

Engagement as Communication

Pathways, Possibilities, and Future Directions

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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

- 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

<i>Social and relational: Engagement definition themes</i>	<i>Author/page</i>
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 <i>collective state</i> 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
<i>Interaction and exchange: Engagement definition themes</i>	
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)

<i>Social and relational: Engagement definition themes</i>	<i>Author/page</i>
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

(continued)

Table 1.1 (Continued)

<i>Social and relational: Engagement definition themes</i>	<i>Author/page</i>
<i>Dynamic and dimensional: Engagement definition themes</i>	
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 <i>affective commitment</i> ...; (b) <i>positive affectivity</i> , which involves a deeper level of positive emotional response beyond liking or attraction ...; and (c) <i>empowerment</i> 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 <i>object</i>) and an individual consumer (i.e., engagement <i>subject</i>), 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, Hollebeck, 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

<i>Tier</i>	<i>Possible measurements</i>
1. Low level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence • Occurrence • Manifestation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding • Connecting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action • Impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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, reenvision 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 designed 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 Giddens’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 Hollebeck, 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. Lievonon *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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