From Inconsistency to Hypocrisy:

When Does "Saying One Thing But Doing Another" Invite Condemnation?

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Abstract

It is not always possible for leaders, teams, and organizations to practice what they preach. Misalignment between words and deeds can invite harsh interpersonal consequences, such as distrust and moral condemnation, which have negative knock-on effects throughout organizations. Yet the interpersonal consequences of such misalignment are not always severe, and are sometimes even positive. This paper presents a new model of when and why audiences respond negatively to those who "say one thing but do another." We propose that audiences react negatively if they (a) perceive a high degree of misalignment (i.e., perceive low "behavioral integrity"), and (b) interpret such misalignment as a claim to an undeserved moral benefit (i.e., interpret it as hypocrisy). Our model integrates disparate research findings about factors that influence how audiences react to misalignment, and it clarifies conceptual confusion surrounding word-deed misalignment, behavioral integrity, and hypocrisy. We discuss how our model can inform unanswered questions, such as why people fail to practice what they preach despite the risk of negative consequences. Finally, we consider practical implications for leaders, proposing that anticipating and managing the consequences of misalignment will be more effective than trying to avoid it altogether.

KEYWORDS: inconsistency, misalignment, behavioral integrity, hypocrisy, morality, ethics, social cognition

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In 2013, former Panera Bread CEO Ron Shaich spent a week living off $4.50 day – the average budget for people living on food stamps – to raise awareness about the plight of low-income families (Lutz, 2013; Shaich, 2013). A public champion of workers' rights, Shaich has also spoken out against the unhealthiness of fast-food chains. Yet the decisions he has made as CEO have not always aligned with his words. In 2015, he replaced many Panera workers with computerized cashiers (Bryan, 2015), and his restaurants offer dishes like macaroni and cheese that contain more calories than a Big Mac ("Panera misses the mark on social activism," 2017). What consequences can Shaich expect his behavior to have for his reputation and his organization? How inconsistent and hypocritical will his employees, customers, and investors perceive his behavior as being? And what can he do to mitigate any negative fallout?

These questions are important because the kind of inconsistency that Shaich displayed is common in organizations (Culbert, 2008; Simons, 2002). A leader may claim to value diversity without actually enacting pro-diversity policies (see Thomas, 1990), managers may espouse the importance of work-life balance but stay late at the office themselves (Paustian-Underdahl & Halbesleben, 2014), or an employee may endorse safety regulations despite violating them (Leroy et al., 2012). In fact, such misalignments between words and deeds may be an inevitable part of organizational life. Managers may have conflicting commitments to multiple stakeholders, face trade-offs between values they have espoused, encounter bureaucratic obstacles to implementing stated ideals, or seek to inspire ethical behavior despite their own past transgressions (Brunsson, 1989; Effron & Miller, 2015; Simons, 1999, 2002). Employees may feel pressure to give lip service to ideals they do not uphold outside of work, or struggle to

balance multiple work identities across contexts (Caza, Moss, & Vough, in press). Inside and outside the workplace, people promise to meet deadlines that are too optimistic, forget verbal commitments, and experience lapses of willpower that lead them to violate their stated values (Buehler, Griffin, & Ross, 1994; Graham, Meindl, Koleva, Iyer, & Johnson, 2015; Mead, Baumeister, Gino, Schweitzer, & Ariely, 2009; Simons, 2008).

The present paper examines when and why "saying one thing but doing another" invites negative interpersonal reactions. We begin with a brief review of research on how people react to others' misaligned words and deeds, and why these reactions matter for individuals, teams, and organizations. Then we highlight that reactions to such misalignment are not always negative – and are sometimes even positive. To resolve the puzzle of when people do versus do not react negatively to misalignment, we introduce a new model that considers how people perceive and interpret misalignment between words and deeds. In doing so, we resolve conceptual confusion surrounding three constructs that the literature often conflates: word-deed misalignment, behavioral integrity, and hypocrisy. Along the way, we do a deep dive into "what counts" as hypocrisy in laypeople's minds. Our new conceptualization of hypocrisy reconciles competing scholarly definitions and integrates diverse research findings.

Next, we use the model to organize and synthesize research on the situational factors that moderate interpersonal reactions to misaligned words and deeds. Examining these factors sheds light on the psychological processes that shape how people perceive, interpret, and respond to misalignment. Finally, we discuss how our model can inform unanswered questions, such as why people fail to practice what they preach despite the risk of negative consequences, we suggest future research directions, and we consider practical implications for how leaders acting in good faith can avoid charges of hypocrisy. Rather than the conventional advice to practitioners to

simply minimize misalignment, we offer suggestions on managing the consequences of misalignment when it inevitably occurs.

1. Interpersonal Consequences of Word-Deed Misalignment

1.1. Negative Interpersonal Consequences

"Saying one thing but doing another" can have a variety of negative interpersonal consequences. The same transgression can spark harsher moral condemnation and punitive sentiment when it is inconsistent with values the transgressor has previously endorsed than when it is not (e.g., Effron, Jackman, Markus, Muramoto, & Muluk, 2018; Laurent, Clark, Walker, & Wiseman, 2013; Powell & Smith, 2012) – an *inconsistency penalty* in judgments of wrongdoing (Effron, Lucas, & O'Connor, 2015). Even minor inconsistencies between endorsed values and actions can damage job-seekers' prospects (Effron et al., 2015). Leaders may have more difficulty repairing their reputation following a transgression that they previously preached against than one they did not (Bhatti, Hansen, & Olsen, 2013; Grover & Hasel, 2015). Advising employees to "do as I say, not as I've done" can undermine a manager's legitimacy (Effron & Miller, 2015). Finally, a meta-analysis showed that employees feel dissatisfied with and struggle to trust managers they perceive as saying one thing but doing another (i.e., managers low in *behavioral integrity*; Simons, Leroy, Collewaert, & Masschelein, 2014). In short, enacting word-deed misalignment can invite severe interpersonal reactions.

These interpersonal reactions, in turn, can harm the organizations in which they occur. When employees perceive a manager as constantly saying and doing different things, they express weaker commitment to the organization, are absent more frequently, turnover at higher rates, are less likely to go above and beyond their role requirements with citizenship behavior, become disenchanted with change initiatives, perform more poorly, and even commit deviance

(Cha & Edmondson, 2006; Davis & Rothstein, 2006; Dineen, Lewicki, & Tomlinson, 2006; Greenbaum, Mawritz, & Piccolo, 2015; Kannan-Narasimhan & Lawrence, 2012; Palanski & Yammarino, 2011; Peterson, 2004; Prottas, 2008; Simons et al., 2014; Vogelgesang, Leroy, & Avolio, 2013). A key reason is that employees' distrust of a manager whose words and deeds are misaligned undermines their motivation to help the manager and contribute to the organization (Simons, 2002; Simons et al., 2014). In this way, a negative interpersonal reaction to managers who fail to practice what they preach – distrust – can spiral into a larger organizational problem.

Reactions to a team or organization whose actions are misaligned with its espoused values often resemble reactions to individuals who fail to practice what they preach – perhaps because people treat work teams and organizations as "social actors" that have many of the same cognitive capacities as individuals (Denson, Lickel, Curtis, Stenstrom, & Ames, 2006; Gioia, 1986; King, Felin, & Whetten, 2010; Rai & Diermeier, 2015; Tsang, 1997). Both internal and external stakeholders react negatively to misalignment. Regarding internal stakeholders, team failures to enact stated values can undermine members' trust, which in turn reduces team performance (Palanski, Kahai, & Yammarino, 2011). Similarly, employees may reduce their productivity in response to a mismatch between an organization's espoused values and actual behavior (Cording, Harrison, Hoskisson, & Jonsen, 2014). Regarding external stakeholders, firms who display such a mismatch risk damaging their reputation (Lyon & Montgomery, 2013; Wagner, Lutz, & Weitz, 2009). For example, among firms who committed a corporate governance violation (specifically, backdating stock options), those who previously implemented corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives related to corporate governance saw a larger drop in their stock price than those who previously had CSR initiatives unrelated to corporate governance (Janney & Gove, 2011). Stock performance can also suffer when a firm takes

strategic actions that are misaligned with a strategy it previously communicated (Mavis et al., in press). And consumers express dissatisfaction with companies who appear to commit to implementing CSR more than they actually implement it (Ioannou, Kassinis, & Papagiannakis, 2018). Anticipating negative stakeholder reactions to inconsistency, organizations may strategically conceal positive information about themselves, such as an environmental certification, that is directly misaligned with negative corporate actions, such as those that cause environmental damage (Carlos & Lewis, 2017).

Thus, audiences tend to have negative interpersonal reactions to misalignment between an actor's words and deeds – whether the actor is an individual, a team, or an organization – and these reactions can cause damage at all organizational levels.

1.2. Positive Interpersonal Consequences

However, word-deed misalignment does not always have negative interpersonal consequences. One reason is that saying one thing but doing another can be an effective impression-management strategy (Lönnqvist, Rilke, & Walkowitz, 2015). An employee might find that agreeing to follow a micro-manager's instructions, and then not actually following them, is more politic than arguing with the manager about why the instructions will not work. More cynically, successful politicians are adept at satisfying a constituency with words despite actually acting against its best interests (Edelman, 1964). Similarly, organizations can appear to address the demands of external stakeholders with "talk" that does not translate into action (Brunsson, 1989; Pfeffer, 1981) or with policies that are formally adopted but never implemented (Boxenbaum & Jonsson, 2017; Bromley & Powell, 2012; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Westphal & Zajac, 1994). For example, an organization might quiet social critics by appointing a diversity officer without doing anything substantive to diversify its workforce. In one study,

shareholders rewarded companies that said they would adopt corporate governance reforms, regardless of whether the companies actually adopted them (Westphal & Zajac, 1998). An audience may react positively to empty words or symbolic gestures when it is unaware they are misaligned with actual behavior (Pfeffer, 1981).

Misalignment between words and deeds may have positive consequences, however, even when audiences are aware of the misalignment. For example, a history of promoting a value can protect organization members from moral condemnation after appearing to transgress the exact same value (Effron & Monin, 2010) – a *moral licensing effect* (Monin & Miller, 2001). Promoting a value or otherwise doing good can secure people's moral status in their own and others' eyes – providing "moral credentials" and thus allowing them to act in morally questionable ways without damaging their reputation (see Blanken, van de Ven, & Zeelenberg, 2015; Effron, 2016; Effron & Conway, 2015; Merritt, Effron, & Monin, 2010).

Another positive consequence is that failing to practice a value can sometimes make preaching it more effective. For example, overweight individuals prefer to receive health advice from doctors who rarely exercise than from doctors who exercise frequently (Howe & Monin, 2017). One reason is that people who have not always lived up to their ideals may be seen as having insights into why those ideals are important and difficult to uphold (Effron & Miller, 2015). Another reason is that people who do not always live up to their values may seem more relatable and less judgmental (Howe & Monin, 2017). Indeed, people who fail to stand up for an important value will tend to derogate an individual who has stood up, because they imagine that she looks down on them (Monin, Sawyer, & Marquez, 2008; O'Connor & Monin, 2016).

Finally, leaders can inspire employees by espousing a value, even if the leaders cannot yet enact it. Depicting an inspiring future that hasn't materialized yet is the very essence of

visionary leadership (Bass, 1999; Burns, 1978). In one study, employee performance improved when leaders emphasized the value of diversity even though the organization was not particularly diverse – apparently because employees interpreted the value as an aspiration (Nishii, Leroy, & Simons, 2014).

To summarize, previous work suggests that audiences often react to "saying one thing but doing another" with distrust and moral condemnation. These negative interpersonal reactions in turn have undesirable consequences for individuals, teams, and organizations. Yet audiences do not always react negatively to word-deed misalignment, and sometimes react positively. Our model, described next, seeks to explain when and why the negative reactions occur.

2. Theoretical Model

We propose that when an audience witnesses an actor saying one thing but doing another, the audience asks itself two sets of questions, whether implicitly or explicitly. First, *are the words and deeds misaligned (and if so, how much)?* – and second, *why are the words and deeds misaligned?* The first question is about the extent to which inconsistency is *perceived* and the second is about how it is *interpreted*. Whereas perception refers to the detection of a stimulus (Colman, 2015), interpretation refers to the meaning imputed to the stimulus once detected. The two questions naturally arise in order; if the audience concludes that the words and deeds are not actually misaligned, then they will not go on to explain why misalignment occurred.

As Figure 1 illustrates, our model predicts that misalignment between an actor's words and deeds is most likely to invite negative interpersonal reactions (e.g., distrust and moral condemnation) when (a) in response to the first question, an audience perceives a high degree of misalignment (i.e., a low degree of *behavioral integrity* – a term that is used in the literature and that we explain later), and (b) in answer to the second question, the audience interprets the
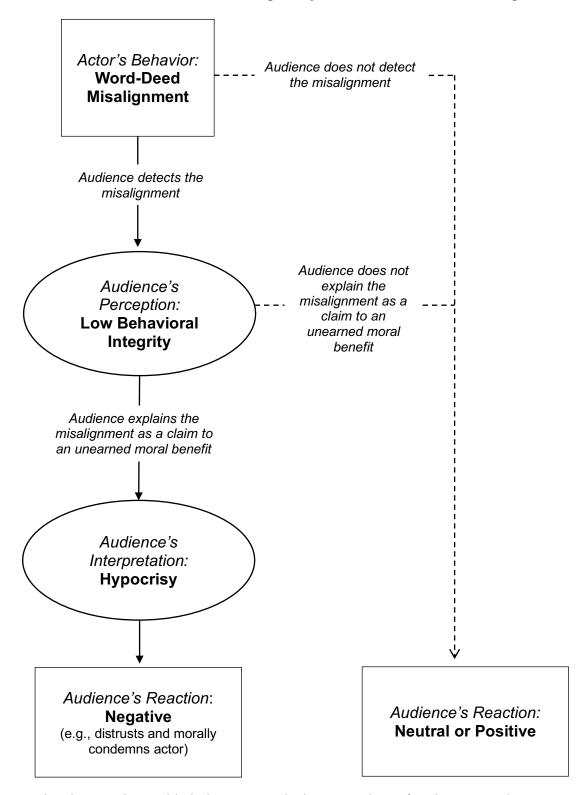
misalignment as hypocrisy. The negative interpersonal reactions, in turn, lead to the undesirable

organizational consequences reviewed above (e.g., low motivation and poor performance; not

shown in the figure). In other words, we posit that perceptions of inconsistency, followed by

interpretations of these perceptions, mediate the effect of actual inconsistency on an audience's

negative reactions. In this way, our model draws on classic theories of social cognition in which

the effect of a stimulus on behavior depends on whether and how the stimulus is perceived as

well as the meaning ascribed to it (see Bodenhausen & Hugenberg, 2009).

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

Figure 1

Theoretical Model: When Do Audiences React Negatively to Others' Word-Deed Misalignment?

Note. Rectangles denote observable behaviors; ovals denote audience's subjective judgments.

If an actor says one thing and does another, but the audience does not perceive a high degree of misalignment, or the audience perceives it but does not interpret it as hypocrisy, then the audience will tend not to react negatively. Whether the audience reacts neutrally or positively will depend on additional mechanisms, reviewed above, that are only relevant to specific situations. For example, when an audience infers no hypocrisy: if the actor has transgressed, then misalignment should provide a moral license (Effron & Monin, 2010); if the actor is offering advice, then misalignment should make her seem more relatable, as in the earlier example of the obese individuals preferring advice from less physically-active doctors (Howe & Monin, 2017); if the actor is describing a vision for the future, then misalignment could inspire them to achieve the vision (Nishii et al., 2014). A thorough examination of these mechanisms and the specific situations in which they operate is beyond the scope of our review. Importantly, though, our model posits that when an audience interprets misalignment as hypocrisy, this interpretation will suppress any mechanism that would otherwise promote positive interpersonal reactions to misalignment. For example, leaders who promote virtuous causes are typically given leeway to transgress, unless they are judged to be hypocritical. Thus, hypocrisy undermines moral license (Effron & Monin, 2010).

Our model offers several contributions. Some previous theorizing, like ours, considers psychological mediators of word-deed misalignment's effects (Cha & Edmondson, 2006; Wagner et al., 2009). For example, Simons (2002) distinguishes between *actual* and *perceived* misalignment. We go beyond this theorizing by distinguishing between two psychological mediators—not only how much misalignment people perceive, but also how they *interpret* (explain) any misalignment they perceive. Our model also considers the factors that shape these perceptions and interpretations. In doing so, we bring together empirical findings from

previously disconnected literatures in organizational behavior (research on behavioral integrity; e.g., Simons, 2008) and social psychology (research on hypocrisy; e.g., Graham et al., 2015).

Our model also clears away conceptual confusion among word-deed misalignment, low behavioral integrity, and hypocrisy – related terms that the literature often uses interchangeably (e.g., Greenbaum et al., 2015; Simons, Friedman, Liu, & McLean Parks, 2007). Disentangling these constructs, in our view, is critical to understanding when and why misalignment invites negative interpersonal reactions. In the next section we therefore define and discuss the distinctions between these constructs, with a particular focus on the thorny issue of what counts, to lay people, as hypocrisy (Alicke, Gordon, & Rose, 2013). A key issue we will address is where exactly morality features. Although some have argued that word-deed alignment and/or integrity are inherently moral (Becker, 1998; Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995), our model suggests the question of morality only comes into play when people consider whether misalignment represents hypocrisy.

3. Disentangling Key Constructs

3.1. Word-Deed Misalignment

Word-deed misalignment ("misalignment" for short) occurs when a person says and does different things (Simons, 2002). It is an objective description of behavior rather than a subjective perception. Misalignment itself is neither good nor bad, and the term conveys no information about a person's motives or character. The relationship between words and deeds falls on a continuum of misalignment. For example, Ron Shaich's decision to lay off cashiers and automate their job is at least somewhat misaligned with his espoused passion for workers' rights. He would have displayed even more misalignment if he had laid off cashiers despite promising

never to do so. Our model aims to explain when an actor's actual word-deed misalignment elicits negative reactions from observers.

3.2. Behavioral Integrity

Behavioral integrity (BI) refers to the degree of alignment people *perceive* between words and deeds (Simons, 1999, 2002, 2008). To view someone as low in BI simply means to perceive him or her as saying and doing different things. When someone enacts word-deed misalignment, not everyone will notice, recognize it as such, or agree on the magnitude of inconsistency. For example, some Panera customers who encounter automated cashiers may not know that Shaich has publicly championed workers' rights; others may know, but never consider the inconsistency with replacing human cashiers; and still others may recognize some inconsistency between Shaich's words deeds, but perceive its magnitude as small given that Shaich never explicitly denounced automation.

BI was originally conceptualized as a *trait* that people ascribe to another person based on his or her chronic behavioral patterns. For example, a scale item asks employees whether their "manager conducts himself/herself by the same values he/she talks about" (Simons et al., 2007). More recent work argues that BI can also be a *state* ascribed to someone in a particular situation (Leroy & Mor, 2015, described in Moore, Lee, Kim, & Cable, 2017). For example, during a job interview, the interviewer could perceive that the candidate's words and non-verbal displays do not match up without assuming that such misalignment would occur in other contexts. We use the term BI to refer to perceived word-deed alignment, regardless of whether it is a state or a trait.

To begin disentangling BI from hypocrisy, it is important to note that perceiving someone as low in BI does not imply any particular interpretation of *why* his or her words and deeds are

inconsistent. Also, despite some colloquial and scholarly understandings of the term *integrity* as central to ethics (Becker, 1998; Mayer et al., 1995; see Palanski & Yammarino, 2007), *behavioral* integrity – like word-deed misalignment – is neither inherently moral or immoral (Simons, 2002). People judge the morality of acts based in part on the actor's intentions, motives, and any extenuating circumstances (Ames & Fiske, 2015; Shaver, 1985; Weiner, 1995), but the BI construct is agnostic about these variables. BI refers simply to the perception of (mis)alignment without explaining why the (mis)alignment occurred or whether it is morally problematic.

3.3. Hypocrisy

Hypocrisy is a morally discrediting interpretation of perceived word-deed misalignment, in our view. Whereas low behavioral integrity is a perception that words and deeds are misaligned, hypocrisy is an explanation of *why* they are misaligned. Thus, once word-deed misalignment is perceived, it may or may not be interpreted as hypocrisy (see Figure 1). Here, we consider the nature of this interpretation; Section 5 reviews research-supported factors that encourage or discourage this interpretation.

In our view, to interpret an actor's word-deed misalignment as hypocrisy is to believe it occurred because the actor has *claimed an undeserved moral benefit*. Moral benefits are social and psychological rewards that must be earned through virtuous character and behavior. They include appearing virtuous, feeling virtuous, being trusted, and having the right to judge others' morality or to influence their moral behavior. Hypocrites seek, and sometimes receive, these benefits without deserving them. For example, in the play *Tartuffe, Or the Hypocrite* by Molière, the title character pretends to be pious to con a rich man named Orgon. Despite actually being a criminal vagrant, Tartuffe tricks Orgon into respecting and trusting him, listening to his advice

on intimate family matters, and allowing him to pass judgment on loved ones. As a result, Tartuffe almost steals Orgon's wealth and property. As this example demonstrates, moral benefits are intangible, but can lead to tangible benefits, like money. It is thus understandable that people are loathe to dole out these benefits to undeserving recipients.

Ron Shaich provides a more contemporary example. A hypocrisy interpretation of his behavior is that he was trying to enjoy the benefits of appearing pro-worker and pro-health (e.g., public accolades, personal pride, improved business, the right to criticize his fast-food competitors) without paying the cost of actually enacting pro-worker and health policies (e.g., retaining cashiers despite its expense; removing caloric foods from the menu despite their popularity). In this view, his public positions on workers' rights and health "are just surface-level activism" ("Panera misses the mark on social activism," 2017) and he deserves no moral benefits from them.

However, not everyone may interpret Shaich's behavior as hypocritical, even if they perceive a high degree of misalignment with his public image. For example, some may see his activism as a genuine desire to help workers despite being unable to afford so many cashiers. Unless he lays off some workers, perhaps he would have to lower everyone's wage to an unacceptable level. Other interpretations of why words have not translated into deeds include obstacles beyond one's control, a legitimate change of heart (e.g., a reformed fraudster who now warns people against committing fraud), or a weakness of will (e.g., a smoker who preaches against tobacco use but is too addicted to quit; see Alicke et al., 2013; Barden, Rucker, & Petty, 2005; Effron & Miller, 2015; Monin & Merritt, 2012). In these interpretations, Shaich may not have displayed much behavioral integrity, but he is not a hypocrite, and thus deserves little condemnation.

Our conceptualization of hypocrisy as a claim to an undeserved moral benefit represents a novel perspective. Previous scholarship offers little consensus about "what counts" as hypocrisy, in part because most of this work has offered normative definitions of what *should* count rather than testing what *actually* counts in laypeople's minds (but see Alicke et al., 2013; Hale & Pillow, 2015). These normative definitions fall into three main categories: the *mere inconsistency* perspective simply equates hypocrisy with failing to practice what you preach (Brunsson, 1989; Greenbaum et al., 2015; Simons, 2002; Simons et al., 2007; Stone & Fernandez, 2008); the *moral double-standards* perspective operationalizes hypocrisy as holding others to harsher moral standards than one holds oneself (Graham et al., 2015; Lammers, 2012; Lammers, Stapel, & Galinsky, 2010; Polman & Ruttan, 2012; Rustichini & Villeval, 2014; Valdesolo & DeSteno, 2007, 2008); and the *insincerity* perspective describes hypocrisy as the espousal of moral values that are more virtuous than one's actual values, regardless of which values one enacts (Crisp & Cowton, 1994; Monin & Merritt, 2012).

We agree that inconsistency, moral double standards, and insincerity *can* appear hypocritical to laypeople, but disagree that any one of these captures the core of hypocrisy in laypeople's minds. Empirically, not all inconsistencies are interpreted as hypocritical (e.g., Effron & Miller, 2015), not all examples of ordinary hypocrisy generated by research participants involve moral double-standards (Hale & Pillow, 2015), and not all hypocrisy involves insincerity. For example, in one study, 75% of students thought it was hypocritical for a tattooed parent to forbid her daughter from getting a tattoo (Alicke et al., 2013), even though few would question the parent's sincerity. We propose that inconsistency, double standards, and insincerity can be hypocritical because they often involve claiming moral benefits that one lacks the right to claim. Thus, failing to practice what you preach will seem hypocritical if it makes

you appear more virtuous than you deserve; moral double standards usually seem hypocritical because they imply a person is claiming the benefit of feeling "holier than thou" despite not being so; and when a teenager calls his mother a hypocrite for inveighing against drugs despite smoking pot in her youth, he is not questioning her sincerity so much as her right to tell him what to do.

Characterizing hypocrisy as an undeserved claim on moral benefits clarifies why people sometimes interpret word-deed misalignment as a moral transgression. Taking a benefit to which you are not entitled violates basic norms of equity (Walster, Walster, & Berscheid, 1978) and challenges people's desire to believe that we get what we deserve and deserve what we get (see M. Ross & Miller, 2002). It also resembles free riding – seeking to enjoy a benefit without paying the cost – which people are highly motivated to detect and punish (see Cosmides, 1989; Cosmides & Tooby, 2013; Delton, Cosmides, Guemo, Robertson, & Tooby, 2012; Fehr & Gachter, 2002; Jordan, Sommers, Bloom, & Rand, 2017). Thus, when people interpret word-deed misalignment as hypocrisy, they have multiple reasons for condemning it.

4. When Do People Perceive Words and Deeds as Misaligned?

Having distinguished among key constructs, and done a deep dive into what counts as hypocrisy, we now turn to the first psychological process in our model: perceiving the misalignment (see Figure 1). Before people grapple with whether to interpret word-deed misalignment as hypocrisy, they must determine whether, and how much, the words and deeds are misaligned (i.e., whether an actor has displayed low BI). Sometimes, identifying misalignment is easy because words and deeds are blatantly inconsistent with each other, as in the case of the academic who plagiarized an anti-plagiarism paper (see Oransky, 2015). Perhaps more commonly, though, the degree of misalignment between words and deeds is ambiguous.

Consider former U.S. education secretary and drug czar William Bennett, public critic of gay marriage and abortion, and editor of *The Book of Virtues: A Treasury of Great Moral Stories* (discussed in Barden et al., 2005). Known as a "national scold," Bennett tarnished his reputation by gambling away $1.4 million in two months. His detractors perceived clear word-deed misalignment. After all, he had preached virtue while practicing vice. His defenders, in contrast, perceived no misalignment. After all, he had never specifically inveighed against gambling (Lott, 2006). What shapes perceptions of word-deed misalignment in ambiguous situations like these? In this section, we review several research-supported factors (see Table 1).

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Table 1. Factors Influencing Perceptions of Word-Deed Misalignment (Low Behavioral Integrity)

Factor	Audience Perceives Word-Deed Misalignment When …	Example	Citation
Motivation	Audience is motivated to condemn the actor	Partisans perceived more inconsistency in political statements attributed to members of the opposing party (vs. their own party)	Weston, Blagov, Harenski, Kilts, & Hamann (2006)
Chronic vigilance	Audience has reason to worry about unfair treatment	Black (vs. White) employees were more likely to notice inconsistency between a manager's words and deeds	Simons, Friedman, Liu, & McLean Parks (2007)
Culture	Audience's culture takes words more (vs. less) literally	Americans (vs. Taiwanese and Indians) perceived a broken promise as signaling lower BI	Friedman et al. (2018)
The Words' Benevolence	Actor's words espouse more (vs. less) benevolence	Students perceived an advisor whose words and deeds were misaligned as lower in BI when the words espoused high (vs. low) benevolence	Leroy, Simons, Masschelein, & Deprez (under review)

4.1. Motivation

One factor is motivation, which research has long documented can shape the perception of ambiguous stimuli (Abrams, Randsley de Moura, & Travaglino, 2013; Balcetis & Dunning, 2006; Hastorf & Cantril, 1954). Bennett was already a politically polarizing figure before his gambling was revealed. His opponents were probably motivated to perceive a contradiction between his words and deeds, whereas his supporters were probably motivated to perceive no contradiction. Research shows that when partisans evaluate a politician's apparently contradictory statements, they see less inconsistency when the politicians are from their own political party as opposed to the opposing party (Westen, Blagov, Harenski, Kilts, & Hamann, 2006).

People rarely jump to motivated conclusions without evidence; instead, they process evidence in a biased manner in order to reach those conclusions (e.g., Alicke, 2000; Ames & Fiske, 2015; Effron, 2018; Kunda, 1990). What sort of biased processing could enable motivated perceptions of word-deed misalignment? One possibility is that people strategically construe a person's words and deeds at the level of abstraction that allows them to perceive the degree of misalignment they want. The same action (e.g., hammering a nail) can be construed more concretely with a focus on the details (e.g., driving metal into wood) or more abstractly with a focus on its meaning (e.g., building a house; Trope & Liberman, 2003; Vallacher & Wegner, 1987). Bennett's opponents apparently construed his work as drug czar and his gambling *abstractly* as, respectively, "preaching against virtue" and "practicing vice," suggesting word-deed misalignment. Conversely, his supporters may have construed these same behaviors more *concretely* as "fighting illegal drugs" and "indulging in a legal pastime," suggesting no misalignment. More generally, construing preaching concretely narrows the scope of behaviors

that would contradict it, whereas construing preaching abstractly widens the scope (cf. Eyal & Liberman, 2012; Eyal, Liberman, & Trope, 2008). The construal level they spontaneously adopt may depend on how much misalignment they prefer to perceive.

4.2. Chronic Vigilance

People may also be more likely to perceive low behavioral integrity when they are habitually on the lookout for it (Simons, 2002). In a cross-sectional survey of 1,944 employees of 107 different hotels, the same managers were perceived as lower in BI by Black American employees than by White American employees (Simons et al., 2007). These differences in BI then went on to explain racial differences in perceptions of interpersonal justice and trust in management. The authors suggested that the Black employees were more likely than the White employees to notice actual word-deed misalignment, rather than that managers displayed more misalignment toward Black employees. One explanation for these racial differences, favored by the study's authors, is that historical and contemporary experiences as targets of prejudice give people good reason for vigilance against powerful individuals who do not stay true to their word.

This explanation suggests other individual differences that should increase the perception of word-deed misalignment. For example, some individuals are chronically vigilant against being duped (Vohs, Baumeister, & Chin, 2007). Given that saying one thing but doing another is one way to dupe someone, these individuals may be particularly likely to perceive others' behavior as low in behavioral integrity. Experiences with people who rarely practice what they preach could foster a similar degree of vigilance. For example, employees may more readily perceive a new manager as displaying low behavioral integrity if their previous manager displayed low behavioral integrity as well (Simons, 2002).

4.3. Culture

Recent research suggests that people perceive the same act of word-deed misalignment differently in different national cultures. In one study, participants read about an employee whose manager publicly requests that he deliver data by a certain date. The employee first expresses reluctance, but then looks around at the others present and agrees to the request. Later, the employee either delivers the data (no misalignment) or does not (word-deed misalignment). American, Indian, and Taiwanese participants all perceived the employee as lower in trait BI when he displayed word-deed misalignment, but this effect was more pronounced for Americans (Friedman et al., 2018). One explanation is that a single act of word-deed misalignment seems less diagnostic of a trait or behavioral pattern in the East versus the West. Americans may be more confident than Indians and Taiwanese that a broken promise in one situation indicates a proclivity to break promises across situations (cf. Choi & Nisbett, 2000). Another explanation is that speech tends not to be taken as literally in Eastern than in Western cultural contexts (Triandis, 1994). In many Western cultures, people are expected to express meaning directly through their words. In many Eastern cultures, by contrast, meaning is expressed more indirectly and cannot be understood without attending to the manner and context in which words are uttered. Although the employee literally says he will deliver the data, his reluctance and his nonverbal behavior indirectly communicate that he will be unable to do so. American participants may have perceived more misalignment than Indian and Taiwanese participants because Americans were less attuned to this indirect communication. Regardless of the specific mechanism, culture seems to be an important moderator of whether word-deed misalignment is perceived as a lack of behavioral integrity.

4.4. The Words' Benevolence

The degree of misalignment people perceive between words and deeds may also depend on how benevolent the words are (Leroy, Simons, Masschelein, & Deprez, under review). Graduate students in a recent study imagined that their thesis advisor either claimed to have students' best interests at heart (words: high benevolence) or claimed to prioritize her own interests over her students' (words: low benevolence). Then they imagined that the advisor subsequently did or did not take action to help them (actions: high vs. low benevolence). When the advisor had espoused high benevolence, students rated her as higher in behavioral integrity when she acted versus did not act benevolently. However, when the advisor had espoused *low* benevolence, the benevolence of her actions had a weaker (and non-significant) effect on behavioral integrity ratings. A field study found analogous results among employees rating their managers. These findings suggest that people may be more vigilant against misalignments between deeds and benevolent (versus less-benevolent) words. Perhaps this is because failing to detect inconsistency between a supervisor's espoused and enacted values has more serious consequences when the espoused values are benevolent. A student who mistakenly expected supportive advising occupies a more precarious position than one who planned for less support that the advisor ultimately provided.

4.5. Summary

The research and examples in this section illustrate that not all word-deed misalignments are perceived as such. We have focused on four empirically supported factors that shape such perceptions – motivation, chronic vigilance, culture, and the words' benevolence. Behavioral integrity theory points to additional factors that remain to be tested. For example, Simons (2002; 2008) speculated that followers are more likely to perceive leaders' word-deed misalignment

than vice versa, and that violations of espoused values may be more noticeable to observers who care about the values than to those who do not.

5. When Do People Interpret Misalignment as Hypocrisy?

We now turn to the second psychological process in our model: interpreting the misalignment (see Figure 1). Once an audience has perceived that an actor's words and deeds are misaligned, what determines whether they interpret the misalignment as hypocritical? Research has documented several factors (see Table 2), which support our argument that people think of hypocrisy as claiming an undeserved moral benefit.

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Table 2. Factors Influencing Whether People Interpret Misalignment as Hypocrisy

Factor	Audience Interprets Misalignment as Hypocrisy When…	Example	Citation
Order of practicing and preaching	Actors say one thing, then do another (vs. do one thing, then say another)	When companies' actions contradict their CSR policies, they seem more hypocritical when the policies preceded the actions (vs. when the actions preceded the policies).	Wagner, Lutz, & Weitz (2009)
Motivated reasoning	Audience is motived to condemn the actor	Political opponents (vs. supporters) are more likely to interpret a politician's misalignment as hypocrisy.	Barden, Rucker, Petty, & Rios (2014)
Suffering for past misdeeds	Actors have benefitted (vs. suffered) for the deeds they preach against	A researcher who used to *p*-hack her data but now preaches against it would seem more hypocritical if she had benefitted from *p*-hacking than if she had paid a price.	Effron & Miller (2015)
Ambiguity of wrongdoing	Wrongdoing is blatant (vs. ambiguous)	When a manager made a blatantly racist personnel decision (vs. when he made an ambiguous decision that *could seem* racist), a history of promoting racial discrimination made him seem more hypocritical	Effron & Monin (2010)
Admission of misalignment	Actors conceal (vs. reveal) their misalignment	Employees who preach about the importance of honesty would be penalized for misalignment more harshly if they concealed (vs. revealed) that they inflate their expense reports	Jordan, Sommers, Bloom, & Rand (2017)
Moral vs. pragmatic commitment	Actors change positions after taking a moral (vs. pragmatic) stand	Political leaders who switch positions on an issue seem more like "hypocritical flip-floppers" when they had explained their initial position as related to fairness and equality (vs. economics)	Kreps, Laurin, & Merritt (2017)
Culture	Audience's culture fosters an independent (vs interdependent) model of the self	Americans (vs. Japanese and Indonesians) condemned misalignment more harshly	Effron, Jackman, Markus, Muramoto, & Muluk (2018)

5.1. Order of Practicing and Preaching

Research suggests people interpret inconsistent practicing and preaching differently depending on the order of these behaviors. In one study, participants read about a student who fails to practice safe sex before versus after promoting its importance on campus radio. When the inconsistent practice followed the preaching, participants judged the student as more hypocritical than when the practice preceded the preaching. Mediation analyses suggested that this was because participants inferred that the student who "did one thing, but then said another" had "turned over a new leaf" and come to appreciate the importance of safe sex (Barden et al., 2005). Similarly, companies that violate CSR policies they already have in place are seen as more hypocritical than companies that implement CSR policies *after* taking an action that violates them (Wagner et al., 2009). These findings fit with our characterization of hypocrisy as an attempt to claim undeserved moral benefits. Preaching virtue is a benefit in that it places the preacher in a morally superior position to others, implying that he or she knows best and has the right to judge and influence them. A reformed sinner who has recognized the error of her ways, felt guilty, made amends, or exerted effort to change her behavior is more entitled to this benefit than a current sinner.

5.2. Motivated Reasoning

Just as motivation shapes observers' perceptions of whether words and deeds are misaligned, it can also shape interpretations of whether such misalignment represents hypocrisy. Not only were Bill Bennet's political opponents more likely than his supporters to perceive his gambling debts as misaligned with his virtuous public image, they were also more likely to condemn this misalignment as hypocrisy (Lott, 2006). Research has indeed shown that people are less likely to interpret their in-group (vs. outgroup's) word-deed misalignment as hypocrisy,

but only when the deeds precede the words (Barden, Rucker, Petty, & Rios, 2014). That is, when a political leader "says one thing, then does another," political ingroup and outgroup members alike infer hypocrisy. Apparently, a hypocrisy interpretation is so salient in such situations that people struggle to overlook it even when motivated to do so. However, when the leader "does one thing, then says another," ingroup members can attribute the inconsistency to a positive change of heart, whereas outgroup members reject this attribution and infer hypocrisy.

5.3. Suffering for Past Misdeeds

Although "failing to practice what you preached" seems more hypocritical than "preaching against what you used to practice," the latter can still attract accusations of hypocrisy (Wagner et al., 2009). This highlights a challenge faced by people who have learned from their mistakes. How can they advise others to avoid these mistakes without seeming hypocritical? Consider a scientist who achieved a tenured faculty position, won numerous academic awards, and snagged a lucrative book deal by "*p*-hacking" her data – i.e., making strategic decisions about data collection and analysis that increase the likelihood of finding false but statistically significant results (Simmons, Nelson, & Simonsohn, 2011). Persuaded by recent arguments that *p*-hacking harms science, she wants to publicly condemn the practice. Is there anything she can do to minimize the risks of appearing hypocritical when she does?

Research suggests that it would help to emphasize how her own *p*-hacking has created an unreplicable body of work, public embarrassment, and difficulty winning new grants. More generally, people are seen as more entitled to preach against what they used to practice if they have suffered for practicing it (Effron & Miller, 2015). Without demonstrably suffering for *p*-hacking, the scientist appears to be having her cake and eating it too. It seems unfair for her to enjoy the moral benefits of condemning a questionable practice (e.g., the appearance of virtue,

the satisfaction of judging others) while simultaneously enjoying the professional rewards she acquired using the same practice. Paying a price for what she practiced diminishes this apparent unfairness and thus how hypocritical she seems.

5.4. Ambiguity of Wrongdoing

Earlier, we observed that promoting a value sometimes protects individuals from condemnation when they appear to transgress it (Effron & Monin, 2010). Our model suggests that audience ascriptions of hypocrisy will counteract this moral licensing effect when the audience thinks the individual is claiming an undeserved moral benefit. One factor that influences this interpretation in the context of moral licensing is the ambiguity of the alleged wrongdoing.

Imagine a White executive who promotes five White employees but not two Black employees, privately explaining that he thinks Blacks are unsuitable for managerial positions. In light of this unambiguous racial discrimination, participants interpreted the executive's behavior as more hypocritical when he had been a vocal proponent of racial equality, versus when he had not, or versus when he had been a proponent of gender equality. These hypocrisy ascriptions in turn predicted harsher moral condemnation (Effron & Monin, 2010). Presumably, participants interpreted his misalignment as an attempt to enjoy the benefits of appearing pro-diversity – benefits he did not deserve in light of his racism.

However, people tend to react *positively* to word-deed misalignment when the deeds represent an *ambiguous* wrongdoing (Effron & Monin, 2010; see also Krumm & Corning, 2008; Polman, Pettit, & Wiesenfeld, 2013; Thai, Hornsey, & Barlow, 2016). Suppose the executive had justified his all-White promotion decision, not with racism, but by claiming that the two employees with the weakest performance simply happened to be Black. Now it is unclear

whether the promotion decision is legitimate or discriminatory – his true intentions are ambiguous. In this situation, participants were *less* condemning of the executive when he had a history of championing racial equality than when he did not – a moral licensing effect. Rather than making him appear hypocritical, the misalignment between his pro-diversity preaching and his promotion decision made this decision seem less racist. Suggesting that this effect is attributable to misalignment, a history of championing gender equality did not affect how participants construed his decision.

These results suggest that word-deed misalignment seems hypocritical when the deeds represent blatant wrongdoing – but can get one off the hook for deeds that represent only ambiguous wrongdoing. The findings support our claim that word-deed misalignment does not in itself invite moral condemnation – only misalignment that is interpreted as hypocrisy.

5.5. Admission of Misalignment

Another factor determining whether word-deed misalignment seems hypocritical is whether the actor conceals versus reveals the misalignment. Consider an employee who tells a coworker that exaggerating reimbursable business expenses is unethical, but who secretly does it anyway. This employee seems like a canonical hypocrite who enjoys the benefits of preaching (appearing moral) while also enjoying the benefits of transgressing (i.e., getting more money). What would happen, though, if the employee openly admitted to cheating on his expense reports despite thinking it is unethical? The admission makes it clear that he is not attempting to benefit by feeling or appearing virtuous. Rather than feeling "holier than thou," he may feel guilty about failing to follow his moral principles. Thus, he should seem less hypocritical. Recent research supports this intuition (Jordan et al., 2017). Those who condemn people for a behavior they readily admit to performing themselves are not penalized for their inconsistency. In our terms,

one cannot be accused of claiming unearned moral benefits – and thus does not seem like a hypocrite – if one has disclaimed the benefits.

5.6. Moral vs. Pragmatic Commitments

Leaders often have a choice about whether to justify their verbal commitments on moral grounds (e.g., "it's the right thing to do") versus pragmatic grounds (e.g., "it's the rational thing to do;" Kreps & Monin, 2011). Recent research suggests that this choice has important consequences for how the public will react if the leader subsequently deviates from these commitments (Kreps, Laurin, & Merritt, 2017). For example, participants read about a political leader who initially said he opposed gay marriage because of a desire to respect tradition (a moral stance) or because a desire to avoid the costs of changing government systems (a pragmatic stance), but then later acted to support gay marriage. Participants interpreted this misalignment as significantly more hypocritical when the leader had initially taken a moral stance – even when participants themselves approved of his newfound support for gay marriage. Thus, infusing one's words with morality can make subsequent misalignment seem like a "hypocritical flip-flop" rather than a "courageous evolution" (Kreps et al., 2017; but see Van Zant & Moore, 2015).

These results fit with our view of hypocrisy as an unearned moral benefit. Leaders who deviate from a moral (vs. pragmatic) stance are more likely to seem like they have put on an undeserved mantle of virtue. The results also reinforce our claim that, unlike misalignment and BI, hypocrisy has a strong moral component. By changing positions on an issue, the leaders in these studies displayed word-deed misalignment – but when the leaders had moralized the issue, people interpreted this misalignment as hypocrisy.

5.7. Culture

Earlier, we cited evidence that people in Western (vs. Eastern) cultural contexts are more likely to perceive an act of word-deed misalignment as low behavioral integrity (Friedman et al., 2018). New research suggests that culture also moderates whether people interpret low behavioral integrity as hypocrisy (Effron et al., 2018).

This research draws on the distinction between cultures that foster an *independent* versus *interdependent model of self* (e.g., Fiske, Kitayama, Markus, & Nisbett, 1998; Markus & Conner; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1995). In independently oriented cultures (e.g., many of those in North America and Western Europe), people tend to view the self as having a core essence comprising internal traits (Fiske et al., 1998; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Riemer, Shavitt, Koo, & Markus, 2014; Triandis, 1995). As a result, virtue is located inside the person, and can be sussed out based on whether people enact virtue consistently across multiple situations, especially in private. A virtuous internal character earns the right to moral benefits such as being perceived as virtuous by others. To claim those benefits without truly being virtuous is hypocrisy. Thus, preaching virtue in public while practicing vice in private receives harsh moral condemnation in independently oriented cultures.

By contrast, in *inter*dependently oriented cultures (e.g., many of those in Asia and Latin America), the self comprises relationships and roles and can therefore be expected to change across social contexts (Fiske et al., 1998; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Riemer et al., 2014; Triandis, 1995). As a result, virtue is conferred by other people rather than being located solely inside the person, and it can be sussed out by observing how sensitive people's public behavior is to the obligations of different roles and situations. From this cultural perspective, being perceived as virtuous by others is itself an important component of virtue, not a moral benefit reserved for people who are "truly" virtuous on the inside. In such cultures, preaching virtue in

public when the situation calls for it, despite privately practicing vice, may seem socially sensitive rather than a hypocritical claim to an undeserved moral benefit. Such misalignment may therefore receive less moral condemnation in cultures that are oriented towards interdependence (vs. independence).

Several studies provided support for these ideas (Effron et al., 2018). In one, participants from an independently oriented culture (USA) and two interdependently oriented cultures (Japan and Indonesia) read about an employee who committed a minor misdeed (e.g., reckless driving). Participants in all three countries responded to the misdeed with harsher moral condemnation when the employee had previously preached against the same misdeed, compared to when he had preached against an unrelated misdeed or no misdeed. However, this effect was significantly larger in the more independently oriented culture than in the interdependently oriented cultures. In a follow-up study, MBA students from 46 nations rated their most recent manager's behavioral integrity and trustworthiness. As in previous work, the higher they perceived the manager's BI, the more they trusted him or her. Going beyond previous work, the more interdependently oriented their national culture was, the weaker this effect became. Whereas Friedman and colleagues (2018) show that the relationship between word-deed misalignment and BI is stronger in a more independent culture (the U.S.) than in more interdependent cultures (India and Taiwan), this study shows that relationship between BI and its downstream consequences is also stronger in more independent cultures. Presumably, this is because the same degree of perceived word-deed misalignment is interpreted as less hypocritical in interdependent (vs. independent) cultural contexts.

5.8. Summary

The research described in this section reveals several factors that shape whether people infer hypocrisy from word-deed misalignment (see Table 2). Although this research was not designed to test our model, it supports the model's key assumptions. First, it demonstrates that not all acts of misalignment are viewed as hypocritical (e.g., Effron & Miller, 2015; Effron & Monin, 2010; Jordan et al., 2017). Second, it supports the claim that hypocrisy adds a moral dimension to word-deed misalignment. Taking a moralized stand on an issue invites hypocrisy interpretations if one deviates from the stand (Kreps et al., 2017), and hypocrisy interpretations predict moral condemnation (e.g., Effron & Monin, 2010). Finally, the research is consistent with the idea that laypeople conceptualize hypocrisy as an attempt to claim undeserved moral benefits. In situations and cultures in which misalignment is less likely to signal that the benefits were obtained or unearned, the moral penalty for misalignment is lower (Barden et al., 2005; Effron et al., 2018; Effron & Miller, 2015; Effron & Monin, 2010; Jordan et al., 2017; Kreps et al., 2017).

6. Summary of Theoretical Model

According to our model, an actor's word-deed misalignment is more likely to provoke negative reactions from an audience when (a) the audience perceives the actor's misalignment, and (b) the audience interprets it as hypocrisy (see Figure 1). We have now reviewed a number of factors that influence these perceptions and interpretations, and that should thus affect how negatively audiences react to word-deed misalignment. An important contribution of the model is to clarify the distinctions and relationships between word-deed misalignment (objective reality), behavioral integrity (subjective perception of misalignment), and hypocrisy (interpretation of misalignment). Another important contribution is our new conceptualization of hypocrisy as an unearned moral benefit. This conceptualization reconciles competing definitions

of hypocrisy offered by scholars, and explains a wide range of empirical findings about what counts as hypocrisy to laypeople. In the remainder of this paper, we highlight how our model can inform open questions and suggest future research directions, which we briefly illustrate with our recent and in-progress research.

7. Open Questions and Future Directions

7.1. Why Is Misalignment So Prevalent?

Given that word-deed misalignment's interpersonal consequences can be so negative, its apparent prevalence in organizations is striking. One explanation is that many people are actually motivated by hypocrisy: They want to reap the benefits of feeling or appearing moral without paying the requisite costs (Batson, 2002, 2016; Kurzban, 2010). Evidence for this explanation comes from laboratory experiments in which participants allocate resources selfishly despite simultaneously striving to appear generous or fair to both others and themselves (Batson, Kobrynowicz, Dinnerstein, Kampf, & Wilson, 1997; Batson, Thompson, Seuferling, Whitney, & Strongman, 1999; Dana, Weber, & Kuang, 2007; Lönnqvist, Irlenbusch, & Walkowitz, 2014; Pillutla & Murnighan, 1995). At the organizational level, a similar hypocrisy motive could lead a firm to use words to mislead the public about the nature of its deeds (cf. Edelman, 1977). For example, a company might disguise its poor environmental track record by touting a commitment to environmental friendliness – a practice known as "greenwashing" (Delmas & Burbano, 2011).

A more charitable explanation for word-deed misalignment in organizations, suggested above, is that organizational factors beyond individuals' control make perfect alignment difficult or impossible (see Simons, 2002). For example, bureaucratic obstacles may block the enactment of espoused values (Simons, 2002). Relatedly, ideas change faster than actions, so words that

reflect current thinking will be inconsistent with current practice (Brunsson, 1993). For example, new rhetoric in a change management initiative may be rolled out faster than the underlying processes can be adapted to fit it (Simons, 1999). Word-deed misalignment could also result from poor communication among different units of a firm. The marketing team that touts a company's commitment to environmentalism, for example, may not be fully aware of the environmental harm caused by the company's products (Delmas & Burbano, 2011). In all these cases, word-deed misalignment results from organization members acting in good faith rather than hypocritically.

Another explanation is that organization members face competing demands that cannot be simultaneously satisfied. First, leaders must make tradeoffs between competing values. It is not always possible to both maximize profits and minimize environmental impact, for example. To resolve the psychological discomfort of such tradeoffs (Tetlock, Kristel, Elson, Green, & Lerner, 2000), and to manage the potential reputational damage (Tetlock, Mellers, & Scoblic, 2017), leaders may pay lip service to one value while acting in accordance with the other (Brunsson, 1989). Second, organization members need to manage competing demands from different stakeholders. For example, middle managers may struggle to reconcile a boss's expectations of their team's performance with the individual team members' needs (Way, Simons, Leroy, & Tuleja, 2016). Leaders lack the time, attention, and resources to attend to all constituencies' demands (Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997), and some demands may be mutually incompatible (Simons, 2002). Given that the right verbal gestures can satisfying stakeholders in the absence of tangible action (Pfeffer, 1981; Westphal & Zajac, 1998), it is perhaps understandable that leaders would display word-deed misaligning by giving "the rhetoric to one side and the decision to the other" (Edelman, 1964, p. 39; quoted in Pfeffer, 1981, p. 34).

Our model suggests another explanation for word-deed misalignment's prevalence. The degree of misalignment between words and deeds, and whether any such misalignment counts as hypocrisy, has a large subjective component. Exploiting this subjectivity using motivated reasoning, actors can convince themselves that their words and deeds are neither particularly misaligned nor hypocritical. Because they are unaware of their motivated reasoning (Balcetis, 2009), actors may erroneously assume that their behavior would be perceived and interpreted in the same way by observers (Effron, 2014; Epley, Keysar, Van Boven, & Gilovich, 2004; L. Ross & Ward, 1996). As a result, actors may mistakenly think an observer would find little reason to condemn their behavior for misalignment. Thus, people may be willing to "say one thing but do another" despite the risk of negative interpersonal consequences because they underestimate the risk.

Preliminary evidence for this possibility comes from a lab study in which participants were assigned to be either actors or observers (Effron & Kakkar, in progress). Actors were asked to record a video in which they preached about the importance of either environmentalism or responsible time management (depending on randomly assigned condition). Then they wrote an essay about a time when they failed to live up to the same value they had preached (misalignment condition) or the other value (no-misalignment condition). Finally, they estimated how an observer would rate their moral character based on their video and their essay. Observers actually provided such ratings after examining the video and essay. As predicted, actors underestimated the extent to which misalignment between their words (video) and deeds (essay) would diminish their moral character in observers' eyes. People may not anticipate the social costs of their word-deed misalignment, which could make them more willing to enact it.

7.2. Beyond Interpersonal Reactions: What are Misalignment's Other Consequences?

Our theorizing has focused on explaining when and why misalignment elicits negative interpersonal reactions (e.g., distrust and moral condemnation) because these reactions predict lower employee motivation (e.g., poorer commitment, engagement, and satisfaction) and undesirable organizational behaviors (e.g., poorer performance, less moral behavior; see Cha & Edmondson, 2006; Simons et al., 2014). Interpersonal reactions are also germane to understanding the consequences of misalignment enacted by teams and organizations, because people treat these collectives like individuals (e.g., Palanski et al., 2011). In this way, interpersonal reactions to misalignment have important organizational consequences.

However, not all of misalignment's organizational consequences stem from interpersonal reactions. Imagine a manager who espouses many values but only rarely puts them into practice. His employees perceive this misalignment, but interpret it as a sign that he is indecisive or ineffective, not that he is a hypocrite. Although they may not react with distrust or moral condemnation, their performance may still suffer because they are confused about what the manager expects from them (Simons, 2008). A meta-analysis supports the idea that negative interpersonal reactions only partially explain BI's organizational consequences (Simons et al., 2014). The results showed that the relationship between managers' BI and employees' performance was partially mediated by employees' trust in the manager; there was also a significant direct effect of BI on performance that did not pass through trust. Future research should test whether employee confusion explains this direct effect. More broadly, future work should go beyond our model by considering organizational consequences of misalignment that occur even when the misalignment is neither attributed to hypocrisy not met with negative interpersonal reactions.

7.3. Can Negative Interpersonal Reactions to Misalignment Have Positive Organizational Consequences?

We have focused on how negative interpersonal reactions to word-deed misalignment can harm organizations. However, these reactions may also have peripheral consequences that benefit organizations. Specifically, people's aversion to hypocrisy can motivate positive behavior change (Aronson, Fried, & Stone, 1991; Fointiat, Grosbras, Michel, & Somat, 2001; Stone, Aronson, Crain, Winslow, & Fried, 1994). For example, if employees observed a colleague preach the importance of diversity but then share a racist meme on Facebook, they might bolster their own commitment to diversity to counteract the colleague's apparent hypocrisy. More generally, witnessing an ingroup member espouse, and then violate, a value can motivate individuals to protect or bolster the integrity of their group's identity by increasing support for the relevant ingroup value (Cooper & Hogg, 2007; Cooper & Trujillo, 2014; Focella, Stone, Fernandez, Cooper, & Hogg, 2016; Norton, Monin, Cooper, & Hogg, 2003). Investigating whether this *vicarious hypocrisy effect* occurs in organizational contexts, and whether its benefits outweigh the organizational costs of potentially hypocritical behavior, is an interesting task for future research.

7.4. Beyond the Prototypical Hypocrite: What Else Counts as Hypocrisy?

By conceptualizing hypocrisy as a claim to an unearned moral benefit, we offer a more complete account of hypocrisy than prior scholarship. In some ways, our conceptualization narrows the field's perspective on hypocrisy. Contrary to some scholarly perspectives (e.g., Simons, 2002; Stone & Fernandez, 2008), we have argued that word-deed misalignment and a lack of behavioral integrity do not by themselves constitute hypocrisy (see Figure 1). In other ways, our conceptualization broadens the field's perspective. The prototypical hypocrite fails to

privately practice the virtues he or she public preaches – like Tartuffe, who appears pious to others but secretly commits crimes. By contrast, a person can lay claim to an undeserved moral benefit even if he or she does not fit this prototype. Research should thus be able to identify behaviors that reliably receive condemnation for hypocrisy and yet do not involve inconsistency between public virtues and private vices.

Our recent work provides examples of such behaviors. In one series of studies, we find that people receive condemnation for hypocrisy when their public appearance is *less* virtuous than their private actions. One such "reverse Tartuffe" would be a tobacco executive who publicly promotes smoking but secretly donates to anti-tobacco causes. Indeed, participants found this inconsistent individual significantly more hypocritical than a tobacco executive who secretly donates to anti-obesity causes. Mediational evidence suggested that this was because participants interpreted the inconsistent executive's donations as motivated by a desire to assuage his guilt (O'Connor, Effron, & Lucas, under review). In other words, participants only perceived volunteering as hypocritical when they interpreted it as an attempt to feel virtuous (less guilty about pedaling carcinogens) without giving up a less-than-virtuous behavior (i.e., without quitting the tobacco job). Thus, consistent with our characterization of hypocrisy as claiming an unearned moral benefit, word-deed misalignment can seem hypocritical even if it does not involve "appearing more virtuous than you are;" "feeling more virtuous than you deserve" suffices.

In other work, we find that audiences will ascribe hypocrisy even to actors whose words and deeds are not misaligned. For example, people find it hypocritical for workers to act inconsistently with an organization's values, even if the workers themselves have never preached or explicitly endorsed those values (Effron et al., 2015). Undergraduates in a lab study evaluated

applications for a research assistant job. One candidate had been cited by campus police for a misdeed: either texting while driving or buying alcohol with a fake ID. This candidate had also interned at a marketing firm two years previously, where his manager assigned him to enter data for a cause that opposed either the same misdeed or a different misdeed. When the misdeed violated the cause, participants thought he was less moral, less competent, less deserving of the job, and merited a lower hourly pay rate than when it violated a different cause. Thus, he was penalized for his association with a cause he transgressed, even though his association was tenuous, short-term, in the past, and assigned by his manager. It was the misalignment between his image and his behavior, rather than between his words and deeds, that seems to have made him a hypocrite in participants' eyes. In light of his misdeed, his image represented an unearned moral benefit.

A related example of how hypocrisy can be perceived in the absence of word-deed misalignment occurs in large corporations or governments that endure across multiple generations of leaders. Consider a CEO who, in 2008, requested debt relief for his organization from the government. Participants found him more hypocritical and rated his request as less legitimate when a *previous* CEO of the same company had petitioned against debt relief for other organizations in 1965 (Lucas, O'Connor, & Effron, in preparation). Although the 2008 CEO's deeds were not misaligned with his own words, they were misaligned with the words of his predecessor. More generally, practicing what a predecessor preached against can sometimes seem hypocritical. Whereas mere inconsistency between a current and previous leaders' words and deeds are insufficient to evoke hypocrisy – organizations often hire a new leader precisely because they want to break with previous leaderships' policies – participants presumably perceived hypocrisy in this case because they saw the CEOs as

claiming mutually incompatible moral benefits on behalf of their organization: the right to preach against helping distressed organizations, and the right to receive help. A leader who claims the first benefit deprives successors of the second.

Although many individuals labelled as hypocrites fit the prototype of someone who appears more virtuous than he or she acts in private, these recent studies support a broader view of how lay people think about hypocrisy – one that fits with our conceptualization of hypocrisy as a claim to an unearned moral benefit. We hope future research will continue to build on this expanded view of hypocrisy.

7.5. What Role Does Authenticity Play?

An important future direction will be to examine how authenticity relates theoretically and empirically to word-deed misalignment, behavioral integrity, and hypocrisy. We omitted authenticity from our model because the relevant literature suffers from a range of competing conceptualizations. For example, one analysis defines *organizational authenticity* as "consistency between a firm's espoused values and its realized practices" (Cording et al., 2014, p. 39), which is tantamount to word-deed alignment at the organizational level. By contrast, other scholarship has examined authentic personality (Wood, Linley, Maltby, Baliousis, & Joseph, 2008), authentic functioning (Kernis, 2003) and authentic leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005) – multidimensional constructs that do not map clearly onto word-deed alignment. Disentangling these different views of authenticity is beyond the scope of our analysis.

Nonetheless, we can offer some preliminary thoughts about how one view of authenticity relates to our model's core constructs. In our view, authenticity is most usefully conceptualized as the degree of congruence between one's outward or visible behavior and one's true or real intentions, emotions, values, or beliefs (Caza et al., in press). Thus, inauthenticity involves

inconsistency, but between appearance and reality rather than between words and deeds. Low BI could be a cue to inauthenticity. For example, claiming to value collegiality would seem inauthentic coming from someone who always undermines coworkers. However, low BI is not a necessary condition for inauthenticity. A customer service representative's words ("I'm happy to help") may align perfectly with his deeds (effectively helping the customer), but he may nonetheless feel or appear inauthentic if he actually despises his job (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Grandey, 2003).

Hypocrisy and this view of inauthenticity are both related to false appearances. As we have argued, one way of claiming undeserved moral benefits – and thus being seen as hypocritical – is to appear more virtuous than you really are. And inauthenticity occurs when public appearances do not reflect the true self. However, unlike authenticity, hypocrisy does not require false appearances. For example, consider American Congressional leaders accused of hypocrisy for supporting stricter immigration controls, even though more open policies allowed their own ancestors to immigrate to America (Hesse, 2018). Their ancestry does not cast doubt on whether they truly support the policies they are endorsing. Their alleged hypocrisy is not about a lack of authenticity, but about taking a moral stand against a policy that personally (though indirectly) benefitted them. As this example illustrates, hypocrisy and inauthenticity are related but distinct.

With these potential distinctions in mind, new research could test the relationships among authenticity, hypocrisy, BI, and word-deed misalignment. It would be particularly interesting to examine the perspective of both actors and observers. When do audiences infer inauthenticity from word-deed misalignment, and do these inferences have different antecedents and consequences than hypocrisy ascriptions? When does enacting word-deed misalignment lead

actors to feel inauthentic, and are the antecedents and consequences of this feeling different than feeling hypocritical? Addressing questions like these would deepen our understanding of both hypocrisy and authenticity, clarifying conceptual confusion in the literatures on each construct.

8. Practical Implications

"Walk your talk," leaders are advised (e.g., Kouzes & Posner, 2011; Simons, 2008); in other words, minimize misalignment. However, given that some misalignment is inevitable in managing the complexities of organizations – and can even be strategic and beneficial – this is easier said than done. An alternative is to avoid words and let deeds speak for themselves. However, given the power of words to inspire followers (Bass, 1999; Burns, 1978), we do not recommend that leaders avoid espousing values.

We suggest that "manage misalignment" is better advice than "minimize misalignment." That is, practitioners should focus not only on how misalignment can be avoided, but also on how to reduce its fallout when it inevitably occurs. Determining the wisdom of deviating from a value one has espoused requires predicting the severity of the consequences. Our model suggests that the drawbacks of word-deed misalignment depend on two touchpoints: (a) whether observers perceive the inconsistency and (b) whether observers interpret it as hypocrisy. Our model also highlights factors that affect these perceptions and interpretations, which leaders can use to make informed decisions about how much to prioritize alignment relative to other considerations. For example, particularly in cultures where misalignment is less likely to be perceived as low BI or interpreted as hypocrisy (Effron et al., 2018; Friedman et al., 2018), the social benefits of tuning one's words and deeds to fit the demands of different social situations will sometimes exceed the social costs of inconsistency.

People hoping to minimize the fallout from word-deed misalignment might also consider suggesting non-hypocrisy interpretations of this misalignment before a hypocrisy interpretation has taken hold. For example, accompanying public commitments with an honest assessment of why they may be difficult to implement should make any word-deed misalignment seem less hypocritical by clarifying that the commitment is not a claim to be "holier than thou" (Jordan, et al., 2017). Ron Shaich might have avoided accusations of hypocrisy if he had accompanied his public support for workers' rights with a disclaimer that wage cuts and layoffs are sometimes inevitable.

Another reason to prefer "managing misalignment" to an "avoiding misalignment" is that a world where people avoid preaching against anything they sometimes fail to practice is not necessarily a more just and moral world. If a spotless moral record were required to stand up for what's right, then most of us would remain seated. Even if we cannot always act in perfect accordance with the values we care about, we should have the courage to speak up about them — and the wisdom to anticipate and manage the fallout.

9. Conclusion

When individuals, teams, or organizations fail to practice what they preach, they are often penalized with negative interpersonal reactions, such as distrust and moral condemnation, which can snowball into organizational problems like poor performance, employee turnover, and deviant behavior. Yet audiences who witness word-deed misalignment do not always react negatively, and sometimes even react positively. Given the virtual impossibility of keeping one's words and deeds perfectly aligned – particularly as an organizational leader – it is crucial to understand when and why misalignment invites negative reactions. Our model suggests that such reactions occur if the misalignment is both perceived as such (low BI) and interpreted as an

unearned moral benefit (hypocrisy), and we have reviewed a number of factors that influence these perceptions and interpretations.

Our model offers guidance to researchers interested in misalignment. We suggest distinguishing between the oft-conflated constructs of word-deed misalignment, behavioral integrity, and hypocrisy. In this vein, we also recommend that studies measure not only whether audiences perceive an actor's misalignment, but also how they interpret it (e.g., why they think it occurred; how hypocritical they think it is). In our view, past research has been constrained by what scholars think *should* count as hypocrisy; future research should consider what laypeople *actually* think counts as hypocrisy. Lay people conceive of hypocrisy more broadly than the act of publicly preaching virtue while privately practicing vice; in this way, hypocrisy has more faces than prior work has captured.

In contemporary society, hypocrisy is "the only unforgivable sin," according to political theorist Judith Shklar (1984, p. 45). We hope to have shed new light on when and why people are condemned for this sin and – perhaps most importantly – how they can manage the risk of such condemnation even if they cannot always practice what they preach.

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