations' interests? Overall, I ask how fully functioning is communication engagement if society and individuals it encompasses do not benefit from deliberative engagement?

This discussion adopts Dawkins' (2015) admonishment of powerful organizations "that the objective of stakeholder engagement should not be benevolence toward stakeholders, but mechanisms that address power asymmetries such that stakeholders are able to protect their own interests" (p. 1). By condemning pandering, we remind ourselves that collective decision-making is fraught with peril, however enacted: rhetoric, dialogue, deliberative democracy, discourse, advocacy, argumentation, or engagement. In line with this, Pieczka (2011) expressed her concern that the rhetorical paradigm of statement/counterstatement might be too argumentative and adversarial, but our analysis should remain realistic to the fact that engagement battles are contestably motivated by self-interests and competing versions of public interest.

To make gravel, the size of the hammer is determined by the size and composition of the rocks to be crushed. Embracing these tensions, Taylor and Kent (2014; see also Yang & Taylor, 2013) believed that engagement is dialogic, but redeemable as a means to create social capital. As we set the scope of the topic, we not only need to be attentive to discourse process, which is featured throughout this chapter, but also need a guiding sense of shared outcome (see Sommerfeldt & Taylor, 2011; Taylor & Kent, 2014). Thus, we can argue that communication engagement is not fully functioning if society does not benefit.

Emphasizing the virtue of civic community as means for defining and claiming public life, Putnam (1995, 2000) featured democracy, with all of its challenges and advantages, as the constituted "norms and networks of civic engagement" (1995, p. 66). For him, these challenges raise the compelling question: "What types of organizations and networks most effectively embody—or generate—social capital, in the sense of mutual reciprocity, the resolution of dilemmas of

collective action, and the broadening of social identities" (p. 76)? Although no panacea, social capital is both a relationship-driven means by which engagement occurs, and an outcome of such activity. In addition to this point, Sommerfeldt (2013) reasoned, "Much of the work in creating social capital, therefore, must start with people and the creation of generalized trust" (p. 285).

Since the golden age of Greece's citizenship innovations to achieve self-governance through democratizing rhetoric, or rhetoric through democratization, the circularity of concepts, such as engagement and trust, or trust and social capital, has been problematically contrived conditions based on shared interests and cocreated terminologies of engagement. In this way, deliberative, dialogic processes presume a balance between trust in self and in others as the enactment of shared control. Thus, engagement breeds trust, as trust breeds engagement.

Whether drawn from the experience of ancient Greeks or modeled by current researchers, the motivation to engage begins with the realization that narrow individual self-interested decision-making is dysfunctional and that deliberation can amalgamate self-generated versions of reality and self-interested identities into collective agency through shared sensemaking. As an aside, and a theme larger than can be embraced here, this thesis is testable in many forms of governance and political economy (monarchy, theocracy, oligarchy, tyranny, classical liberalism, capitalism, socialism, and progressivism, for instance). However framed sociopolitically, engagement is challenged by power asymmetries and agonistic pluralism (Dawkins, 2015). Thus, the case can be made that society is not fully functioning if its components do not benefit from collective decision-making.

Modeling Engagement

Engagement is neither new nor easily understood or achieved. Its discussion begins by understanding society as shared sensemaking and community as place and process. Community as place may restrict engagement by emphasizing empirical understanding of physical qualities (both positive and negative, such as the amount of food and water, carbon released, or temperature rise). Community as process suggests "a generative method of understanding the complex power relations animating specific risk communication contexts as well as reinventing 'community' in terms more conducive to meaningful citizen engagement" (Spoel & Den Hoed, 2014, p. 267).

Human experience is, as discussed by Mead (1934), the matter of mind, self, and society which can be expanded and reframed as mind/ideation, self/identity, and society/relational (Heath, Motion, & Leitch, 2010). Through language, terministic screens, humans engage with reality and one another about reality to achieve the ideation of mind, shared sensemaking. They engage as individual selves with one another to understand the intersectionalities of identity as selves which is never independent of others nor of identifications with them, as shared sensemaking. What we know and who we are (identity) become the grist of how collectively we best define, understand, and manage risks, uncertainties, and reward distribution, as individuals and collectives: society of engaged relationships seeking to make enlightened choices through shared sensemaking.

Justifying the constructive (idealistic) role of rhetoric in society, Nichols (1963) reasoned that the individual and societal agency challenges require the ability, individually and collectively, to make enlightened choices. Such tensions result from problems, uncertainties, and differences that confront and challenge the individual and therefore demand collective decision-making with others: groups, organizations, institutions, and cultures. Such tensions result from the pragmatic and normative need to make enlightened choices, those that reduce risks, avoid crises, solve problems, distribute rewards, and resolve issues.

Discourse as process produces collective meaning making and as outcome either bends self to others or others to self, self to reality and reality to self. Although these are not binary conditions, they emphasize the paradox of precaution, power-constituted relationships, legitimacy,

and empowerment to seek least harm and most benefit. Each of these concepts paradoxically has opposites and manifests dysfunctions in practice. As such, engagement is multidimensional (Johnston, 2014), multilayered, and multitextual. It is the uncertain means by which individuals (and others) comanage the paradoxes, ironies, and risks of uncertainty. As such, community is challenged by the paradoxes of decision-making capacity. Capacity refers to place/space and to structures, functions, institutionalization, tolerance, and empowerment (Head, 2007).

The challenge of collectively enlightening choices raises the need to consider individual–collective tensions that may be or can become divides. In recent years, through many influences including reflective management and neoinstitutionalism's emphasis on how theory and practice must shift from a corporate-centric approach to communication which can presuppose the means and ethics of instrumentalizing stakeholders to serve organizational interests. Such bending of society to serve the organization motivates researchers like Zaharna (2016) to investigate such divides and to strive to shift the paradigm from an emphasis on the "autonomous individual" using communication (as transmission, and even information sharing) to that which cocreates functional decision-making relationships.

Rather than being committed to an individualistic (organization-centric) paradigm, the organization needs to engage stakeholders by using relational communication, which presumes that individuals become collectively agentic within a context. An instrumental approach presumes that individuals can use society to make themselves fully functioning, but that paradigm is incorrect and weakened to the extent that it does not see engagement as the rational, emotional, value-driven, and identification glue that transforms individuals into the kind of collectives needed to make society agentic, fully functioning. As relationships resolve individual–collective tensions, so does engagement become communicative relationships.

During the 2012 presidential election in the United States, Republican candidates liked to say (always in a group/public, mass-mediated, setting), "I did it by myself, I built it by myself." Adding its view of that theme, *The Martian* (Weir, 2011) fictionalizes the survival struggle of astronaut, Mark Watney, who is left behind on Mars when his fellow explorers flee to return to the safety of the Earth. Watney's survival, often teetering at the brink of certain disaster, requires knowledge of biology/botany, mechanical engineering, luck—and engagement. At crucial moments, his knowledge (gained from others) is applied along with advice from others on the Earth and coordinated with others, including governments, to allow the individual to survive. One takeaway from the book is that individual initiative is made manifest through social engagement. That the hero of the story survived and was rescued is the evidence of individual courage and ingenuity; the reality is that before, during, and after his being stranded his survival required society—the facilitation of engagement. As much as society helped him, his efforts benefited society because it demonstrated how engaged working together is a social benefit based on collective individualism.

Confronted with its mission/vision and traditional sets of operations, each organization is likely to encounter its own mind set as a hindrance to collaborative stakeholder engagement. If stakes are expressions of values and interests, multiple-objective decision analysis (MODA) is required to achieve effective stakeholder participation (Merrick, Parnell, Barnett, & Garcia, 2005). MODA presumes that stakeholders have different views of reality, self, and society and that one consequence of those divergent views is their impact on the ability of individual organizations to collectivity engage to make decisions that have collective value and consequence. Such engagement begins by establishing a values hierarchy of the collective decision-making objective/value, and those that support, refine, and defy each single decision outcome. A utopian decision is the one that maximizes stakeholder gains and minimizes loss—analysis that can be/must be both qualitative and quantitative. If an optimal/utopian outcome can be established, its components can be used (mental models approach to sound science and culturally driven risk decision-making; Heath & Palenchar, 2016) to assess how close a specific decision is to some cocreated vision of utopia. MODA's advice for engagement is to (a) blend environmental and

socioeconomic objectives; (b) incorporate community participation into expert decision-making; and (c) engage in the collective management of achievable interests.

Lawrence (2002) modeled engagement as requiring motivation, goal, and internal capacity to act. Expanding this logic to a societal level of engagement, we can add that it requires external capacity as well. Finally, "a successful stakeholder engagement process requires, moreover, that the parties possess a *cultural affinity*, recognise the other's *legitimacy*, dedicate time to building *trust* and are willing to make *incremental gains*" (p. 71, italics in original). Such internal capacity, Aakhus and Bzdak (2015) contended, presumes a commitment to collective self-governance. The strength of networks (internal and external) is their ability "to generate and manage multiple values that address matters of social, cultural, environmental, and economic problems" (p. 188). Engagement can enlarge individuals' and societies' decision-making capacity.

As the conditions and value of working together, engagement seems inseparable from the means and outcome of social capital. Putnam (1994) pointed to social capital as "the collective value of all social networks and the inclinations that arise from these networks to do things for each other." The doing for each other results when "social organizations such as networks, norms, and social trust … facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" (pp. 664 and 665). The needed incentive is to enact prepositions such as "between" and "for" rather than "to." By emphasizing moral and utilitarian qualities of relationships (as between, Buber, 1965), individuals accomplish their objectives by doing for one another what they cannot do by themselves. This paradigm minimizes the incentive to do to one another, as goes the golden rule, what they would not want done to themselves.

Broadly, these conceptualized conditions offer the rationale for a testable hypothesis, engagement requires shared recognition of and desire to achieve an optimal/utopian decision (enlightened decision of mutual benefit) as shared goal and community incentive to maximize achievable interests under conditions of dialogue capacity, trust, cultural affinity, legitimacy (of self, others, processes, and goals) and incrementalism. Engagement presupposes that individuals realize they cannot serve themselves without willfully or forcefully seeking collective enlightenment.

Addressing that model begins with a vignette of how community decision-making balanced and translated competing interests into shared interests.

Collective Individualism: Vignette and Oxymoron

Collective individualism is an oxymoron. But it captures the essence of engagement. To set the tone for that theme, I revisit the 27 years during which I was a member of the Planning Committee, then Planning and Zoning Commission of Missouri City, Texas, (MCP&Z), a city adjacent to Houston, Texas. Although it was called a suburb, that is a misnomer. It actually was a well-established town by the mid-nineteenth century because of sugar production and then land development. It produced sugar in the 1800s and then oil and gas in the early twentieth century. But, like other towns near the growing giant, Houston, it had identity, self-governance, and land development challenges—the battle to make it a livable place for families. Does one entity impose its land-use plan or does the plan emerge through discursively forged, aligned interests, and shared goals?

For most of those 27 years, I chaired the Commission. In that capacity I helped the city move from having no planning department, only a platting process, to become a burgeoning planned and zoned city. That step was important because Missouri City is sandwiched between Houston (no zoning and little planning) and Sugarland, Texas, a master-planned city. Because of the lore of Houston, developers were used to buying land, drawing up a plat, and having it accepted with minimal amendment by planning committees that were understaffed and easily intimidated.

During the first couple of years of my tenure, a planning (later Planning and Zoning [P&Z]) meeting might have an agenda that listed two or three plats for review and approval. Before we

refined the P&Z process, as will be explained below, each meeting might approve the plats in less time than that of the time spent drafting a letter to the local paper to defend itself against citizens' complaints that the committee was not serving the community. Because of public meeting laws, decisions had to be made that not only were transparent but also more importantly served the collective interests of current and future residents, and the business interests of developers. As we changed the way we operated, by progressing toward a more systematic process of engagement, we not only got sued but also noticed that some developers no longer did business in our city. Were we doing something right?

As the City really began to boom, the length and frequency of meetings increased. We were unpaid volunteers who were mandated by law to meet at least once a month. Now we were meeting weekly; meetings had lasted till 11 : 00 p.m. They often became shouting matches between local residents who had been notified by mail or in the local newspaper that a plat near them was coming before the Commission for review and approval. What did that mean, citizens asked? It must be serious since they were notified of the change. They often did not even know that such a process or Commission existed, until they got the letter or read the notice in the paper. (Or they learned of the "plan" as bulldozers moved in and signs boasted a new subdivision. As land near their subdivision was sliced and diced, residents became impatient, scared, and furious.) They were notified the meeting would start at 7 : 00 p.m. but then the specific plat they wanted to "kill" was slow to come up. By 10 : 30 p.m., some were furious; they were meeting with other residents outside the meeting room. We were charged with stalling to make decisions until after they had left. This process approached crisis. Citizens were frustrated, and developers were terrified that they were losing control.

As we progressed through each evening's agenda, we explained to citizens before the hearing for each plat began how the process worked. First, the developer presented the plan, often with nicely crafted architectural paintings showing amenities, which the developer used as marketing, but was not required to provide. Rugs could be pulled from beneath residents' feet; bait and switch was too often the order of the day. Developers hated us when we pointed out that such paintings, for instance, were not contracts. Citizens did not know whom to trust. Technical and conceptual review of a plat can be extraordinarily tedious. Such review has a peculiar language and requires unique knowledge of planning and platting details and technical standards that citizens usually do not know. Developers expected the Commission to take their side and assure the public that everything would be OK.

Finally, one night I asked a developer why he had not meet with the neighbors to discuss the plat before coming to the Commission for review and approval. Another night, someone on the Commission told a developer that we did not have enough time or patience during the meeting to have them explain the technical nature and neighborhood implications of their plat. We voted to make them meet with the neighbors and discuss the plan/plat. We expected neighbors to become willing to support the plan/plat when it came up again.

Out of sheer chaos and frustration, we had discovered a new era of engagement in land-use planning and approval. Before that moment, we had been the focal point of heated engagement, but we really should not have been. We knew what a good or bad (approvable or not approvable) plat/plan was, but our judgment had to reflect the public's concern and interest. We vowed to not buffer developers from concerned citizens. We would not marginalize citizens, but we would not tolerate them slurring our character if we did not yield to their concerns, which can be petty, but dearly held.

Engagement became a new part of the development process. This was not rocket science. It was merely respectful engagement, bringing interested people together so that they could discuss matters of mutual interest. Soon, meetings became shorter and less frequent. Engagement took place before each meeting. We no longer had furious residents not knowing whom to believe or trust. They had become a constructive part of the review and approval process.

Game theory presumes a zero-sum outcome where one entity does better at the expense of another. The contrary option is nonzero-sum game, at least, and win–win at best. The logic is that engagement rarely is only one entity engaging with one other: Engagement is often multi-dimensional. It is a matter of sharing control, empowering opposition, and vetting decisions by looking for shared objectives, discovering facts that hold up against the test of dialogue, realizing values and interests may not align and may not align with facts as preferred by some advocates, and policies do not necessarily and wisely distribute rewards and costs appropriately. This case suggests that parties to engagement have interests and goals that are variously aligned. The Commission had substantial power, subject to being overridden by the City Council (or courts). The challenge to engagement is to make deliberation work, as much as possible to foster decisions that build, define, and share interest-driven outcomes. This begins by making parties realize, if they do not already, that they must engage to achieve their self-interests. Engagement begins with willful decision or force.

Dimensions of Engagement: Social Systems, Stakeholders, Legitimacy, and Self-governance

By the sort of operant logic reflected in the vignette earlier, in 2004, Bentele advised adopting a sociological rationale for public relations: "Public relations [is] not just an organizational activity," he reasoned, "but a social phenomenon, that is a phenomenon which has societal functions and impacts on the society and its subsystems like the political system, the economic system, the cultural system or the media system" (p. 488). This was a clarion call for adopting an engagement approach to public relations.

Pioneers in the development of strategic management, Freeman and Gilbert (1988) revolutionized stakeholder analysis and engagement by noting the following implications of effective understanding and engagement with stakeholders: "Corporate strategy must reflect an understanding of the values of organizational members and stakeholders." Such understanding can and must inform "the ethical nature of strategic choice" (p. 7).

Capturing the breadth and depth of corporate social responsibility, Mitchell, Agle, and Wood (1997) proposed a *normative theory of stakeholder identification*, which can be used "to explain logically why managers should consider certain classes of entities as stakeholders" (p. 853). The other key option, the *descriptive theory of stakeholder salience*, can offer insights "to explain the conditions under which managers do consider certain classes of entities as stakeholders" (p. 853).

These stakeholder dimensions of engagement are complemented by Phillips' (2003) distinction between normative and derivative legitimacy, that between "stakeholders who retain the ability to affect the organization" as being "managerially legitimate (derivatively)"; "this legitimacy arises from the moral obligation owed other (normative) stakeholders and the two sets of legitimacy are importantly different from one another" (p. 26). The organization, in the case of normative legitimacy, is obligated to be fair, to accord with regard to "social actors simply by virtue of their being human" (p. 31). Rather than respecting others' humanity, derivative legitimacy results from the influence (power, resistance, control) that certain stakeholders can levy against the organization.

Legitimacy is both a rationale for and a result of engagement. Legitimacy, as Golant and Sillince (2007) reasoned, is a matter of societal productivity. Their approach to legitimacy challenges organizations to meet normative/evaluative (moral legitimacy) and cognitive/pragmatic (financial legitimacy) standards. Organizations (artificial citizens) are authorized by natural citizens to operate for reward because they add moral and pragmatic value that exceeds the costs (financial and moral equity—health and safety) of their presence in the community. Pragmatic and moral standards/norms and rewards are interdependent. Cast in the logics of societal productivity through self-governance, corporate social responsibility focuses on the cost–benefit ratio