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Understanding Motivation and Social Influence in Stakeholder Prioritization

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Abstract

Insight into organizational responses to stakeholder claims and influence attempts is critical to understand the challenges currently facing managers and organizations. Drawing on Kelman's (1958) model of social influence, we advance the field's understanding of the factors driving firm-level prioritization of competing stakeholder claims by developing a theoretical framework that accounts for both the stakeholder attributes that are important to relevant decision makers, and the decision makers' motivations for accepting or rejecting the influence attempts of varying stakeholders. Our framework distinguishes itself from existing research by focusing on stakeholder prioritization, not salience, recognizing that stakeholder-related decisions result from group interaction and that important decision makers are not limited to those found within the classic boundaries of the firm. Consequently, we argue that decision makers are simultaneously stakeholders with attributes that might be relevant to other decision makers involved in prioritization. In addition, we identify a more extensive set of stakeholder attributes that includes powerlessness and illegitimacy.

Keywords

motivation, social influence, stakeholder prioritization, stakeholder theory

Introduction

Firms' prioritization of competing stakeholder claims constitutes an important topic in stakeholder research (Laplume, Sonpar, & Litz, 2008). Interest in this type of firm behaviour is unsurprising, as the intellectual shift in management thought from a historical emphasis on the singular importance of the shareholder to a more inclusive multiple stakeholder view requires an explanation of how firms choose between competing stakeholder claims. Stakeholders may have legal, moral, or

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presumed claims, as well as the ability and incentive to influence a firm's behaviour, direction, processes, or outcomes (Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997). Insight into organizational responses to stakeholder claims and influence attempts is critical to understanding the challenges currently facing managers and organizations.

Mitchell et al.'s (1997) stakeholder salience framework has provided the most influential explanation to date of how managers decide which individuals or entities to prioritize when facing multiple claims and influence attempts (Neville, Bell, & Whitwell, 2011). Although Mitchell et al. (1997) explicitly note that heterogeneity among decision makers is vital to their framework, they provide little insight into the contribution of such heterogeneity and instead exclusively rely on three stakeholder attributes to explain how an organization's stakeholders successfully attract managerial attention. Although a later empirical study by some of the same authors examined certain decision-maker attributes (Agle, Mitchell, & Sonnenfeld, 1999), research on stakeholder salience continues to focus primarily on the attributes of stakeholders.

Drawing on Kelman's (1958, 1980) model of social influence, we aim to advance our field's understanding of the factors driving firm-level prioritization of competing stakeholder claims by developing a theoretical framework that accounts for both the stakeholder attributes that are important to relevant decision makers, and these decision makers' motivations for accepting or rejecting the influence attempts of varying stakeholders. Because stakeholder attributes are perceived differently by different decision makers, neglecting the contribution of heterogeneity among decision makers substantially reduces the descriptive and predictive power of the stakeholder salience framework and of its later extensions.

Kelman's (1958) model of social influence, which is one of the most heavily cited theories of motivation, is particularly appropriate for our framework. Kelman's theory of motivation has been integrated into management frameworks for issues as diverse as worker motivation (Sussman & Vecchio, 1982), organizational commitment (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986), organizational justice (Cropanzano, Rupp, Mohler, & Schminke, 2001), leadership (Barbuto, 2005), and corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Aguilera, Rupp, Williams, & Ganapathi, 2007). Kelman's (1958) model has been praised as a useful tool that emphasizes essential human characteristics (Cropanzano et al., 2001). Because Kelman's (1958) model focuses on individuals' motivation to accept social influence in shifting their attitudes, it is a natural choice for our research context as stakeholders generally attempt to influence firms (Frooman, 1999; Mitchell et al., 1997; Savage, Nix, Whitehead, & Blair, 1991; Starik, 1994) through specific individuals.

Because our approach differs from the stakeholder salience framework in several important respects, our research contributes to the stakeholder literature in a number of ways. First, we de-emphasize the salience construct and focus on stakeholder prioritization. This shift is critical because the phenomenon of interest is not whether a stakeholder is salient, i.e., conspicuous, but rather whether the claims of that stakeholder are prioritized or addressed by a firm and why. Second, although research on stakeholder salience generally focuses on a single decision maker within a firm, we know that the reality is far more complex. Stakeholder-related decisions often result from group interaction. Furthermore, much of the current stakeholder research assumes that relevant decision makers are all found within the confines of the firm, which is not necessarily the case.

Consequently, because a decision maker does not change his or her attitude regarding the prioritization of certain stakeholder claims in isolation but must consider the attributes of other decision makers both within and outside the firm, decision makers are simultaneously stakeholders with attributes that might be relevant to the other decision makers involved in prioritization. Our framework captures this complexity and thus demonstrates how specific stakeholder attributes differentially affect decision makers who hold three different motivations. Finally, we identify a more extensive set of stakeholder attributes that includes powerlessness and illegitimacy. We argue that powerlessness and illegitimacy are not simply endpoints on a scale but also independent attributes that play an important role in prioritization decisions.

The Ongoing Effort to Understand Stakeholder Prioritization

Although Freeman's (1984) early definition of stakeholders as all those who can affect or who are affected by firm activities is often cited and highly influential, it has also been recognized as possibly too broad for practical purposes (Parmar et al., 2010). Consequently, researchers over the years have sought to identify appropriate criteria for identifying and classifying relevant stakeholders (e.g., Clarkson, 1994; Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Freeman, 1994; Hill & Jones, 1992; Jensen & Sandstrom, 2011; Mitchell et al., 1997; Savage et al., 1991). Mitchell and colleagues' framework of stakeholder salience is one of the most important proposals (Neville et al., 2011) for understanding an organization's decision to actively address the concerns of particular stakeholders, as their framework provides a set of attributes that can determine which stakeholders are most likely to receive managerial attention.

Mitchell et al.'s (1997) framework introduces the concept of "salience" as a critical construct in stakeholder research and emphasizes the significant role played by the individual firm decision maker in firm-level stakeholder engagement decisions. "Salience" is defined as the degree to which managers assign priority to competing stakeholders (Mitchell et al., 1997). The concept of salience and the criteria for its identification have played a dominant role in stakeholder research (Laplume et al., 2008), and the attributes identified by the stakeholder salience framework have remained relevant because of the empirical support provided by subsequent research (Agle et al., 1999; Eesley & Lenox, 2006; Knox & Gruar, 2007; Magness, 2008; O'Higgins & Morgan, 2006; Parent & Deephouse, 2007; Winn, 2001).

The key attributes required to identify a stakeholder include the power to influence a firm's behaviour, a compelling and urgent demand, or a legitimate claim based on a legal or moral right (Mitchell et al., 1997). The power, urgency, and legitimacy-based identification typology indicates the types of stakeholders that exist, while the concept of salience explains managerial responses to particular stakeholders (Mitchell et al., 1997). In the stakeholder salience framework, the attribute of power originates from Weber's (1947) view that an actor who wields power within a social relationship holds the position to compel others to fulfil his or her will despite resistance. The concept is also based on Pfeffer's (1981) insight that power is exhibited when one social actor is able to compel another social actor to do something he or she would not do otherwise. In the salience framework, the threat that a stakeholder might exercise her power in a manner potentially adverse to the firm's bottom line enhances the salience of that stakeholder to the decision maker. The decision maker calculates the damage that might occur if the demands of the stakeholder are not met and then decides whether the potential costs warrant additional attention to that particular stakeholder's needs. A stakeholder with greater power will therefore have higher salience among relevant decision makers (Mitchell et al., 1997).

In the stakeholder salience framework, urgency reflects the extent to which a stakeholder's claim calls for immediate attention. Urgency is a multidimensional construct involving both criticality and temporality; a stakeholder claim is urgent both when it is important and when a time delay in attending to it is unacceptable (Mitchell et al., 1997). A stakeholder with a claim that is perceived to be more urgent will have higher salience with decision makers.

In the stakeholder salience framework, legitimacy is broadly defined as the general perception that an entity's actions are proper or appropriate within a socially constructed system of norms, values, or beliefs—that is, the extent to which individuals within the firm or society at large consider

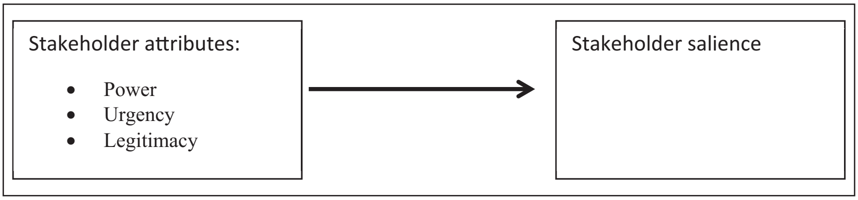

Figure 1. The Stakeholder Salience Framework.

the stakeholder to have a legitimate claim that the firm should address. Effective managerial decision making depends on the extent to which firms conform to what society as a whole regards as legitimate (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). In the stakeholder salience framework, a stakeholder with a more legitimate claim will have higher salience among relevant decision makers (Mitchell et al., 1997).

According to the stakeholder salience framework, stakeholders with a greater number of the above attributes are more salient to those responsible for setting priorities. Thus, a stakeholder with all three attributes is highly salient, stakeholders with two attributes are moderately salient, and stakeholders with only a single attribute are only marginally salient. Similarly, a stakeholder exhibiting an attribute to a greater degree is more salient than one exhibiting the attribute to a lesser degree (Neville et al., 2011).

The relationship between the key attributes and salience for an individual decision maker in the stakeholder salience framework is illustrated in Figure 1.

Although Mitchell et al.'s (1997) framework has advanced the field's understanding of how mangers prioritize competing stakeholder claims, the "salience" label and the distinction between stakeholders and decision makers is problematic. First, the very definition of salience creates confusion. Mitchell et al. (1997) define salience as the degree to which managers assign priority to competing stakeholder claims, rendering salience synonymous with priority. This definition contrasts with colloquial usage of the term. Currently, the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines salience as "a striking point or feature", which is consistent with contemporary parlance in which salience is synonymous with conspicuousness.

A second and related issue is that higher salience does not necessarily entail that a stakeholder's claims are prioritized or even addressed. Later researchers investigating stakeholder salience have focused more on stakeholder identification than on stakeholder prioritization (Laplume et al., 2008). We diverge from this trend because conspicuousness is less important for a stakeholder than the ability to influence a specific decision maker into prioritizing the stakeholder's claims. These considerations are the basis for our third objection. Mitchell et al. (1997) focus exclusively on individual decision makers within a firm, even though stakeholder-related decisions often result from group interactions (Freeman, Harrison, & Wicks, 2007; Becker-Ritterspach & Dörrenbächer, 2011) and even though relevant decision makers are not necessarily confined within the boundaries of a firm. As organizational boundaries become more fluid, influence efforts no longer exclusively involve firm members. For example, relationships with suppliers might be more important than a relationship with a colleague for a decision maker, rendering the supplier an important decision maker as well.

Mitchell et al. (1997) note that salience reflects the perception of an individual decision maker. However, the decision to prioritize certain stakeholder claims ultimately occurs at the firm level, and it is influenced by decision makers both within and outside organizational boundaries. Thus, although a firm cannot be considered to have a "collective mind" that perceives a stakeholder to be salient, the firm can be considered to have an attitudinal consensus regarding prioritization. For these reasons, our proposed framework focuses on stakeholder influence and prioritization rather than stakeholder salience.

What does "prioritizing" a stakeholder involve? Mitchell et al. (1997) note that the stakeholder literature identifies the need for managers to attend to actual or potential stakeholder *claims* and argue that stakeholder salience refers to the degree to which managers assign priority to competing stakeholder claims. More recently, Neville et al. (2011) observed that managers face the challenge of continually balancing the claims of one stakeholder against the claims of other stakeholders, which requires an assessment of the validity of the various claims and the effects of acquiescing to or rejecting demands. Thus, we define stakeholder prioritization as an attitude to prioritize and attend to the claims of certain stakeholders over other competing claims.

Although Savage et al. (1991) argue that, by definition, all stakeholders have claims and the ability to influence a firm, the stakeholder salience framework explicitly rejects this view. Mitchell et al. (1997) argue that influencers must be powerful regardless of whether their claims are legitimate and that stakeholder claims must be legitimate, regardless of whether they have power to influence the firm. Because we argue that even individuals or groups without power can be regarded as influencers in our prioritization framework, we adopt Savage et al.'s (1991) definition in which stakeholders either are themselves influencers or have advocates who act as influencers on their behalf (Jensen & Sandstrom, 2011). For example, Greenpeace serves as an advocate for the natural environment.

However, because a decision maker does not change his or her attitude regarding stakeholder prioritization in isolation, the decision maker is simultaneously a stakeholder with attributes that are relevant to other decision makers involved. Thus, we argue that stakeholders must be viewed not only as claimants and influencers but also as decision makers. Moreover, stakeholders not only have attributes that are relevant to the motivations of other decision makers but also themselves have motivations to accept, seek, or reject influence.

The Relationship between Stakeholder Influence Efforts and Prioritization Decisions Depends on Motivation

The three stakeholder attributes of power, urgency, and legitimacy are perceived differently by different decision makers, who must prioritize conflicting stakeholder claims and influence attempts (Mitchell et al., 1997). Although two decision makers might agree that a stakeholder exhibits a particular attribute, the attribute might produce different (and perhaps diametrically opposed) effects on each individual's attitude towards prioritization because of their different personal motivations. Consequently, we argue that the effect of a stakeholder attribute on an individual's attitude towards prioritization cannot be accurately predicted without accounting for the individual's motivation to accept social influence.

Stakeholders actively seek to influence individual decision makers in target firms to attend to their needs and requests (Frooman, 1999; Mitchell et al., 1997; Savage et al., 1991; Starik, 1994). Because we regard stakeholders as influencers, we draw on Kelman's (1958, 2006) theory of social influence to explain how the motivations of an individual decision maker who is exposed to influence attempts by a specific stakeholder affect the decision maker's attitude towards stakeholder prioritization. Kelman's framework is ideal because it provides insight into motivation at the individual level in the context of the day-to-day operations of organizations that continually interact with others seeking to advance their group's interests (Kelman & Hamilton, 1989). Thus, the framework directly addresses the concerns of stakeholder management research.

Understanding the role of motivation in social influence

Kelman (1980) explains that attitudes are a product of an individual's efforts to process information about an object in a particular motivational context. Kelman (1958) identifies three motivations for accepting social influence: a moral motivation, in which the decision maker seeks to ensure that his or her actions and beliefs are consistent with an internal system of values; a relational motivation, in which the decision maker seeks to establish or maintain a satisfying relationship with another based on either reciprocity or modelling; and an instrumental motivation, in which a decision maker seeks to obtain a specific reward or avoid a specific punishment. These three motivations are not mutually exclusive, but are present at all times in all individuals to some extent, depending on the situation (Kelman, 2006).

Kelman's theory of the motivations for accepting social influence captures the often tenuous and contingent nature of accepting influence. Stakeholder influence attempts reflect the desire to increase their claims' priority and ultimately to ensure that their demands are met or that their needs are attended to by a target firm. Although individuals often publicly display acquiescence to persuasive communications, these superficial displays are not part of the robust interactions at the heart of the stakeholder management paradigm. Meaningful engagement is possible only when the relevant type of motivation enables the decision maker to internalize stakeholder claims; however, even then, the internalization is partial, dynamic, and contingent (Kelman, 2006). Kelman (1980) explains that through interaction information about the object (in this case, the stakeholder's claim) is transmitted to and processed by the decision maker, and further notes that the way in which the information is processed is a function of the motivational context in which the interaction occurs. Importantly, social influence is described as a continually ongoing process (Kelman, 1980).

Barbuto's (2005) meta-theory of work motivation identifies links between Kelman's typology of motivations for accepting social influence and other theories of motivation. For example, Kelman's instrumental motivation is related to Kohlberg's (1976) instrumental orientation, Piaget's (1972) concrete operational stage, Loevinger's (1976) opportunistic involvement, and Etzioni's (1961) calculative involvement. Further, Kelman's moral motivation is related to Kohlberg's (1976) principled orientation, Piaget's (1972) post-formal operational stage, Loevinger's (1976) autonomous involvement, and Etzioni's (1961) pure moral involvement. Finally, Kelman's relational motivation is similar to Kohlberg's (1976) interpersonal orientation, Piaget's (1972) early formal operational stage, Loevinger's (1976) conformist involvement, and Etzioni's (1961) social moral involvement. Consequently, a diverse and extensive body of research supports the generalizability of a framework that assumes that managers are governed by moral, relational, and instrumental motivations. However, our framework is specifically grounded in Kelman's approach because of our focus on the motivation for accepting the social influence of stakeholders rather than motivation in the workplace in general.

Revising and refining the stakeholder attributes that influence stakeholder prioritization

By incorporating the various motivations for accepting social influence, our framework departs from the stakeholder salience framework (Mitchell et al., 1997) in three important respects. First, the stakeholder salience framework predicts that, all else being equal, each attribute possessed by a stakeholder enhances the likelihood that a decision maker will prioritize her claim. Highly salient stakeholders tend to have high levels of power, urgency, and legitimacy (Neville et al., 2011), and the effect of these attributes is additive. In our framework, in contrast, the effect of a particular stakeholder attribute on prioritization might be positive, negative, or marginal depending on the decision maker's motivation. Because we focus on stakeholder prioritization decisions, it is possible to discuss negative effects, and we argue that a negative effect of an attribute motivates a decision maker to reduce the priority of a specific claim without making the stakeholder less salient. Accordingly, although a stakeholder might be highly salient (i.e., conspicuous and noticed by the decision maker), the effect might be negative (i.e., the stakeholder's influence efforts do not produce the desired prioritization).

Second, we relax the assumption in the stakeholder salience framework in which a single motivation influences all decision makers. It cannot be assumed that the stakeholder attributes of power, urgency, and legitimacy alone determine stakeholder prioritization. To the extent that different attributes are relevant for different motivations, the set of stakeholder attributes that potentially influence prioritization decisions must be extended and refined.

Third, while the starting point of the stakeholder salience framework is the attributes of the stakeholder, our starting point is the attitude of the stakeholder towards their claim. This is because, as we argued earlier, stakeholders are also decision makers with their own attitudes and motivations. Decision makers do not perceive the stakeholder attributes in a vacuum, but rather in the context of an influence attempt. Similarly, the stakeholder chooses who to influence and how to display their attributes to best strategically manage external perceptions.

In the next section, we refine and extend the set of major stakeholder attributes identified by Mitchell et al. (1997). Following Kelman (2006), we focus on the motivation to accept or reject stakeholder influence at the individual level (Frooman, 1999; Mitchell et al., 1997; Savage et al., 1991; Starik, 1994). Although we recognize that stakeholder prioritization decisions are not made by a single individual, our discussion of stakeholders' influence efforts initially focuses on individuals for purposes of clarity. After describing the phenomenon on the individual level, we extend the prioritization framework to influence efforts in the context of multiple decision makers. Furthermore, we wish to note the recognition that the culture of an organization is an antecedent to individual motivation. Research by Jones, Felps and Bigley (2007) on stakeholder culture identifies different types of organizations, from narrowly instrumental to broadly other-regarding, and clarifies that culture will affect individual motivation.

Power

The stakeholder salience framework (Mitchell et al., 1997) is based on the work of Etzioni (1964), who identifies three types of power: coercive, utilitarian, and normative. Coercive power, which is primarily based on the threat of physical harm, produces an aversive effect when exercised (Etzioni, 1965). Although utilitarian power, in which financial or material incentives and threats are employed to obtain a desired behaviour from less powerful actors, is not as aversive as coercive power, it is nevertheless predicted to have an alienating effect (Etzioni, 1965). By contrast, normative power is the most ethically desirable source of power, as it is based on prestige, esteem, and acceptance, which are "pure" symbols that do not involve a physical threat or material harm (Etzioni, 1964). Accordingly, normative power does not produce an aversive effect because symbolic methods of control persuade individuals (Etzioni, 1965). Although all the above sources of power are conflated into a single attribute in the stakeholder salience framework, our model distinguishes between the effects of each type of power separately because the distinct effects of the three types of power exert different levels of influence on stakeholder prioritization for each type of motivation identified by Kelman.

Moreover, although the stakeholder salience framework does not differentiate less powerful individuals from the powerless, we argue that powerlessness is an attribute that affects prioritization decisions within certain motivations. We therefore differentiate powerless stakeholders who are regularly encountered by firms (Van Buren, 2001) from stakeholders with low levels of power. This distinction is empirically supported by the finding that pro-social considerations are more influential for decision makers facing powerless players who are unable to retaliate (Handgraaf, van Dijk, Vermunt, Wilke, & de Dreu, 2008). Researchers in psychology and experimental economics have documented differences in the attitudes towards the less powerful and the powerless (e.g., Sachdev & Bourhis, 1985). A number of researchers have studied the extent to which power asymmetries influence the behaviour of powerful actors in ultimatum simulations in which decision makers have complete control over outcomes and payoffs (e.g., Forsythe, Horowitz, Savin, & Sefton, 1994; Kahneman, Knetsch, & Thaler, 1990; Suleiman, 1996). These studies show that although allocators confronted with weak recipients often act aggressively, pro-social considerations become increasingly influential when allocators face completely powerless players who are unable to retaliate in any way (Handgraaf et al., 2008). In our framework, powerlessness is defined as a lack of power in all three dimensions: coercive, utilitarian, and normative.

Legitimacy

In the stakeholder salience framework, legitimacy is broadly defined. Although the framework is based on the three forms of legitimacy (i.e., moral, pragmatic, and cognitive) identified by Suchman (1995), these forms are conflated into a single attribute. As argued above for the concept of power, our framework distinguishes among different types of legitimacy because each type exerts a different effect depending on the motivation. However, our model focuses on moral and pragmatic legitimacy only because cognitive legitimacy (i.e., what is "taken for granted") is not encountered in stakeholder prioritization decision making (Driscoll & Starik, 2004).

Pragmatic legitimacy is based on public perception and approval (Suchman, 1995). This type of legitimacy, which involves the relational effects of the environment on a firm's decision makers (Neville & Menguc, 2006), is important because managerial decision making must conform to what society considers to be legitimate (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Moral legitimacy, in contrast, results from a positive normative evaluation of the stakeholder and their claims (Suchman, 1995); thus, unlike pragmatic legitimacy, moral legitimacy is "sociotropic" because the acceptance of moral legitimacy is solely dependent on the extent to which the decision maker believes that prioritizing a particular stakeholder is the right thing to do (Suchman, 1995). Phillips (2003) defines normatively legitimate stakeholders as those to whom the organization has a moral obligation of fairness simply by virtue of their being human, which supersedes obligations to other social actors.

In their extensive review of the literature on legitimacy, Deephouse and Suchman (2008) argue that two fundamental classes of organizations exist: legitimate and illegitimate. Although it is possible to rank legitimacy and illegitimacy along a scale ranging from low to high, an organization low in legitimacy is nevertheless fundamentally different from an illegitimate organization. Illegitimacy, similar to powerlessness, has different effects depending on the type of motivation. Following Deephouse and Suchman (2008), we distinguish between types of illegitimacy: a stakeholder might be pragmatically illegitimate because of a negative public endorsement or morally illegitimate based on an individual's negative normative evaluation. Because the absence of an endorsement does not necessarily lead to illegitimacy (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008), both legitimacy and illegitimacy must be explicitly granted—either by an external social group for pragmatic illegitimacy or by the decision maker for moral illegitimacy. For example, although a non-registered charity might lack pragmatic legitimacy, the lack of legitimacy in itself does not render an organization illegitimate. If the hypothetical charity's activities prove to be morally or legally

Table 1. A comprehensive set of stakeholder attributes and definitions.

Attribute	Definition	Citations
Coercive power	The perception that a stakeholder is able to use threats or physical harm to compel a firm to do something that it would not otherwise	Weber, 1947; Pfeffer, 1981; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1974; Etzioni, 1965; Mitchell et al., 1997
Utilitarian power	The perception that a stakeholder is able to use threats or material incentives to compel a firm to do something that it would not otherwise	Weber, 1947; Pfeffer, 1981; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1974; Etzioni, 1965; Mitchell et al., 1997; Parent & Deephouse, 2007
Normative power	The perception that a stakeholder is able to employ symbolic characteristics, such as prestige and acceptance, to persuade a firm to do something that it would not otherwise	Weber, 1947; Pfeffer, 1981; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1974; Etzioni, 1965; Mitchell et al., 1997; Parent & Deephouse, 2007
Powerlessness	The perception that a stakeholder is unable to use physical, material, or symbolic means to compel a firm to do something that it would not otherwise	Sachdev & Bourhis, 1985; Forsythe et al, 1994; Kahneman et al., 1990; Suleiman, 1996; Van Buren, 2001; Handgraaf et al., 2008
Urgency	The extent to which a stakeholder's claims require immediate attention owing to perceived criticality or temporal immediacy	Cobb & Elder, 1972; Eyestone, 1978; Wartick & Mahon, 1994; Mitchell et al., 1997
Pragmatic legitimacy	An assessment of public perceptions of the firm–stakeholder relationship and public approval of stakeholder behaviours and actions based on social standards	Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Suchman, 1995; Mitchell et al., 1997; Neville & Menguc, 2006
Moral legitimacy	An internal assessment of the firm–stakeholder relationship and stakeholder behaviours and actions based on independent, subjective, moral principles	Suchman, 1995; Phillips, 2003
Pragmatic illegitimacy	A negative assessment of public perceptions of the firm–stakeholder relationship and public disapproval of stakeholder behaviours and actions based on social standards	Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Suchman, 1995; Mitchell et al., 1997; Neville & Menguc, 2006; Deephouse & Suchman, 2008
Moral illegitimacy	A negative internal assessment of the firm–stakeholder relationship and stakeholder behaviours and actions based on independent, subjective, moral principles	Suchman, 1995; Phillips, 2003; Deephouse & Suchman, 2008

questionable, the organization might later be deemed illegitimate by the public; however, until then, the organization does not have either pragmatic legitimacy or illegitimacy.

The new set of stakeholder attributes and definitions are presented in Table 1.

The Interaction between Decision-Maker Motivations and Stakeholder Attributes

We next explore in detail the interaction between the revised and extended set of stakeholder attributes and the three types of motivations identified by Kelman (1958).

Moral motivations: values and meaning

Because moral motivations are based on the internalization of a subjectively chosen set of values that guide daily life (Kelman, 1958, 2006), such motivations are related to the core of a stakeholder approach to management, which is inherently normative (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). Moral motivations produce a value orientation towards the stakeholder, which is consistent with Freeman's (1984) observation that effective stakeholder management not only enables businesses to thrive but also entails a moral endeavour that reflects values.

A unique characteristic of moral motivations is that the decision to accept social influence is based solely on an internal assessment of the correspondence between the relevant issue and an internal system of values (Kelman, 2006). The decision maker influenced by the stakeholder believes that satisfying the stakeholder's claim ensures that the decision maker's actions and beliefs reflect his personal values. Furthermore, the firm's decision maker adopts an evaluative perspective (Kelman, 2006) towards the ongoing firm–stakeholder relationship; although ongoing support is regarded as fundamental, it is also conditioned on continued positive assessments of the moral outcomes of prioritizing this stakeholder over others.

In contrast to the stakeholder salience framework (Mitchell et al., 1997), which predicts that perceived stakeholder power always enhances the prioritization of a stakeholder's claim regardless of its source, we argue that each of the three types of power produces a different effect with respect to each type of motivation. For moral motivations, normative power exerts a positive influence on prioritization because the application of the symbolic control at the heart of normative power produces a morally persuasive effect that appeals to post-conventional moral reasoning (Etzioni, 1965) and because a morally motivated decision maker is open to this type of principled persuasion (Kelman, 1958, 2006). Morally motivated behaviour is based solely on the internal assessment of the correspondence between the relevant issue and the individual's internal value system (Kelman, 2006). Furthermore, a morally motivated decision maker considers the powerlessness of a stakeholder to be a compelling reason for prioritizing a claim because most normative moral systems emphasize the obligation to assist the vulnerable and helpless (Donaldson & Dunfee, 1999).

Urgency is also expected to positively influence prioritization for moral motivations. A call for immediate attention owing to criticality resonates with a principled internal normative system because strong ideals form the heart of this type of motivation (Barbuto & Scholl, 1998), and the opportunity to act in accordance with beliefs (Kelman, 1958) in a situation that others perceive to be critical increases an individual's salience. With respect to temporality, urgency is expected to increase prioritization for moral motivations because a strongly principled actor acts when a delay might cause harm. As Kelman (2006) notes, a morally motivated decision maker, who continually evaluates the moral outcomes of accepting influence, heeds urgent claims.

In contrast to the stakeholder salience framework (Mitchell et al., 1997), which predicts that legitimacy always enhances prioritization, we argue that the two types of legitimacy exert different effects on moral motivations. A morally motivated decision maker considers assessments outside his or her chosen value system irrelevant (Kelman, 2006). Accordingly, the only type of legitimacy that activates a moral motivation is the moral legitimacy associated with the decision maker's personal values (Kelman, 1958), as the situation is viewed solely through the lens of these internalized standards (Kelman, 2006). The sociotropic nature of moral legitimacy (Suchman, 1995) is consistent with this argument because a morally motivated decision maker focuses only on the extent to which accepting social influence in a particular case is the right thing to do (Kelman, 2006).

Based on the above considerations, we propose the following prediction:

P1a: For a morally motivated decision maker, greater perceived stakeholder attributes of normative power, powerlessness, urgency, or moral legitimacy increase the prioritization of a stakeholder's claims.

Utilitarian power, which is based on the perception of the ability to use material threats or incentives (Etzioni, 1965), is expected to exert considerably less influence on prioritization than normative power with respect to moral motivations. For a morally motivated decision maker, behaviour is guided by principles rather than by material rewards or punishments (Argandona, 1998; Donaldson & Dunfee, 1999; Evans & Freeman, 1993; Phillips, 1997; Wicks, Gilbert, & Freeman, 1994; Wempe, 2008). The moral thinking underlying an assessment based on the anticipation of a reward or punishment exhibits conventional reasoning, whereas a morally motivated decision maker exhibits post-conventional reasoning (Kelman, 2006). Moreover, as noted above, a morally motivated decision maker considers external legitimacy assessments based on pragmatic legitimacy or illegitimacy to be either marginal or irrelevant (Kelman, 2006). Consequently, we propose the following prediction:

P1b: For a morally motivated decision maker, perceived stakeholder attributes of utilitarian power, pragmatic legitimacy, or pragmatic illegitimacy only modestly influence the prioritization of a stakeholder's claims.

Finally, coercive power is expected to exert a negative influence on prioritization for a morally motivated decision maker because the threat or use of force to achieve a goal is strongly aversive (Etzioni, 1965), particularly for individuals seeking principled interactions (Kelman, 1958, 2006)—even if the stakeholder is a government that is socially empowered to employ coercion (Etzioni, 1965). Similarly, normative illegitimacy is expected to exert a negative effect because a morally motivated individual is receptive to social influence only when the influencing party is thought to uphold values that ensure that the decision maker's actions and beliefs reflect a personal system of values (Kelman, 1958). An assessment of normative illegitimacy involves not only the neutral evaluation that specific principles might not have been upheld but also the judgement that the stakeholder has violated the decision maker's moral principles (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008). The knowledge that the stakeholder engages in actions that reflect an explicit rejection of the decision maker's system of values would thus negatively influence the prioritization of the stakeholder's claims. Thus, we propose the following prediction:

P1c: For a morally motivated decision maker, greater perceived stakeholder attributes of coercive power or normative illegitimacy decrease the prioritization of a stakeholder's claims.

Relational motivations: growing and improving interpersonal relationships

Relational motivations are based on the need for identification through social relationships (Kelman, 1958, 2006). The motivation to accept social influence to form and maintain relationships is directly related to the perspective that business activity optimally involves building, managing, and improving interpersonal firm–stakeholder relationships (Freeman, 1984; Freeman & Gilbert, 1992). Many stakeholder management models (e.g., Burton & Dunn, 1996) propose more cooperative and caring types of business relationships than classical economic-based approaches. With such models, stakeholders are typically represented as concrete, real individuals and groups with relationships that are not merely based on moral or economic concerns (Burton & Dunn, 1996; McVea & Freeman, 2005; Sloan & Oliver, 2013). The identification of a relational motivation to accept social influence is a natural extension of these models.

An individual decision maker influenced by a stakeholder expects to establish or maintain a satisfying relationship with the particular stakeholder. Personal satisfaction from the relationship is based on either reciprocity or modelling (Kelman, 1958). The level of moral reasoning exhibited by this type of motivation is conventional, and a small set of moral principles selected by the firm decision maker thus applies, with perceived moral obligations to the influencer (i.e., the stakeholder) overriding other aspects of the decision maker's personal moral values (Kelman, 2006). For relational motivations, the relationship itself has value, and the decision maker feels the need to fulfil obligations to the stakeholder (Kelman, 2006) in order to ensure that the relationship grows stronger.

Of the three types of power, only normative power is expected to increase stakeholder prioritization for a relationally motivated decision maker. Normative power is exercised through actions that symbolize love, esteem, and relatedness (Etzioni, 1965), which are outcomes that produce personal satisfaction in this type of motivation (Kelman, 1958). Because a relationally motivated decision maker values the relationship in and of itself and because such a decision maker thus allows the stakeholder to put their interests first (Deckop, Mangel, & Cirka, 1999), a relationship based on a power asymmetry is not necessarily unattractive as long as the power is normative. Similarly, the perception that a stakeholder is powerless is also expected to increase stakeholder prioritization. A compassionate, relationship-minded decision maker is expected to identify and engage more with vulnerable stakeholders than others (Kanov et al., 2004).

For relational motivations, urgency due to criticality is influential because of the desire to establish or maintain a satisfying relationship with the other based on reliable enthusiasm (Kelman, 2006). For a decision maker enthusiastically seeking to establish or strengthen personal ties, the other party's perception that an issue is critical increases the prioritization of that issue. With respect to temporality, urgency is expected to exert a positive influence because an enthusiastic and reliable actor is motivated to seize an opportunity for social involvement when it appears (Kelman, 2006).

Pragmatic legitimacy is also expected to increase stakeholder prioritization for relational motivations because it offers access to the social cues (Suchman, 1995) sought by a decision maker who is actively engaged in establishing or improving a social relationship (Kelman, 1958, 2006). A relational actor who seeks more wide-ranging social connections (Colombetti & Torrance, 2009) and increased awareness of other social groups that currently or potentially have links to the firm must also view the stakeholder under consideration to be legitimate before allowing influence. However, as we argue below, once influence has been granted, loyalty to an existing relationship outweighs the pragmatic objections that might later emerge. Based on these considerations, we propose the following prediction:

P2a: For a relationally motivated decision maker, greater perceived stakeholder attributes of normative power, powerlessness, urgency, or pragmatic legitimacy increase the prioritization of a stakeholder's claims.

For a relationally motivated decision maker, moral legitimacy without pragmatic legitimacy is unlikely to significantly influence stockholder prioritization because moral legitimacy is sociotropic (Suchman, 1995), and a relationally motivated individual is not open to social influence if it is associated with a risk of broader alienation (Kelman, 1958). Although pragmatic legitimacy is expected to exert a positive influence, pragmatic illegitimacy is expected to only marginally influence the firm decision maker wishing to maintain the existing firm–stakeholder relationship if other parties have only recently viewed the stakeholder in a negative light, as the decision maker's reliable and enthusiastic stance supports doing whatever is necessary to support the relationship and resists adopting a negative view of the relationship based on outside opinions (Kelman, 2006). Although validation based on others' approval of the relationship is expected to positively influence a relationally motivated individual, external disapproval is not expected to sway the relationally motivated individual because of perceived immediate moral obligations to the stakeholder that override other moral values that might motivate re-evaluation (Kelman, 2006). Therefore, we propose the following prediction:

P2b: For a relationally motivated decision maker, perceived stakeholder attributes of moral legitimacy or pragmatic illegitimacy only marginally affect the prioritization of a stakeholder's claims.

Because coercive power is strongly aversive (Etzioni, 1965), it is expected to negatively influence stakeholder prioritization for a relationally motivated decision maker, who is particularly sensitive to social influence. Utilitarian power is also predicted to be aversive and to prevent normative commitments (Etzioni, 1965). A relationally motivated decision maker is open to social influence because of his or her interest in a relationship with stakeholders whose needs have been found to be worthwhile (Colombetti & Torrance, 2009) and because of his or her desire to establish or maintain satisfying relationships (Kelman, 1958). Although pragmatically useful relationships based on utilitarian power can be established, a relationally motivated decision maker seeks human relationships not for their usefulness in terms of utilitarian power but for their own sake (Kelman, 1958). A relationship based on utilitarian power rather than reciprocal social connections is expected to negatively influence stakeholder prioritization because this type of relationship is antithetical to the decision maker's desires.

Similarly, moral illegitimacy is antithetical to the desires of a relationally motivated decision maker. Because this type of motivation is based on the conventional level of moral reasoning in which the firm decision maker applies a restricted set of moral principles (Kelman, 2006), any perceived violation of this limited set of principles is expected to negatively affect stakeholder salience. Thus, we propose the following prediction:

P2c: For a relationally motivated decision maker, greater perceived stakeholder attributes of coercive power, utilitarian power, or moral illegitimacy decrease the prioritization of a stakeholder's claims.

Instrumental motivations: maximizing gains and minimizing losses

Instrumental motivations are based on the desire to obtain a specific reward or to avoid a specific punishment that is under the control of another (Kelman, 1958). The motivation to accept social influence for instrumental reasons is conceptually related to the instrumental approach in stakeholder research, which examines relationships between the practices of stakeholder management and the achievement of corporate performance-related goals (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). The instrumental approach has been described as an attempt to integrate ethical and economic approaches to strategy (Jones, 1995) and has substantially influenced the field of strategic management by broadening the level of discourse and by finding empirical support (Berman, Wicks, Kotha, & Jones, 1999) for managerial practice. Not surprisingly, the most influential stakeholder theory in strategic research is the instrumental approach, which regards stakeholders as the means to accomplish strategic objectives (Parmar et al., 2010). An instrumentally motivated individual seeks to maximize gains and minimize losses, and managers might thus be motivated to accept social influence based on a calculative assessment (Cropanzano et al., 2001).

For instrumental motivations, an individual who is influenced by a stakeholder expects to obtain a reward or avoid a punishment by following the rules established by the relationship. This type of motivation exhibits the pre-conventional level of moral reasoning because moral principles are irrelevant to an instrumentally motivated decision maker (Kelman, 2006). The firm decision maker offers minimal compliance to maintain the firm–stakeholder relationship and invests only what is necessary to protect the decision maker's interests in the relationship (Kelman, 2006). For the firm decision maker, the responsibility to the stakeholder in this type of relationship is limited to the estimated cost of sanctions for non-performance (Kelman, 2006).

With regard to instrumental motivations, our framework makes the same predictions as the stakeholder salience framework (Mitchell et al., 1997). For an instrumentally motivated decision maker who is influenced by perceived benefits and harms, coercive power increases stakeholder prioritization. Coercive power must be socially licensed (Etzioni, 1965); for instrumental motivations, the aversive effect of coercive power is reduced because it is subordinate to the ultimate outcome. Both normative and utilitarian power also increase stakeholder prioritization because the decision maker is motivated to accept social influence in exchange for external rewards, whether material or symbolic in nature (Kelman, 1958).

For an instrumentally motivated decision maker, urgency is also expected to increase stakeholder prioritization. Mitchell et al. (1997) argue that the attention-getting capacity of an urgent claim in the stakeholder–manager relationship is the same regardless of whether the focus is loss prevention, goal pursuit, or selection pressures. Our model is consistent with the stakeholder salience framework because we expect individuals who are motivated by instrumental concerns to be more likely to respond to a stakeholder claim if it reflects a broader social consensus. However, in contrast to the stakeholder salience framework (Mitchell et al., 1997), which does not distinguish among the effects of the different types of legitimacy, we argue that because only pragmatic legitimacy is based on self-interest (Suchman, 1995), only pragmatic legitimacy increases stakeholder prioritization for an instrumentally motivated decision maker. Based on the above considerations, we propose the following prediction:

> *P3a: For an instrumentally motivated decision maker, greater perceived stakeholder attributes of coercive power, utilitarian power, normative power, urgency, or pragmatic legitimacy increase the prioritization of a stakeholder's claims.*

Powerlessness does not influence stakeholder prioritization with instrumental motivations because only managers' non-instrumental values or access to powerful proxies (Mitchell et al., 1997) support receptivity to the social influence of vulnerable stakeholders. Furthermore, because instrumental motivations exhibit the pre-conventional level of moral reasoning, moral principles are irrelevant to this type of motivation, for which the focus is only the relative benefit or harm (Kelman, 2006). Consequently, the issue of moral legitimacy or illegitimacy does not contribute to the decision-making process. Based on these considerations, we propose the following prediction:

> *P3b: For an instrumentally motivated decision maker, perceived stakeholder attributes of powerlessness, moral legitimacy, or moral illegitimacy only marginally affect the prioritization of the stakeholder's claims.*

Pragmatic illegitimacy is based on negative public opinion of a particular group (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008) which produces a significant social cost for individuals who engage with a

Table 2. Summary of predictions.

Attribute	Moral motivation	Relational motivation	Instrumental motivation
Coercive power	Decreases prioritization	Decreases prioritization	Increases prioritization
Utilitarian power	Minimal effect	Decreases prioritization	Increases prioritization
Normative power	Increases prioritization	Increases prioritization	Increases prioritization
Powerless	Increases prioritization	Increases prioritization	Minimal effect
Urgency	Increases prioritization	Increases prioritization	Increases prioritization
Pragmatic legitimacy	Minimal effect	Increases prioritization	Increases prioritization
Moral legitimacy	Increases prioritization	Minimal effect	Minimal effect
Pragmatic illegitimacy	Minimal effect	Minimal effect	Decreases prioritization
Moral illegitimacy	Decreases prioritization	Decreases prioritization	Minimal effect

stakeholder that society considers illegitimate. For the firm decision maker, responsibility to the stakeholder in this type of relationship is limited to the estimated cost of sanctions for non-performance (Kelman, 2006). An instrumentally motivated decision maker is expected to exhibit minimal compliance throughout the relationship and to terminate the relationship if the sanctions imposed by society for maintaining the relationship outweigh the stakeholder sanctions for non-performance (Kelman, 2006). We thus propose the following prediction:

> *P3c: For an instrumentally motivated decision maker, greater perceived pragmatic illegitimacy decreases the prioritization of a stakeholder's claims.*

Increasing the number of different types of motivation exhibited by decision makers produces new predictions that are summarized in Table 2 and presented in Figure 2.

From a Linear to a Dialectical Model

Until now, for the sake of clarity, we have explored in a linear fashion the relationship between a stakeholder's attitude and efforts to influence the attitude of an individual decision maker towards prioritizing their claims. We have shown that the success of the efforts to influence prioritization are moderated by the attributes of the stakeholder, which are in turn dependent on the motivation of the decision maker. Social influence, however, is not the linear process represented in Figure 2. Change in attitude is, in fact, a dynamic process. Attitudes are constantly shifting and changing as decision makers interact with the attitude object and with their social environment. As such, social influence is in fact a dialectical process. Attitudes flow from social interaction and evolve over the course of these interactions, while feeding into the interaction and guiding the process (Kelman, 1980).

As we have explained throughout our paper, decision makers are also stakeholders bearing attributes, and stakeholders need to also be viewed as decision makers with motivations. So the logic captured in the flow of Figure 2 holds equally true in the reverse direction: just as the attitude of the decision maker will change (or not) based on the influence efforts of the stakeholder, her perceived attributes and the decision maker's dominant motivational frame, the attitude of the stakeholder will change (or not) based on the information presented by the so-called decision maker in the form of perceived attributes and interpreted in light of the stakeholder's dominant motivational frame.

This ongoing dialectical process is what we capture in Figure 3. The left-hand side of the model is simply a replication of the linear process described in Figure 2, and the arrow on the far right of Figure 3 represent the reverse direction we explained above.

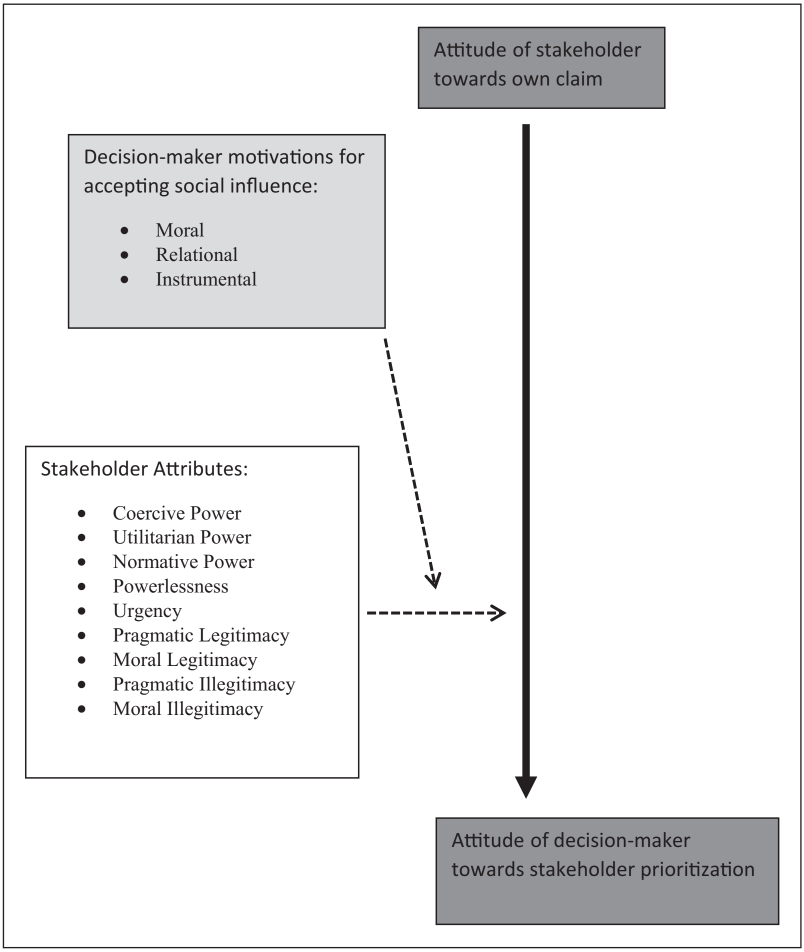

Figure 2. Process of Influencing Stakeholder Prioritization: Individual-Level Linear Model.

Once the individual decision maker has chosen to either change her attitude towards stakeholder prioritization or not, the social interaction between the decision maker and stakeholder does not necessarily end. The flow of information continues, as do the interactions in light of this new (or unchanged) attitude. As a result, the stakeholder's attitude towards continuing to pursue this particular claim may shift, depending on the stakeholder's motivation to be influenced by the decision maker and the decision maker's attributes.

The model we present here captures the dialectical process of stakeholder influence on an individual decision maker or an organization where there is only one decison maker, such as in a closely held family firm. But a further extension of our model is required if we are to capture the reality of most contemporary organizations, where there are multiple decision makers involved in prioritizing stakeholder claims.

Extending the Model to Multiple Decision Makers

Extending the model to multiple decision makers at this point is actually fairly straightforward. The same underlying rationale that informed our examination of stakeholder efforts to influence a

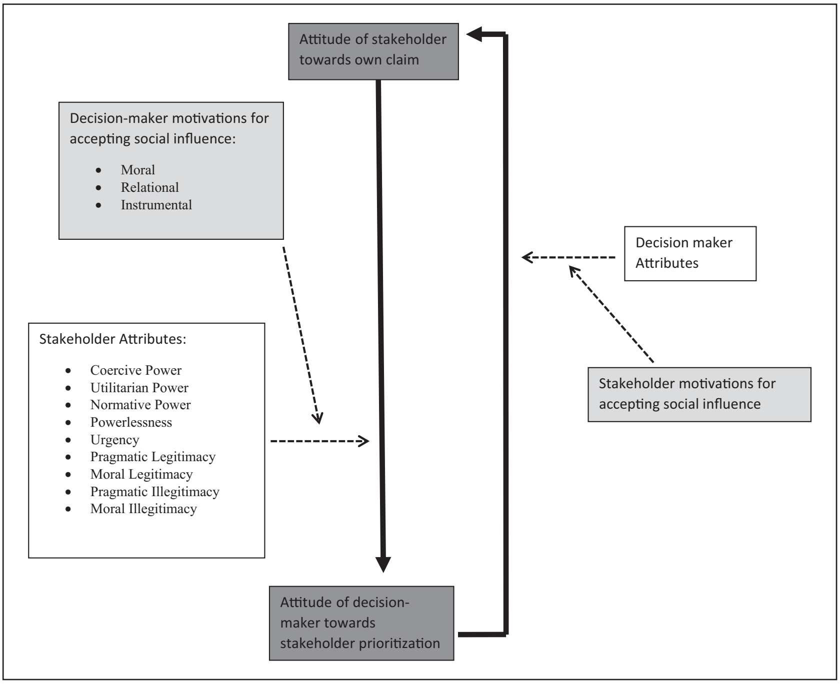

Figure 3. Process of Influencing Stakeholder Prioritization: Individual-Level Dialectical Model.

firm with a single decision maker could be extended to the case of multiple decision makers, within or outside the firm. Kelman (1980) explains that attitude change is almost always rooted in the process of communication within a group. In the course of this process, individuals stimulate each other, reinforce each other, test their views and compare themselves with others. As a result of this process new attitudes arise. Drawing on this view, we extend our model to delineate a process in which decision makers try to influence each other and change the individual attitudes towards the stakeholder in question that will ultimately lead to a change in the firm-level attitude towards the prioritization of that stakeholder's claims.

As we have noted repeatedly, every decision maker is an individual with attributes who might be motivated to accept the influence attempts of other decision makers. In the previous model (Figure 3), the stakeholder sought to influence an organization in order to prioritize their claims via a single decision maker. Now, we recognize that these efforts to influence will need to be directed towards the multiple decision makers of a target firm. To keep the model manageable, with no loss of generalizability, we will describe the extension of our framework using two decision makers.

Each decision maker will form a unique attitude towards stakeholder prioritization in light of the latter's influence efforts. We can view the emergence, thus far, of two diadic relationships: one between the stakeholder and decision maker A, another between the stakeholder and decision maker B. It is worth noting that each of these two dyadics are simply a replication of the dyad depicted in Figure 3. These two relevant decision makers now form a third diadic process as the internal players proceed to interact with each other and attempt to negotiate social influence, relying on their own attributes and motivations. Eventually, through this dialectical process, they reach a firm-level prioritization attitude that forms the newly crafted consensus that in return will effect (or not) the attitude of the stakeholder, based on the firm's attributes and the stakeholder's dominant motivation. This process is illustrated in Figure 4.

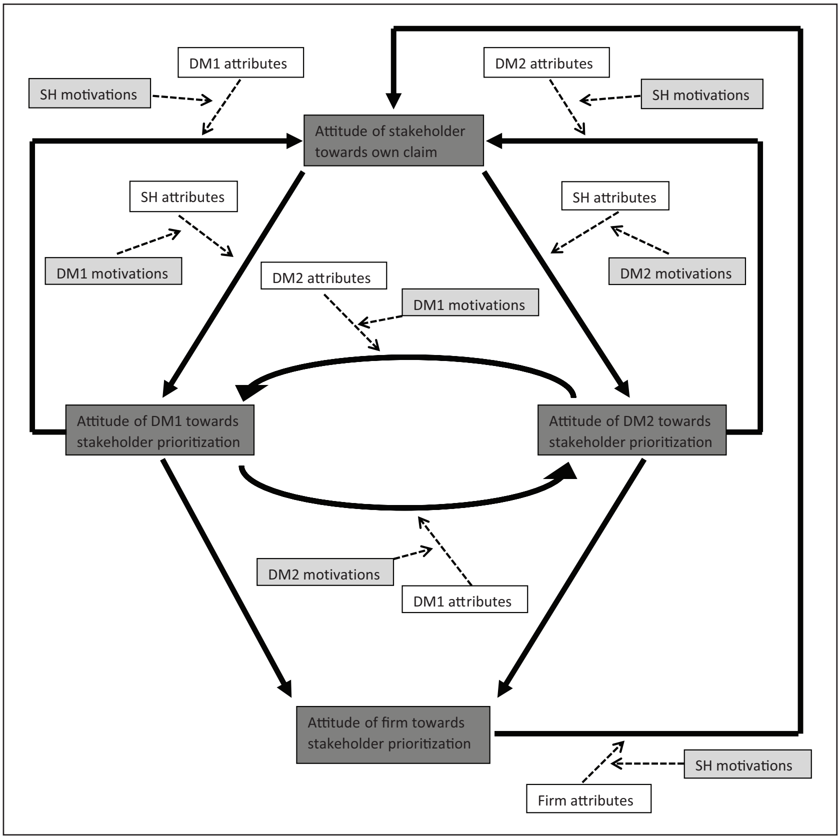

Figure 4. Process of Influencing Stakeholder Prioritization: Firm-Level Dialectical Model.

While at first glance our final model may appear complex, the underlying logic is the same as that discussed throughout this paper. Once again, the starting point is the attitude of a stakeholder towards their own claim and the subsequent efforts to change, the attitudes of no longer one, but two relevant decision makers. As before, this is moderated by the stakeholder's attributes whose effects on influence efforts in turn are moderated by the distinct motivations of each of the two individual decision makers, ultimately leading now to two different individual attitudes towards prioritization, and the start of yet another process of negotiation and influence.

At some point, as Kelman (1980) predicts, what will emerge from these continuous interactions is a group-level consensus that we label the attitude of the firm towards stakeholder prioritization. Kelman (1980) accounts for both group-level and individual-level attitudes. This group-level attitude is a disposition that acquires a large part of its meaning from its shared character within a collectivity, and can be understood as an aggregate attitude of the organizational system (Kelman, 1980). In our case, this attitude emerges from the interactions between the two organizational decision makers, whose individual attitudes emerge from a negotiated process between each decision maker and the stakeholder seeking influence.

Kelman (1980) further explains that within a collectivity, certain attitudes are closely linked to group goals or group identity with little tolerance for deviation, while others are seen as issues for debate within the collectivity and legitimate expressions of differing subgroup interests. We believe the attitude towards stakeholder prioritization falls into the latter category.

Now, this group-level attitude, as the single decision maker's, also feeds back to the stakeholder, and will also inform subsequent interactions of the stakeholder with the individual members of the firm, now moderated by firm attributes, whose perception are contingent on the motivations of the stakeholder. It is worth noting that while our model delineates the process in a firm with two decision makers, it could easily be extended to account for any number of decision makers.

Discussion and Conclusion

Our examination of stakeholder attributes and decision-maker motivations contributes to the stakeholder literature in a number of ways. First, accounting for the entire range of motivations contributing to decision makers' thought processes is essential to accurately describe the phenomena investigated by stakeholder researchers. Identifying the type of motivation that enables a decision maker to consider or reconsider a stakeholder's claim is critical because stakeholders seek to influence firms by influencing firm decision makers (Frooman, 1999; Mitchell et al., 1997; Savage et al., 1991; Starik, 1994).

Second, we demonstrate the need for the field to refocus attention from stakeholder salience to stakeholder prioritization. Although stakeholder salience was originally synonymous with stakeholder prioritization (Mitchell et al., 1997), the colloquial usage has shifted and salience is now understood to mean conspicuousness. Furthermore, recent research has focused more on the identification of salience rather than the extent to which salience results in prioritization (Laplume et al., 2008). Our paper addresses the latter issue and may thus motivate future empirical research on stakeholder prioritization.

Third, research on stakeholder salience has focused exclusively on decision makers within firms; however, stakeholder-related decisions often result from group interactions, and relevant decision makers may be external to a firm. Our model of stakeholder prioritization incorporates both internal and external organizational actors who actively contribute to the process of deciding which stakeholder claims are considered and prioritized by an organization.

Fourth, because decision makers do not make prioritization decisions in isolation, each decision maker is also simultaneously both a stakeholder with attributes that are relevant to other relevant decision makers and an individual who is motivated to accept or reject influence attempts. Consequently, our approach provides a more robust definition of stakeholders that includes decision makers as well as other claimants and influencers and a more robust definition of decision makers that identifies them as stakeholders and no longer constrains them within the classic boundaries of the firm.

Fifth, we provide a detailed explanation of how specific stakeholder attributes interact with different types of motivations to affect prioritization outcomes. Although stakeholder attributes have been assumed to differentially affect individual managers' judgements of salience owing to differences in individual perceptions and motivations (Mitchell et al., 1997), our model is the first to systematically explore the interaction between stakeholder attributes and decision-maker motivations.

While we focus specifically on the question of stakeholder prioritization and attitude shifts, our theoretical model might prove useful for other management disciplines, such as CSR. Parmar et al. (2010) note that various concepts are subsumed under the category of CSR, such as corporate social performance, responsiveness, citizenship, governance, accountability, social entrepreneurship, and sustainability, and each of these concepts acknowledges that a firm's obligations extend beyond financial considerations. Our framework of stakeholder prioritization might enable CSR scholars to determine the role played by decision makers and influencers in prioritizing a firm's social obligations.

Furthermore, our theory may be applicable to researchers interested in the politics of organizations (Becker-Ritterspach & Dörrenbächer 2011; Dörrenbächer & Geppert. 2014; Morsing & Schultz, 2006) as this stream of research privileges power differentials, and we demonstrate how different types of power have different impacts depending on motivation, and on the fact that other decision maker attributes may be equally, or more important.

We noted that the stakeholder culture model (Jones et al., 2007) might offer an antecedent to our framework of motivation. This offers some interesting opportunities for future research. Future research should explore the interplay between the three motivational frames we identify and the development of a stakeholder culture or vice versa. Further, the model of stakeholder culture is static. Each typology of stakeholder culture is assumed to always remain the same. Once identified as such, a firm with an altruistic culture will remain altruistic in all ethical situations, barring a radical change that fundamentally alters the corporate culture. In our framework, we argue that the important attributes are contingent on the situation, and thus our model is more dynamic. Exploring the role of social influence, attitude change, and motivation in changing a stakeholder culture could be very valuable.

Although recent research has identified a prescriptive danger on long-term performance in prioritizing urgent claims (Vilanova, 2007), leading some to conclude that urgency should be dropped as an attribute worthy of consideration, we believe that retaining urgency in our model is important because the predicted danger is contingent on the motivational frame of the decision maker. While Vilanova (2007) and others presume an instrumental motivation, the long-term impacts would be different under moral or relational motivations.

Our framework has focused on the motivations of the firm's individual decision makers in reaching a firm-level stakeholder prioritization decision. However, we should note that the decision makers' motivations in prioritizing stakeholder relationships are not necessarily always aligned with the best interests of the firm's motivation needs. Indeed, in their motivations some decision makers act for their self-interests and not for the company's interests. Decision makers' opportunism can actually result in a more stakeholder-positive positioning. For example, Surroca and Tribo (2008) argue that stakeholders and incumbent managers will be natural allies when there are efficient internal corporate governance mechanisms capable of preventing managerial entrenchment. However, we believe that the dialectical nature of our framework and the fact that attitudes are always shifting through continued interaction, plays an important role in bringing conflicting motivations of individual managers into better alignment with the attitude of the firm.

Stakeholder research still struggles to provide a robust definition of the concept of "value" (Parmar et al., 2010). Our model reveals that the concept of stakeholder value is contingent on the decision maker's motivational frame. The concept of "value" for a decision maker motivated by a desire to maintain personal relationships greatly differs from the concept of "value" for managers motivated by a desire to minimize financial losses. We urge future researchers to extend our research to further our understanding of this important field.

Recent research in the normative stream of stakeholder theory has argued that certain classes of stakeholders have a moral obligation to reciprocate in the loyalty, responsibility, fairness, and ethical treatment a firm offers them (Fassin, 2012). While this notion of reciprocity is limited to a number of genuine, fair, and loyal stakeholders with a legitimate stake labelled as "stakeowners" (Fassin, 2012), it is very much in line with our argument that the classic unidirectional line of analysis between a stakeholder with a claim and a decision maker in a firm needs to be reconsidered as stakeholders are themselves decision makers.

Our model captures the dialectical nature of stakeholder prioritization, the myriad of factors behind influence and the numerous players whose attributes, motivations, and attitudes matter. We hope future researchers continue investigating this topic and unearth further complexities to aid both scholars and practitioners in understanding the critical relationships that reside at the heart of the activities that make up the contemporary business enterprise.

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