Social influence and stakeholder engagement behavior conformity, compliance, and reactance

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Social Influence and Stakeholder Engagement Behavior
Conformity, Compliance, and Reactance

Abstract

Following the proliferation of customer engagement behavior research, rising interest is observed in marketing-based *stakeholder engagement behavior*, which covers *any* stakeholder's – including a customer's, employee's, firm's, supplier's, competitor's, etc. – behavioral engagement in his/her role-related interactions, activities, and relationships. However, despite its importance, understanding of the stakeholder engagement behavior concept remains tenuous, as therefore addressed in this paper. We first conceptualize stakeholder engagement behavior as *a stakeholder's behavioral manifestation toward his/her role-related interactions, activities, and relationships*, followed by an exploration of the effect of influencor-exerted social influence on an influencee's stakeholder engagement behavior. We argue this effect to manifest as stakeholder engagement behavior conformity, -compliance, or -reactance, depending on the influencee's level of acceptance of the influencor's exerted influence. In turn, we propose stakeholder engagement behavior conformity, -compliance, and -reactance to yield cooperation, coopetition, or competition in the influencor/influencee relationship, respectively, as depicted in a conceptual model and an associated set of propositions. By investigating the interface of social influence, stakeholder engagement behavior, and its prevailing relational consequences (i.e., cooperation, coopetition, and competition), our analyses offer novel theoretical acumen and actionable managerial insight.

Keywords: Stakeholder engagement behavior (SEB); Customer engagement (behavior); Social influence; Conformity; Compliance; Cooperation; Competition.

1. INTRODUCTION

Based on its heralded contribution to firm sales and profitability (Beckers et al., 2018; Tu et al., 2018), the *customer engagement* (CE) concept has seen rapid dissemination in the marketing literature since the turn of the last decade (e.g., Brodie et al., 2011; Mirbagheri and Najmi, 2019; Chung et al., 2019). Extending CE research, growing recognition exists regarding the need to understand the engagement of stakeholders *beyond* customers alone, including that of employees, firms, suppliers, regulators, competitors, etc. (Freeman, 1984; Kumar and Pansari, 2016), sparking a recent rise in marketing-based *stakeholder engagement* research (Viglia et al., 2018). Defined as "a stakeholder's state-based, boundedly volitional resource endowment in… [his/her] role-related interactions, activities, and relationships" (Hollebeek et al., 2020, p. 1), stakeholder engagement covers *any* marketing stakeholder's dynamics.

An important CE sub-stream focuses on *customer engagement behavior*, or a "customer's behavioral manifestation toward [a] brand or firm" (Van Doorn et al., 2010, p. 253). That is, while CE is traditionally modeled as a multi-dimensional (i.e., cognitive, emotional, behavioral) concept (e.g., Hollebeek et al., 2014), its manifest, directly observable *behavioral* aspect has been identified as pertinent (vs. latent cognitive/emotional engagement), offering a key impetus for the development of customer engagement behavior (e.g., Beckers et al., 2018; Oh et al., 2017). However, in the emerging marketing-based stakeholder engagement discourse, the parallel concept of *stakeholder engagement behavior* (SEB) remains nebulous, exposing an important gap. We therefore identify the need to explore SEB as that theoretical sub-set of the broader, multi-dimensional stakeholder engagement concept, which focuses on manifest, directly observable stakeholder engagement behavior (Alexander et al., 2018). Integrating and extending Van Doorn et al.'s (2010) customer engagement behavior and Hollebeek et al.'s (2020) stakeholder engagement, we thus conceptualize SEB as a marketing stakeholder's *behavioral manifestation toward his/her role-related interactions, activities, and*

relationships. SEB's *omni*-stakeholder scope covers a broad range of issues, including employees' job-related behavior, firms' service delivery activities, regulators' interactions with an organization, customer-firm exchange, etc. (Freeman, 1984; Gupta et al., 2020).

Second, given SEB's systemic nature (Viglia et al., 2018), it is subject to interacting stakeholders' communication and *social influence*, defined as the ways in which stakeholders modify their behavior to meet the demands of a social environment (Kelman, 1958; Ozuem et al., 2021). For example, an influencor's (e.g., manager's) social influence exerted on an influencee (e.g., employee) is expected to impact the latter's SEB (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Delbaere et al., 2021). However, little remains known regarding the psychological effect of social influence on SEB, necessitating further investigation. We therefore explore the psychological impact of social influence on SEB, which we posit takes one of three forms (i.e., SEB conformity, -compliance, or -reactance), depending on the focal stakeholder's (i.e., influencee's) level of agreement with the influencor's exerted pressure or influence (Chatterjee et al., 2017; Mandrik et al., 2005; Kelman, 1961). In their interactions, influencees and influencors can, theoretically, take any stakeholder role (e.g., customer, firm, employee, etc.), fitting with our SEB focus. We in turn posit SEB conformity to facilitate cooperation, SEB compliance to be conducive to coopetition, and SEB reactance to foster competition in the influencor/influencee relationship (Deutsch and Gerard, 1955; Wolf et al., 2021; Septianto and Garg, 2021), revealing key insight.

This conceptual paper makes the following contributions to the marketing-based stakeholder engagement (behavior) literature. First, we extend stakeholder engagement to its manifest, observable theoretical sub-set of SEB, as outlined. In line with the importance attributed to customer engagement behavior (Van Doorn et al., 2010), we develop the SEB concept, which focuses on actual stakeholder actions without the added complexity of incorporating their more latent, underlying role-related cognitions or emotions (e.g., Labrecque

et al., 2020). Like customer engagement behavior, we expect SEB to make a pertinent theoretical contribution and offer a springboard for future (e.g., empirical) research, as discussed further in section 4.1. Moreover, by fostering enhanced insight into multiple stakeholders' behavioral engagement, our analyses are expected to benefit managers seeking to optimize their returns from different stakeholders (vs. customers alone; Hollebeek et al., 2022), as detailed further in section 4.2.

Second, despite stakeholder engagement's recognized systemic nature, the effect of social psychology-based social influence on SEB remains tenuous (Stibe et al., 2015; Poirier and Cobb, 2012), as therefore explored in this paper. Specifically, we investigate how influencees change their behavior to meet an influencor's request or demand (Kelman, 1958), as exhibited through their displayed level of SEB conformity, -compliance, or -reactance, respectively (Chatterjee et al., 2017; Cialdini and Goldstein, 2004; Kelman, 1961). The proposed model addresses an influencee's response to an influencor's request, which – depending on the former's level of agreement – can yield a level of tension (e.g., Clark et al., 2020). Our observations add to this growing discourse by applying the widely used social psychology concepts of conformity, compliance, and reactance to socially influenced SEB (Kelman, 1958; Fitzsimons and Lehmann, 2004), exposing a key contribution (Lee et al., 2018; Siami et al., 2020). Overall, our analyses reveal MacInnis' (2011, p. 146) *integrating* purpose of conceptual research, which "draws connections between previously differentiated phenomena, finding a novel… perspective on how these entities are related."

The model also links SEB to the social psychology concepts of conformity, -compliance, and -reactance, which are in turn connected to prevailing outcomes characterizing the influencor/influencee relationship, which we classify as cooperation, coopetition, and competition, respectively (Johnson and Johnson, 2005). Though seminal authors, including Deutsch (1949a/b), proposed the relational notions of cooperation/competition over half a

century ago, their association to marketing-based SEB is yet to be made (cf. Wolf et al., 2021), as therefore undertaken in this paper. We also add the hybrid form of *coopetition*, which implies the influencee's partial acceptance/partial dissent of an influencor's request (Gnyawali and Charleton, 2018; Stadtler and Van Wassenhove, 2016), as discussed further below.

The paper is organized as follows. In section 2, we review literature on social influence, SE(B), and cooperation, competition, and coopetition in stakeholder relationships. In section 3, we develop a conceptual model and an associated set of propositions that address the effect of social influence on SEB conformity, -compliance, and -reactance under the influencee's differing levels of acceptance of the influencor's request, and their respective effect on cooperation, coopetition, and competition in the influencor/influencee relationship. In section 4, we outline key implications from our analyses and derive avenues for further research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 *Social influence*

Social influence reflects the ways in which individuals modify their behavior to meet the demands of a social environment (Kelman, 1958; Turner, 1991; Cialdini and Griskevicius, 2010; Ozuem et al., 2021). It has been defined as the "change in an individual's thoughts, feelings, attitudes, or behaviors that results from interaction with another individual or a group" (Rashotte, 2007), revealing its multidimensional (e.g., cognitive, emotional, behavioral) nature (Ozuem et al., 2021). Though social influence often results from an influencor's specific action, command, or request, stakeholders may also alter their thoughts or behavior based on what they believe others may think or do (e.g., peer pressure; Kandel and Lazear, 1992; Hook and Kulczynski, 2020).

Deutsch and Gerard (1955) identify two key social influence types that may affect human behavior. First, *informational social influence* refers to "influence to accept information provided by others, which is taken as evidence about reality" (Cohen and Golden, 1972, p. 54).

For example, customers may follow Amazon's (e.g., artificial intelligence-based) recommendations to make their purchase decision (Lee et al., 2011; Hollebeek et al., 2021a). When such influence is successful, it tends to yield the influencee's private acceptance of the influencor's information (Kelman, 1958; Perfumi et al., 2019), as the above example illustrates. Second, *normative social influence* reflects the "influence to conform [to] certain expectations held by others" (Cohen and Golden, 1972, p. 54). Influencees who accept normative social influence tend to do so to improve their relationship with or identify with the influencor or his/her point of view (Kelman, 1961; Kuan et al., 2014). For example, employees taking on board important job-related information from their manager may do so to strengthen their professional relationship and job prospects. As this example illustrates, normative social influence tends to yield the influencee's public compliance with the influencor's request (Kelman, 1958; Lascu and Zinkhan, 1999). Both informational- and normative influence may stem from more formal (e.g., employment-related) or informal sources (e.g., reference groups).

Social influence can manifest in different ways, including through conformity (e.g., Deutsch and Gerard, 1955; Gonçalves et al., 2020), compliance (e.g., Septianto and Garg, 2021; Cialdini and Goldstein, 2004), and reactance (e.g., Lee and Lee, 2009; Clee and Wicklund, 1980), among others, as discussed further below. First, *conformity*, which has been identified as one of the more common social influence types (Cohen and Golden, 1972), entails an individual's modified belief, behavior, or cognition to align with that of salient others or with prevailing normative standards (Martin and Johnson, 2008; Bernheim, 1994; Crutchfield, 1955). It has been defined as "the act of matching attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors to group norms or politics" (Cialdini and Goldstein, 2004). For example, clients are required to conform to their supplier's terms and conditions to receive their orders.

Second, *compliance* is the act of responding favorably to another's implicit or explicit request (Kelman, 1958; Kashyap and Murtha, 2017). Though compliance can imply the

influencee's positive attitudinal *and* behavioral response, it often sees these being *unmatched* (vs. matched). In other words, while an influencee might alter his/her behavior, as requested by the influencor, (s)he may privately disagree with the exerted pressure (Adam et al., 2020; Kasabov and Warlow, 2010; Aronson et al., 2010). For example, though employees may *do as they are told* by their manager (e.g., by exposing themselves to physical risk at work), they may resent the exerted pressure in private.

Third, *reactance* refers to a stakeholder's unpleasant reaction to others, rules, or actions that are perceived to threaten or eliminate specific behavioral freedoms (Trampe et al., 2014; Fitzsimons and Lehmann, 2004; Brehm, 1966;). For example, citizens may respond to their government's proposed (e.g., environmental/employment) legislation by striking or protesting. Therefore, in reactance, the influencee will tend to adopt a view contrary to that, which (s)he is being pressured to accept (Chang and Wong 2018; Lee and Lee, 2009; Clee and Wicklund, 1980).

2.2 Stakeholder engagement (behavior)

Despite its rapid rise, debate surrounds stakeholder engagement's conceptualization (Jonas et al., 2018). For example, while Viglia et al. (2018, p. 405) define stakeholder engagement as a stakeholder's "emotional and cognitive ... engagement [to] trigger... behavioral activation," Hollebeek et al. (2020, p. 1) define the concept as "a stakeholder's state-based, boundedly volitional resource endowment in his/her role-related interactions, activities, and/or relationships." However, despite this definitional dissent, several commonly agreed-upon stakeholder engagement traits exist, as discussed further below.

First, like customer engagement, stakeholder engagement features an interactive conceptual core, where *interaction* refers to two or more stakeholders' face-to-face or platform-mediated interactivity (e.g., Cho et al., 2020; Moriuchi, 2019). In these interactions, influencors have the

opportunity to exert social influence, in turn potentially affecting their influencee's role-related engagement (Delbaere et al., 2021). For example, by informing a customer about a current promotion, firms may sway clients' purchase decision-making. Stakeholder engagement's inherent interactivity is therefore critical in the communication of social influence (Stibe et al., 2013).

Second, stakeholder engagement has been viewed as a stakeholder's role-related resource investment (e.g., Rich et al., 2010; Fletcher-Brown et al., 2021), including of tangible and/or intangible role-related resources. For example, a customer may spend money (i.e., tangible resource) and time and effort (i.e., intangible resources) to acquire an item. The more of their resources stakeholders invest in their role-related task fulfilment, the higher their engagement. However, while some role-related resource investments transpire voluntarily, others are less volitional, revealing stakeholder engagement's bounded (vs. full) volitionality (Hollebeek et al., 2018). This bounded volitionality is key in the social influence context, because while an influencee (e.g., customer/employee) may to some extent accept the influencor's (e.g., seller's/employer's) influence (i.e., yielding relatively volitional stakeholder engagement), another part of him/her may dislike or resent it (i.e., generating less volitional stakeholder engagement; Kelman, 1958; Deutsch and Gerard, 1955; Hollebeek et al., 2020). In turn, more volitional stakeholder engagement will tend to be increasingly conforming in nature.

Third, though customer engagement is commonly modeled as a multi-dimensional (e.g., cognitive, emotional, behavioral) concept (e.g., Calder et al., 2009; Vivek et al., 2014), recognition exists regarding the key role of *behavioral* customer engagement, given its manifest, observable nature (vs. more latent cognitive/emotional engagement), as outlined. Correspondingly, Van Doorn et al. (2010) coined the concept of *customer engagement behavior*, which has seen significant uptake in subsequent research (e.g., Beckers et al., 2018; Groeger et al., 2016). However, despite its value, customer engagement behavior remains

limited to the customer- (vs. stakeholder) engagement domain, thus overlooking the key role of *other* stakeholders' engagement behavior. We therefore develop the concept of *stakeholder engagement behavior* (SEB), which is our focus in this paper (vs. cognitive/emotional SE; Alexander et al., 2018). Integrating and extending Van Doorn et al.'s (2010, p. 253) customer engagement behavior-related *behavioral manifestation* and Hollebeek et al.'s (2020, p. 1) stakeholder engagement-based *role-related interactions, activities, and relationships*, we conceptualize SEB as "a stakeholder's behavioral manifestation toward his/her role-related interactions, activities, and/or relationships."

Fourth, while the literature predominantly assumes customer engagement to create customer-perceived value (e.g., Harmeling et al., 2017), emerging sources suggest that while a stakeholder's engagement may create value for one individual, it may destroy value for another (e.g., Clark et al., 2020). For example, a firm's success in securing an exclusive dealership with a supplier will be to the detriment of its competitors, thus creating (eroding) value for these stakeholders, respectively. Applying this observation to the social influence context, influencor- and influencee-perceived value are also likely to differ. For example, though an influencor (e.g., employer) may derive value from convincing its influencee (e.g., employee) to take on additional responsibilities, this can yield reduced value for the latter. We next review the literature on cooperation and competition in stakeholder relationships.

2.3 Cooperation vs. competition in stakeholder relationships

Interdependent stakeholders rely on one another to some extent (Litz, 1996; Scheer et al., 2015). That is, a stakeholder's actions are expected to impact not only him/herself, but also, others in the social environment (Lewin, 1948; Kelley and Thibaut, 1959; Yang and Ghose, 2010). For example, during the pandemic, consumers who refuse to wear protective equipment (e.g., a face mask) not only put themselves at risk, but also others in their environment, revealing these stakeholders' mutual reliance on each other (Itani and Hollebeek, 2021).

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In these interdependent relationships, stakeholders may exhibit cooperative or competitive behavior (Johnson and Johnson, 1989; Wolf et al., 2021). First, in *cooperation*, stakeholders have compatible goals (Deutch, 1949a), leading them to view themselves as working together with focal others to achieve a common objective that requires their mutual support (Geldes et al., 2015). Cooperation thus promotes consensual interactions in which stakeholders assist and encourage each other (Johnson and Johnson, 1989; Hollebeek et al., 2021b). For example, in collaborative teams, the participating stakeholders will tend to support one another to optimize team performance. Second, in *competition*, stakeholders have differing goals (Deutsch, 1949b; Clark et al., 2020), leading them to compete with one another (Johnson and Johnson, 1989). For example, a firm may behave competitively or opportunistically against its competitors by enticing their customers to switch to its offering (e.g., through price promotions). Competition thus stimulates oppositional interactions in which stakeholders seek personally beneficial outcomes, typically without consideration for the needs of others (Wolf et al., 2021; Wang and Krakover, 2008).

Though existing authors have tended to limit their analyses to stakeholder cooperation and competition (e.g., Johnson and Johnson, 2005; Deutsch, 1949a/b), we identify the additional importance of their respective hybrid form, *coopetition* (Bengtsson and Kock, 2014; Wang et al., 2008). Though coopetition has been traditionally applied in firm-centric (management) research, we extend its scope to the realm of *omni*-stakeholder or actor-to-actor relationships (Vargo and Lusch, 2016). In coopetition, stakeholders simultaneously collaborate and compete. That is, while some of their goals overlap, others are oppositional (Gnyawali and Charleton, 2018). For example, though co-workers work together in teams, they may also compete when it comes to a promotion. Given its expected prevalence in the context of socially influenced SEB, we add coopetition to the existing dualistic model of cooperation/competition (e.g., Deutsch, 1949a/b; Deutsch, 2014). We next introduce the proposed conceptual model and its

associated set of propositions, which integrate and extend the reviewed areas of literature (MacInnis, 2011).

3. CONCEPTUAL MODEL

In this section, we develop a conceptual model and a related set of propositions that outline the role of influencor-instigated social influence in shaping the influencee's SEB, and its ensuing relational consequences. Influencees may display varying degrees of acceptance of an influencor's exerted pressure or influence (Kelman, 1958; Kivetz, 2005), ranging from full acceptance, to partial acceptance/partial disapproval, to full disapproval (Asch, 1955; Sherif, 1935; Wills et al., 2019). We in turn expect these to yield different SEB manifestations and relational consequences, as discussed further and shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Conceptual model.
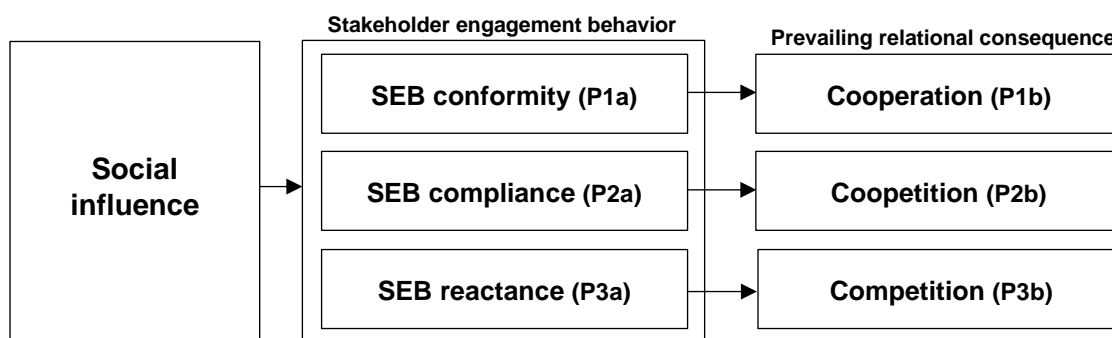
Note - SEB: Stakeholder engagement behavior.

3.1 Effect of social influence on stakeholder engagement behavior

3.1.1 SEB conformity. When stakeholders agree with and accept an influencor's exerted influence, they are likely to conform their SEB to the influencor's elicited pressure (e.g., Delbaere et al., 2021). As outlined, conformity reflects an individual's (influencee's) modified belief, behavior, or thinking to align with that of the influencor or with prevailing normative standards (Septianto and Garg, 2021; Bernheim, 1994; Crutchfield, 1955). Extending this concept, we develop the notion of *SEB conformity*, which refers to an influencee's modified

SEB, as instigated by an influencor's social influence on him/her, with which (s)he is in full agreement. For example, citizens who are instructed to execute a particular task (e.g., maintain social distancing), and who see the value of doing so, are likely to follow or conform with their government's request. The influencee's SEB conformity with the influencor's request, therefore, sees the former not only follow the latter's suggestion, but also truly take it on board and support it. In turn, SEB conformity reveals the alignment of the influencee's SEB with that requested by the influencor (Chatterjee et al., 2017; Bernheim, 1994; Crutchfield, 1955), as shown in Figure 1. We posit:

> **P1a:** *Influencees who accept their influencor's exerted social influence will display SEB conformity with the influencor's request.*

Prevailing relational consequence. Given the influencee's acceptance of the influencor's request, the former's SEB conformity (see P1a) is expected to foster smooth, cooperative, and/or accommodating interactions in the influencor/influencee relationship (e.g., owing to the absence of influencee resistance to the influencor's request), which is also known as *cooperation* (Johnson and Johnson, 2005; Wolf et al., 2021). For example, employees who believe in and correspondingly, execute their manager's job-related suggestions or demands – thus displaying SEB conformity – will tend to cultivate a placid, collaborative working relationship (Deutsch, 1949a/b; Geldes et al., 2015). As another example, clients following their salesperson's advice (e.g., by being persuaded to purchase a more expensive car than planned), thus exposing SEB conformity, likewise cooperate with the seller's suggestion. We theorize:

> **P1b:** *An influencee's SEB conformity to the influencor's exerted social influence is conducive to cooperation in the influencee-influencor relationship.*

3.1.2   SEB compliance. In some cases, stakeholders partially (vs. fully) agree with the influencor's exerted influence (Tobia, 2013), which may see differing degrees of acceptance (vs. dissent). For example, a business customer's disagreement with its supplier's delivery may

range from mild to vehement. Under the influencee's elevated (vs. low) level of acceptance of the influencor's request, (s)he is more likely to follow or comply with it (e.g., Wolf et al., 2021). As noted, though compliance entails the influencee's favorable public response to the influencor's request, (s)he may privately disprove of the exerted influence to some extent (Kelman, 1958; Kashyap and Murtha, 2017). Extending the compliance concept, we therefore develop the notion of *SEB compliance*, which refers to an influencee's modified SEB, as instigated by an influencor's social influence on him/her, with which (s)he is in partial agreement. For example, an influencee (e.g., firm) may accept its supplier's (e.g., pricing-related) pressure to maintain the relationship, while privately dissenting having to pay more for its products (vs. in the past; Aronson et al., 2010). To the extent that the influencee disagrees with the influencor's exerted influence, (s)he may also display SEB reactance, as discussed further below. We postulate:

> **P2a:** *Influencees who partially accept their influencor's exerted social influence will display SEB compliance with the influencor's request.*

Prevailing relational consequence. Under the influencee's partial acceptance of the influencor's request, his/her SEB compliance, as outlined in P2a, will tend to comprise both accepting *and* dissenting aspects (Taylor and Bower, 2004; Vaidyanathan et al., 2013). Therefore, the expected prevailing relational consequence of SEB compliance is *coopetition*, which denotes the influencee's concurrent cooperation with (i.e., acceptance of) *and* competition with (i.e., dissent of) the influencor's request (Gnyawali and Charleton, 2018), thus implying a potential level of influencee resistance to the influencor's request. For example, an employee might view some of his/her employer's (e.g., job task-related) terms as fair, while others (e.g., pay) are perceived as unfair, leading the former to potentially reduce his/her work-related efforts and triggering a level of coopetition in their employment relationship. We theorize:

P2b: *An influencee's SEB compliance with the influencor's exerted social influence is conducive to coopetition in the influencee-influencor relationship.*

3.1.3 SEB reactance. Influencees may also fully oppose, dissent, or resent their influencor's exerted influence, eliciting their expected disagreeable reaction (Clee and Wicklund, 1980; Lee and Lee, 2009). That is, when influencees are being pressured to accept an influencor's suggestion that they disagree with, their likelihood of adopting a perspective *contrary* to that of the influencor rises, in turn also raising their resistance to persuasion, which is known as reactance (Brehm and Brehm, 1981; Fitzsimons and Lehmann, 2004). As noted, *reactance* refers to a stakeholder's disagreeable response to others, rules, or actions that are perceived to threaten specific behavioral freedoms (Chatterjee et al., 2017; Brehm, 1966). Extending this concept, we propose the notion of SEB reactance, which denotes an influencee's modified SEB, as instigated by an influencor's social influence on him/her, with which (s)he disagrees (White et al., 2008). For example, a student who feels pressured to follow a teacher's instructions is likely to respond negatively (e.g., by engaging in the opposite of the suggested behavior). That is, in SEB reactance, the influencee's behavioral outcome tends to oppose that intended by the influencor (Chang and Wong, 2018; Dillard and Shen, 2005). We postulate:

P3a: *Influencees who dissent their influencor's exerted social influence will display SEB reactance to the influencor's request.*

Prevailing relational consequence. Given the influencee's disagreement with the influencor's request, his/her SEB reactance, as outlined in P3a, will yield the individual's unpleasant sentiment toward the attempted influencing and/or the influencor. Consequently, the prevailing relational consequence arising from SEB reactance is *competition*, in which the influencee and influencor have differing goals (Deutsch, 1949a; Clark et al., 2020), rendering them oppositional to one another (Wolf et al., 2021). For example, an employer requesting an employee to work under unsafe conditions is likely to ignite a level of reactance in the latter,

thus fostering an expected level of competition in their relationship (Johnson and Johnson, 2005). We posit:

P3b: *An influencee's SEB reactance to the influencor's exerted social influence is conducive to competition in the influencee-influencor relationship.*

4. DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS

4.1 Theoretical implications

In this paper, we developed the concept of stakeholder engagement behavior (SEB), which we – extending the work of Van Doorn et al. (2010) and Hollebeek et al. (2020) – define as a stakeholder's behavioral manifestation toward his/her role-related interactions, activities, and relationships. Like customer engagement behavior, we expect SEB's focus on stakeholders' manifest, observable role-related interactions, activities, and relationships (vs. latent engagement cognitions/emotions) to be of significant value to marketing-based stakeholder engagement researchers (e.g., Alexander et al., 2018), thus serving as a springboard for further (e.g., empirical) research. Sample research questions include: Is manifest SEB consistent with stakeholders' latent cognitive/emotional engagement *per se*? Under which conditions might discrepancies occur? Which social influence techniques (e.g., manipulation, coercion) are most effective in modifying the influencee's SEB from an influencor perspective (Wild et al., 2006; Cialdini, 1999)? What ethical issues may arise from these activities? How may other social psychology notions (e.g., the social self, attribution, locus of control) affect SEB? Might SEB toward one's role-related interactions, activities, and/or relationships differ?

Second, given SEB's inherently systemic nature (e.g., Viglia et al., 2018), we also explored the role of influencor-exerted social influence on the influencee's SEB, as shown in Figure 1. We postulate social influence to generate the influencee's SEB conformity with, -compliance to, or -reactance to the influencor's request, depending on the former's level of acceptance of the latter's influence, as outlined. Though a handful of prior studies (e.g., Poirier and Cobb,

2012; Stibe et al., 2015) have identified the effect of social influence on engagement, little remains known regarding its effect on SEB, as therefore explored in this paper. Specifically, we predict social influence to yield (i) SEB conformity when the influencee agrees with/accepts the influencor's exerted social influence, (ii) SEB compliance when the influencee partially agrees with the exerted influence, and (iii) SEB reactance when the influencee disagrees with/dissents the exerted influence, thus extending the work of authors including Kelman (1958), Chatterjee et al. (2017), Vaidyanathan et al. (2013), and Wolf et al. (2021) and advancing scholarly acumen of the socio-psychological mechanisms that drive SEB. Our observations also offer ample opportunity for further research, including by examining such issues as the following: Under which conditions is the association of social influence and SEB conformity, -compliance, and -reactance, respectively, strengthened (vs. weakened)? Can aspects of SEB conformity, -compliance, and -reactance co-occur or coincide, or do they necessarily exist as fully mutually exclusive theoretical entities? How does an influencee's SEB manifest in the case of multiple influencors (vs. a single influencor)?

Third, the model suggests that SEB conformity, -compliance, and -reactance yield cooperation, coopetition, and competition in the influencor/influencee relationship (Deutsch, 1949a/b; Gotsopoulos, 2018), respectively. As noted, though cooperation/competition exist as a widely acknowledged two-partite theoretical typology (Johnson and Johnson, 1989), we add its hybrid form, coopetition, as a third taxonomical element (Wang and Krakover, 2008). While coopetition is subject to a rich discourse in the firm-centric (management) literature (Gnyawali and Charleton, 2018), its application to the *omni*-stakeholder context remains limited, thus revealing an important contribution. Sample research questions include: What is the strength of the association of SEB conformity, -compliance, and -reactance on cooperation, coopetition, and competition, respectively, under differing contextual conditions? How may stakeholder

(e.g., influencor/influencee), focal persuasion issue-related (e.g., issue salience), and situational factors affect these associations (e.g., Groenendyk and Valentino, 2002)?

Table 1: Sample research questions structured by our propositions of socially influenced stakeholder engagement behavior (SEB).

Proposition	Sample research questions
SEB conformity	
P1a: *Influencees who accept their influencor's exerted social influence will display SEB conformity with the influencor's request.*	○ Which types of (e.g., informational/normative) social influence are most conducive to fostering an influencee's SEB conformity with the influencor's request? ○ Can particular (e.g., moderating) variables (e.g., stakeholder need-for-conformity) alter the (e.g., intensity of the) theorized associations? ○ Which factors are conducive to strengthening the association of the influencor's exerted social influence and SEB conformity?
P1b: *An influencee's SEB conformity to the influencor's exerted social influence is conducive to cooperation in the influencee-influencor relationship.*	○ What effect does an influencee's level of SEB conformity have on the ensuing level of cooperation in the influencee-influencor relationship across different types of stakeholder roles? ○ How is cooperation achieved in cases of multiple influencors (vs. a single influencor) and/or multiple influencees (vs. a single influencee)? ○ Is cooperation in the influencor/influencee relationship conducive to further SEB conformity, revealing a virtuous cycle?
SEB compliance	
P2a: *Influencees who partially accept their influencor's exerted social influence will display SEB compliance with the influencor's request.*	○ Which factors reinforce the association of the influencor's exerted social influence and the influencee's SEB compliance? ○ How do the influencee's differing or potentially varying levels of acceptance of/dissent toward the influencor's exerted social influence affect the former's level of SEB compliance? ○ How can SEB compliance be transitioned to SEB conformity (i.e., featuring the influencee's full (vs. partial) acceptance of the influencor's request?
P2b: *An influencee's SEB compliance with the influencor's exerted social influence is conducive to coopetition in the influencee-influencor relationship.*	○ What effect does an influencee's level of SEB compliance have on the resulting level of coopetition in the influencee-influencor relationship? ○ How does an influencee's relative degree of acceptance of/dissent toward an influencor's request affect their level of coopetition? ○ Which tactics are most effective for influencors in swaying their influencee's view toward greater acceptance of their request?
SEB reactance	
P3a: *Influencees who dissent their influencor's exerted social influence will display SEB reactance to the influencor's request.*	○ To what extent does SEB reactance manifest in relationships characterized by differing levels of power in the influencor-influencee relationship? ○ Will the influencee's SEB reactance always create competition in the influencor/influencee relationship? ○ Which strategies can be deployed to minimize the influencee's reactance to the influencor's request?
P3b: *An influencee's SEB reactance to the influencor's exerted social influence is conducive to competition in the influencee-influencor relationship.*	○ What effect does an influencee's level of SEB reactance have on the level of competition in the influencee-influencor relationship across different types of stakeholder roles? ○ To what extent may the influencor's (vs. influencee's) reactance to the influencee's behavior *also* affect the level of competition in their relationship? ○ Can the adoption of a mediator in the influencor-influencee relationship help reduce impending competition in their relationship, as it arises from SEB reactance?

As shown in Figure 1, we postulate that (i) SEB conformity facilitates cooperation, (ii) SEB compliance is conducive to coopetition, and (iii) SEB reactance tends to foster competition in the influencee-influencor relationship, respectively, thus linking established social psychology-based social influence- (e.g., Kelman, 1961; Deutsch and Gerard, 1955; Chatterjee et al., 2017) and marketing-based SE literature (e.g., Viglia et al., 2018; Hollebeek et al., 2020). These analyses also unlock significant avenues for further research, as structured by our propositions in Table 1. For example, will SEB's predicted effect on the influencor's/influencee's prevailing relational outcomes always hold, or may particular (e.g., moderating) variables or circumstances alter the theorized associations? We next outline important practical implications that arise from our analyses.

4.2 Practical implications

Our analyses also raise pertinent implications for managers. First, our SEB (vs. customer engagement behavior) focus highlights the need to consider not only the engagement of customers, but also, that of other stakeholders in business relationships (e.g., Viglia et al., 2018; Brodie et al., 2016). That is, through the interplay of different stakeholders' engagement behavior, stakeholder relationships are shaped at each role-related interaction. Therefore, to optimize stakeholder relationships and firm performance, each stakeholder's engagement behavior needs to be considered, both individually and at the interface of that with others (Jonas et al., 2018; Hollebeek et al., 2022).

Second, our analyses suggest that while an influencor's exerted social influence *can* yield favorable SEB (e.g., through SEB conformity) and exhibit an associated positive effect on the influencor/influencee relationship (i.e., through cooperation), more negative effects can also transpire (e.g., through SEB reactance, which is expected to foster competition in the influencor/influencee relationship), thus extending Clark et al.'s (2020) and Hollebeek et al.'s (2020) findings on differentially valenced stakeholder engagement. Managers are therefore

advised to monitor the effects of the firm's social influence on its different stakeholders (e.g., customers, employees, suppliers, lobby groups), who may display differing responses, and potentially adjust its social influence exerted on particular stakeholders as required. Moreover, in cases of conflicting stakeholder responses, we recommend the development of agile contingency plans that enable the prompt resolution of these issues (e.g., Pullins, 2001).

4.3   Limitations and further research

Despite its contribution, this paper is not free from limitations, which offer additional avenues for further research. First, the purely conceptual nature of our work raises a need for its future empirical testing and validation (e.g., Yadav, 2010). For example, the theorized associations could be tested in subsequent structural equation modeling-based or experimental research (e.g., Malhotra, 2019). In addition, the potentially moderating effect of specific variables (e.g., stakeholder need-for-uniqueness, personality, culture, majority vs. minority influence) also remain open for further investigation (e.g., Geng et al., 2018; Doms and Van Avermaet, 1980).

Second, though we drew on Kelman (1958), Deutsch (1949a/b), and Wolf et al. (2021) to explore the effect of social influence on SEB conformity, -compliance, and -reactance and identify their respective impact on cooperation, coopetition, or competition in the influencor/influencee relationship, other or related perspectives may be adopted in future research. For example, social identity theory (Tajfel, 1974) or social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) offer alternate, potentially suitable lenses to explore socially constructed SEB. In addition, factors including social contagion or perceived social exclusion are likely to affect the dissemination of social influence and thus, SEB (Vinuales and Thomas, 2021; Bagozzi and Lee, 2002; Iyengar et al., 2011), therefore also warranting further investigation. Moreover, scholars may wish to explore the dynamics characterizing psychological manipulation or power in particular contexts and assess their respective effect on SEB (e.g., Flach, 1988).

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