

# Punishing hypocrisy: The roles of hypocrisy and moral emotions in deciding culpability and punishment of criminal and civil moral transgressors

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Three experiments explored how hypocrisy affects attributions of criminal guilt and the desire to punish hypocritical criminals. Study 1 established that via perceived hypocrisy, a hypocritical criminal was seen as more culpable and was punished more than a non-hypocritical criminal who committed an identical crime. Study 2 expanded on this, showing that negative moral emotions (anger and disgust) mediated the relationships between perceived hypocrisy, criminal guilt, and punishment. Study 3 replicated the emotion finding from Study 2 using new scenarios where group agents were clearly aware of the hypocrisy of their actions, yet acted anyway. Again, perceived hypocrisy worked through moral emotions to affect criminal guilt and punishment. The current studies provide empirical support for theories relating hypocrisy and moral transgressions to moral emotions, also informing the literature on the role of moral emotions in moral reasoning and legal decision making.

**Keywords:** Hypocrisy; Morality; Moral emotions; Anger; Disgust; Psychology and law.

But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said,  
“Why tempt me ye, ye hypocrites?”

Matthew 22:18, *The King James Bible*

To the Hypocrites give the glad tidings that there  
is for them a grievous penalty, a painful doom.

4:127, *The Qur'an*

As the quotes above demonstrate, people have been thinking about and discussing hypocrisy since well before modern times. Captured in English idioms such as “talk is cheap”, “practice

what you preach”, or “actions speak louder than words”, hypocrisy is something that social perceivers are quite willing to attribute to others’ inconsistencies in word and action, even when they excuse their own (Valdesolo & DeSteno, 2008). This is true even though many people fail themselves to act in the moral ways they advocate, perhaps because morality can be costly to implement (Batson & Thompson, 2001). In fact, the readiness to perceive hypocrisy is so common that

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trying to disclaim possession of a trait makes perceivers expect inconsistency and assume that the disclaimer possesses the disclaimed trait (El-Alayli, Myers, Petersen, & Lystad, 2008).

The succinct (under)statement by Gilbert and Jones (1986) that “two-faced, hypocritical phonies are not generally admired” (p. 604) effectively captures how people feel about hypocrisy. People feel happy when bad things befall hypocrites, because they are seen as deserving of punishment (Powell & Smith, 2009, as cited in Smith, Powell, Combs, & Schurtz, 2009). Important to the current research, this is also true of criminals. That is, theories concerning retributive justice suggest that people like to see criminals punished in part because moral outrage at criminal transgressions leads to a desire for criminals to get their “just deserts”, symbolically restoring the moral order (Darley & Pittman, 2003).

Therefore, it seems likely that social perceivers will feel particularly strong moral outrage at those people who not only break laws, but whose crimes expose their hypocrisy. Examples of this are easy to find. For example, Reverend Grant Storms, a self-appointed guardian of public morality, was arrested for masturbating in his van outside a children’s playground (Hunter, 2011). Eliot Spitzer, a former governor of New York and crusader against prostitution, was found to have spent tens of thousands of dollars on high-priced prostitutes (Hakim & Santos, 2008). And Debra Oberlin, a former president of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, was detained for driving drunk in Florida (Leibowitz, 2011). The commission of these crimes is not notable. What stands out is that in each case, the actors previously took a public stand against the very crimes they committed, exposing their hypocrisy and inviting public condemnation. And these anecdotes suggest that hypocrites are more roundly condemned than non-hypocrites who engage in similar immoral behaviours. However, there is little beyond anecdotal evidence to support this assumption.

The present studies set out to test several hypotheses related to the idea that hypocritical transgressors will be punished to a greater extent than non-hypocritical transgressors who commit

the same infractions. First, while there is some empirical support in the literature that people do not like hypocrites (Barden, Rucker, & Petty, 2005; Powell & Smith, 2009, as cited in Smith et al., 2009), this seemingly obvious conclusion has not received much attention. Furthermore, no published empirical demonstrations have shown that perceived hypocrisy translates into an actual desire to punish hypocrites, particularly in the context of a legal proceeding. Our first goal was to remedy this gap in the literature, by demonstrating that the perceived hypocrisy of hypocritical criminal and civil moral transgressors will lead them to be viewed as more responsible (i.e., criminally guilty) and deserving of punishment than non-hypocritical transgressors.

Second, little research to date has examined the role of emotional reactions to perceived hypocrisy, in particular, whether emotional reactions to hypocrisy lead to a desire to punish hypocrites. Therefore, our second hypothesis, in line with other work suggesting that emotional reactions play a large role in how people respond to moral transgressions (e.g., Haidt, 2001; Rozin, Lowery, Imada, & Haidt, 1999) and mediate judgements of blame, responsibility, and punishment (e.g., Alicke, 2000, 2008; Averill, 1982; Darley & Pittman, 2003; Goldberg, Lerner, & Tetlock, 1999; Lerner, Goldberg, & Tetlock, 1998; Lerner & Tiedens, 2006; Mullen & Skitka, 2006; Seidel & Prinz, 2013; Skitka & Crosby, 2003; Tetlock et al., 2007), is that negative moral emotions will mediate relationships between perceived hypocrisy, and respectively, perceived criminal guilt and the desire to punish transgressors.

Study 1 provided an initial test of the link between perceived hypocrisy, criminal guilt, and desire for punishment. Study 2 investigated whether moral emotions act as further downstream links between perceived hypocrisy, criminal guilt, and punishment. Study 3 replicated the findings from Study 2, using a civil rather than a criminal case, group agents rather than individuals, and a manipulation of hypocrisy where the agent involved was obviously aware of the hypocrisy of their actions, but acted despite this knowledge.

## Hypocrisy

Starting as early as LaPiere's (1934) study involving a Chinese couple and restaurant owners who said they would not serve Chinese people, but did, people have been studying hypocrisy, even when understanding hypocrisy was not an explicit goal of these studies (see Miller, Monin, & Prentice, 2000; Monin & Merritt, 2012, for related discussions). Even Festinger's (1957) classic theory of cognitive dissonance is in some respects a theory describing how hypocrisy leads to psychological tension. Using this idea, Aronson and colleagues (e.g., Aronson, Fried, & Stone, 1991; Dickerson, Thibodeau, Aronson, & Miller, 1992; Fried & Aronson, 1995; Stone, Aronson, Crain, Winslow, & Fried, 1994; see Stone & Fernandez, 2008, for a review) found that positive behavioural change can be brought about by having participants first write essays in support of a prosocial behaviour (e.g., water conservation, condom use), and then making the same participants aware of the times they failed to act consistently with their advocated standards. That is, making subjects aware of their hypocrisy promoted honesty and sincerity (Stone, Wiegand, Cooper, & Aronson, 1997).

Batson and colleagues (e.g., Batson, Kobryniewicz, Dinnerstein, Kampf, & Wilson, 1997; Batson, Thompson, Seufferling, Whitney, & Strongman, 1999; see Batson, 2008; Batson & Thompson, 2001, for reviews) also examined hypocrisy in the laboratory in an effort to understand why apparently moral people would act in immoral ways. After several studies, their conclusion was that self-interest often trumps the goal of acting with integrity, leading to hypocrisy. If this is the case, then perceivers may be especially sensitive to hypocrisy that results from deliberately pursuing a self-serving (but ultimately hypocritical) goal.

In the worst form of this, an actor might know ahead of time that his or her actions and words will not align. For example, when a politician claims a particular belief simply to get elected, but then contradicts this belief in subsequent actions, perceivers may believe that the earlier claim was a purposeful and disingenuous distortion made for a

specific purpose (i.e., getting elected), with no plan to act consistently. This type of hypocrisy—when an actor plans to act in a way that he or she knows could be seen as hypocritical (i.e., if the inconsistency is discovered)—might be met with the greatest anger and desire for retribution. This would be consistent with an idea put forth by Barden et al. (2005), namely that saying one thing and then doing another is seen as more hypocritical than the reverse, because in the latter case, people believe that the inconsistency is driven by a genuine change in attitudes. Here, the key word is “genuine”. When an actor's hypocrisy involves a devious ploy to promote self-interest, the perception of hypocrisy should be increased.

However, it is not clear that self-promoting hypocrisy, committed by actors who are fully aware of their hypocrisy, is the norm. In fact, considering how often the label of hypocrisy is tossed around, it seems likely that it is perceived even when an actor has no *plan* to be a hypocrite. That is, the label is probably applied whenever a person simply claims an attitude or belief and then later contradicts this in action. Despite this, when the action component is itself a moral violation (such as when an action results in harm), hypocrisy is probably best viewed as a moral violation that exacerbates moral outrage at the action and the actor.

Because hypocrisy is a complex construct, and the perception of hypocrisy can be affected by a variety of contextual variables (e.g., Alicke, Gordon, & Rose, 2012), we considered multiple forms of hypocrisy and several different outcomes resulting from actors' hypocritical actions. In each study, we paired an attitude with a contradiction of this attitude in action—which seems to be an essential component of hypocrisy (e.g., Alicke et al., 2012; Barden et al., 2005). In Studies 1 and 2, we manipulated hypocrisy by suggesting that the individual actors involved had (or had not) taken clear public stands about an issue, and violated their avowed positions in their actions. Importantly, in both of these studies, the actors likely did not *plan* to contradict their attitudes in their actions; instead, their contradictions can be seen as resulting from poor judgement or

weakness of will. In Study 3, we examined a form of hypocrisy where agents' hypocritical actions were clearly in furtherance of their own goals (e.g., Alicke et al., 2012). In Studies 2 and 3, we investigated whether a heightened perception of hypocrisy translates into greater negative emotion, and whether this mediates increased ratings of criminal guilt and the desire for retribution.

### The role of moral emotions

Research has suggested that emotional reactions to and intuitions about morality and justice play as strong a role in moral decision making as conscious reasoning, although the idea is not without its critics (e.g., Saltzstein & Kasachoff, 2004; but see Haidt, 2004). For example, Haidt's (2001) moral intuitionist model suggests that most people evaluate moral dilemmas relatively intuitively and in ways that are laden with affect, and only after an evaluation is made are post hoc rationalisations constructed to explain judgements and persuade others (see also Sunstein, 2005). Although this model includes a role for deliberative reasoning, intuitive evaluations are posited to come first.

In support of this, researchers have found that moral emotions are implicated in how people make judgements about moral issues (e.g., Haidt, 2003; Skitka & Mullen, 2002; Skoe, Eisenberg, & Cumberland, 2002; Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, 2007; Valdesolo & DeSteno, 2006; Wisneski, Lytle, & Skitka, 2009), and that people prefer to use intuition to arrive at moral conclusions and dislike using deliberative reasoning (Merritt & Monin, 2011). Haidt (2003; see also Rozin et al., 1999) suggests that anger in particular is elicited by perceived unjustified slights, insults, or harms, and motivates "approach" action tendencies aimed at retribution for perceived transgressions. This may be particularly true when moral values are strongly held and personally relevant.

Moral mandates are an example of this, and concern moral beliefs that are viewed as objective, universal, absolute, and self-evident (see Skitka, 2010, for a review; see also Tetlock, Kirtel, Elson,

Green, & Lerner, 2000, for a discussion of sacred values). Violations of moral mandates result in moral outrage, which mediates judgements of outcome fairness (Mullen & Skitka, 2006) as well as behavioural intentions (Skitka & Wisneski, 2011). Hypocrisy may, in some ways, resemble a moral mandate, because judgements of hypocrisy probably emerge spontaneously and intuitively, appearing self-evident and not requiring proof. Again, outrage at hypocrisy is probably most likely when it amplifies another moral violation, such as harm.

Emotions, particularly anger, also come into play in legal decision making (e.g., DeSteno, Petty, Rucker, Wegener, & Braverman, 2004; Tiedens & Linton, 2001). For example, anger has been found to influence juror decision making by mediating the effects of blameworthiness and outcome severity on apportionments of fault in civil cases (Feigenson, Park, & Salovey, 2001) and mediating the effect of viewing gruesome crime scene photos on verdicts in criminal cases (Bright & Goodman-Delahunty, 2006). However, more research on this topic is clearly needed (Maroney, 2006; Vidmar, 2001).

Similarly, a role for emotions has been implicated in the social justice literature (e.g., De Cremer & van den Bos, 2007; Skitka & Crosby, 2003), because concerns about morality influence reasoning about justice (Skitka, 2009). That is, when people perceive an offence, they feel moral outrage, which drives a desire for blame, punishment, and retribution (Alicke, 2008; Darley & Pittman, 2003; Goldberg et al., 1999; Tetlock et al., 2007; Vidmar, 2001). Furthermore, this drive for punishment is hypothesised to occur via relatively unconscious and spontaneous evaluations (Alicke, 2000; Greene & Ellis, 2008). So, while there is obviously room for deliberation alongside intuition and emotion in moral judgement (e.g., Carlo, Mestre, Samper, Tur, & Armenta, 2010; Cushman, Young, & Hauser, 2006; Monin, Pizarro, & Beer, 2007), the role of automatic, intuitive processes should not be underestimated, as they likely play as important a role in moral decision making as they do in other areas of

perception and judgement (e.g., Bargh, 1994; Bargh & Chartrand, 1999).

Taken together, it seems plausible that anger will play a role in the desire to punish hypocritical moral transgressors out of a desire for retribution. However, researchers (Haidt, 2003; Rozin et al., 1999) have also suggested that hypocrisy should elicit disgust and motivate “avoid” action tendencies aimed at severing contact with offenders. While some researchers have found evidence that disgust responds generally to moral violations (Hutcherson & Gross, 2011), a large body of evidence suggests that it is primarily brought forth by purity or divinity violations (Haidt, 2003; Horberg, Oveis, Keltner, & Cohen, 2009; Rozin et al., 1999; Russell & Giner-Sorolla, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c). In fact, responses to the word “disgust” (as opposed to other self-report measures of disgust, such as responses to the phrase “grossed out”; e.g., Russell, Piazza, & Giner-Sorolla, 2013) may map more closely onto anger than onto physical disgust (e.g., Nabi, 2002). Still, disgust is theoretically connected to hypocrisy, responds in some measure to fairness violations (Cannon, Schnall, & White, 2011), is correlated with anger (e.g., Russell et al., 2013), and often co-occurs with anger (Gutierrez, Giner-Sorolla, & Vasiljevic, 2012). Furthermore, because disgust may respond to beliefs that a moral transgression has in fact been committed by an actor, while anger should be evoked by moral transgressions involving harm, a composite measure of anger and disgust could potentially predict judgements of both criminal guilt and punishment, making measurement of both variables important for investigations of hypocrisy.

## STUDY 1

Study 1 was conducted to initially examine whether perceived hypocrisy would affect participants’ (i.e., potential jurors’) view of a criminal as culpable and deserving of punishment. To test this, we created a scenario where a man physically assaulted his live-in girlfriend and his best friend during a meal in his home. To manipulate

hypocrisy, the criminal was described as a spokesperson for an organisation called either “Stop the Violence” (high hypocrisy condition) or “Stop the Looting” (low hypocrisy condition). Perceived hypocrisy was then measured, as were assessments of the criminal’s guilt and suggested punishment, the latter measured with both jail time and fines (direct punishment) and money paid to the victims for emotional distress (punitive awards). Our expectation was that participants in the high hypocrisy condition would perceive the criminal to be more hypocritical than participants in the low hypocrisy condition, and that this increased perception of hypocrisy would transmit the effects of condition to judgements of guilt and punishment.

## Method

### *Participants, procedure, and materials*

Participants were 79 students ( $M_{\text{age}} = 19.73$  years,  $SD = 2.36$ ; 52% female) enrolled in an introductory psychology course. Students voluntarily completed the study as part of an exercise on the psychology of morality. No other demographic information was collected.

The study was described as providing selected details from a recently decided court case, although all materials were in fact fictional. The defendant (Mr James Sanderson) was described as a spokesperson for an organisation promoting awareness of the harms of interpersonal violence and the benefits of peaceful, non-violent conflict resolution (high hypocrisy condition) or an organisation promoting awareness of the harms of mortgage, banking, and lending practices that led to the economic breakdown in the USA (low hypocrisy condition). The circumstances leading up to Mr Sanderson’s arrest and trial were then described, where during a dinner with a live-in girlfriend and a best friend, Mr Sanderson pushed his girlfriend away from him and punched his best friend in the nose. Subsequently, the girlfriend hit her head, the best friend’s nose was broken, the police were called, and Mr Sanderson was arrested. The full scenario is available on request from the first author.

Following this, a definition of assault was provided, and participants were asked to assess the defendant's criminal guilt ("Mr Sanderson is guilty of assault"; 1 = *Completely disagree* to 10 = *Completely agree*), and confidence in their guilt ratings ("How confident are you of your guilt judgement?"; 1 = *Not at all* to 10 = *Extremely*). Next, ostensible maximum jail sentences (from none up to five years) and fines (from \$0 up to \$10,000) for assault were described, and participants recommended a jail sentence and fines that Mr Sanderson should pay (on 10-point scales, with higher numbers indicating greater punishment). These were averaged to form a punishment index ( $\alpha = .82$ ). Participants next read that the girlfriend and best friend were each respectively suing Mr Sanderson for \$20,000 for psychological damages above and beyond their medical costs, and were asked to indicate what amount should be awarded to each party. Responses were averaged to form an index of punitive costs ( $\alpha = .83$ ). Participants were then asked two questions relating to Mr Sanderson's hypocrisy, both measured on 10-point scales and averaged ( $\alpha = .83$ ) with higher numbers indicating greater agreement ("Mr Sanderson is a hypocrite" and "Mr Sanderson's actions were hypocritical").

## Results and discussion

Our primary interest was in how the hypocrisy manipulation would affect the perception of hypocrisy, which we expected to affect attributions of guilt and punishment (i.e., a mediational model). However, all dependent variables were examined using *t*-tests for condition differences. Initially, participant gender was included as a potential factor in Condition  $\times$  Gender ANOVA analyses, but no main effects of or interactions with gender were found.<sup>1</sup>

As expected, in the high hypocrisy condition ( $M = 7.34$ ,  $SD = 1.93$ ), participants thought the defendant was much more hypocritical than in the low hypocrisy condition ( $M = 4.42$ ,  $SD = 2.10$ ),  $t(77) = 6.43$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 1.45$ . However, while means for all other dependent variables were descriptively in the expected directions (see Table 1 for means and standard deviations of all dependent variables in each study), none of these comparisons reached significance, all  $p$ s  $> .14$ , two-tailed. Next, correlations between all dependent variables were examined. As expected, greater perceived hypocrisy was associated with greater punishment ( $r = .24$ ,  $p = .04$ ) and punitive damages ( $r = .42$ ,  $p < .001$ ); however, hypocrisy was only marginally related to judgements of the defendant's guilt ( $r = .21$ ,  $p = .07$ ) and not related to confidence in guilt ratings ( $r = .09$ ). Furthermore, guilt and confidence ratings were unrelated to punishment and punitive damages ( $r$ s  $< .14$ ), although they were somewhat correlated ( $r = .47$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Punishment was correlated with punitive damages ( $r = .26$ ,  $p = .02$ ).

While there were no significant total effects of our manipulation on criminal guilt, punishment, and punitive damages—a topic we address in the discussion section of Study 2—we still proceeded to test the hypothesised path model (Figure 1). That is, current discussions regarding mediation/indirect effects suggest that indirect effects can be found even in the absence of significant total effects, for reasons such as suppression, a lack of measurement precision (involving the total effect), or power of indirect versus total effects. For example, if an independent variable exerts "a stronger influence on a mediator (path *a*) than on the dependent measure (path *c*)", this can "lead to a stronger indirect effect than total effect" (Rucker, Preacher, Tormala, & Petty, 2011, p. 364).<sup>2</sup>

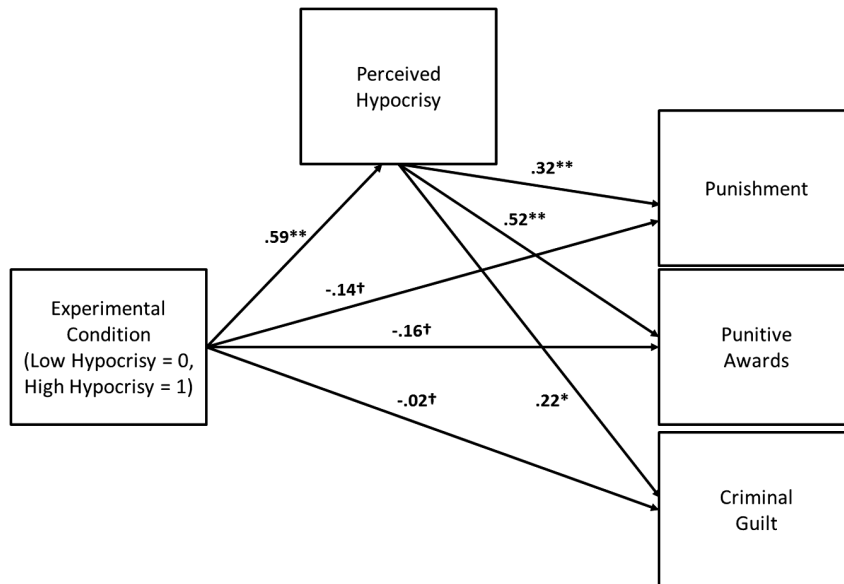
<sup>1</sup>With one exception that did not affect any primary hypothesis, participant gender had no main or interactive effects on any dependent variable in any of the three studies reported here. Therefore, gender is not included as a factor in any analysis. The one effect involving gender (in Study 2) is reported there.

<sup>2</sup>For additional discussions of directly testing proposed theoretical models and examining hypothesised indirect effects, even in the absence of significant total effects of  $X(s)$  on  $Y(s)$ , see, e.g., Hayes, 2009; MacKinnon, Krull, and Lockwood, 2000; MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West, and Sheets, 2002; Preacher and Hayes, 2008; Shrout and Bolger, 2002; Zhao, Lynch, and Chen, 2010.

**Table 1.** Mean ratings of perceived hypocrisy, negative emotion, criminal guilt, and punishment as a function of experimental condition (Studies 1, 2 and 3)

	Experimental condition		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
	Low hypocrisy <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	High hypocrisy <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )			
<i>Study 1</i>					
Perceived hypocrisy	4.42 (2.10)	7.34 (1.93)	6.43	< .001	1.45
Criminal guilt	7.26 (2.67)	7.80 (2.17)	0.99	.32	0.22
Confidence in guilt	7.10 (1.90)	7.65 (1.39)	1.46	.15	0.33
Punishment	3.53 (2.15)	3.74 (2.17)	0.42	.67	0.10
Punitive awards	4.09 (2.70)	4.88 (2.62)	1.31	.19	0.30
<i>Study 2</i>					
Perceived hypocrisy	5.07 (2.31)	7.05 (1.70)	4.45	< .001	0.98
Negative emotion	4.30 (1.17)	4.75 (1.32)	1.63	.11	0.36
Criminal guilt	5.55 (0.56)	5.47 (0.63)	0.55	.58	0.13
Punishment	4.85 (1.25)	4.81 (1.23)	0.16	.87	0.03
<i>Study 3</i>					
Perceived hypocrisy	-0.53 (0.90)	0.53 (0.67)	7.10	< .001	1.33
Negative emotion	2.85 (1.42)	4.50 (1.22)	4.50	< .001	1.25
Criminal guilt	4.85 (1.04)	5.31 (0.88)	2.52	.01	0.48
Punishment	-0.32 (0.76)	0.32 (0.72)	4.50	< .001	0.86

Notes: Study 1: *N* = 79 (low hypocrisy *n* = 39, high hypocrisy *n* = 40); Study 2: *N* = 83 (low hypocrisy *n* = 41, high hypocrisy *n* = 42); Study 3: *N* = 110 (*n* = 55 per experimental condition).



**Figure 1.** Diagram showing relations among experimental condition (0 = low hypocrisy, 1 = high hypocrisy), perceived hypocrisy, criminal guilt, punishment, and punitive awards from the full, unconstrained path model in Study 1. Note: Model fit was good,  $\chi^2(3, N = 79) = 2.56, p = .46, TLI = 1.0, CFI = 1.0, RMSEA = .00, p\text{-close} = .57$ . Indirect paths from condition to punishment and punitive awards were significant,  $p_s \leq .001$ . Coefficients shown are standardised. \* $p = .16$ ; \*\* $p \leq .001$ ;  $^{\dagger}p > .20$ .

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In this path model, we treated our manipulation (low hypocrisy = 0, high hypocrisy = 1) as a predictor of perceived hypocrisy, and used both experimental condition and perceived hypocrisy as predictors of criminal guilt, punishment, and punitive awards (Figure 1). Because confidence ratings (in criminal guilt) were not significantly correlated with any variable other than guilt, this variable was left out of the model. We tested the model using AMOS 21 (Arbuckle, 2012), with bootstrapping (5,000 replications) to estimate standard errors of the indirect effects (Preacher & Hayes, 2008; Shrout & Bolger, 2002). Below, we report model fit, bias-corrected unstandardised<sup>3</sup> (with 95% confidence intervals) and standardised coefficients for all direct and indirect paths, along with significance levels, and  $R^2$  for all endogenous variables.

This model fit the data well,  $\chi^2(3, N=79) = 2.56, p = .46, TLI = 1.0, CFI = 1.0, RMSEA = .00, p\text{-close} = .57$ . The direct effect of condition on perceived hypocrisy was significant, with greater perceived hypocrisy in the high hypocrisy condition,  $b = 2.92, CI_{.95} = (2.04, 3.84), \beta = 0.59, p < .001, R^2 = .35$ . Greater hypocrisy directly predicted greater punishment,  $b = 0.28, CI_{.95} = (0.11, 0.49), \beta = 0.32, p = .001, R^2 = .07$ , and greater punitive awards for psychological damage,  $b = 0.56, CI_{.95} = (0.30, 0.80), \beta = 0.52, p < .001, R^2 = .20$ . The relationship between perceived hypocrisy and criminal guilt was not significant, but was in the hypothesised direction ( $b = 0.21, \beta = 0.22, p = .17, R^2 = .04$ ). Important to our hypotheses were the significant indirect effects of condition, through hypocrisy, on punishment,  $b = 0.81, CI_{.95} = (0.30, 1.57), \beta = 0.19, p = .001$ , and punitive awards,  $b = 1.62, CI_{.95} = (0.90, 2.52), \beta = 0.31, p < .001$ . The indirect effect of condition on criminal guilt failed to reach significance, but was in the hypothesised direction ( $b = 0.62, \beta = 0.13, p = .15$ ).

There were no significant (respectively) total or direct effects of condition on punishment

( $b = 0.21, p = .66$  and  $b = -0.61, p = .27$ ), punitive awards ( $b = 0.79, p = .20$  and  $b = -0.84, p = .20$ ), and criminal guilt ( $b = 0.54, p = .31$  and  $b = -0.07, p = .91$ ). Removing these non-significant direct paths did not decrease model fit,  $\chi^2\Delta(3) = 0.57, p = .90$ , and the reduced model fitted the data well,  $\chi^2(6) = 5.21, p = .52, TLI = 1.0, CFI = 1.0, RMSEA = .00, p\text{-close} = .63$ . All hypothesised direct and indirect paths remained significant ( $p \leq .005$ ; exceptions were the direct effect of perceived hypocrisy on criminal guilt,  $p = .12$ , and the indirect effect of condition on criminal guilt,  $p < .10$ ). Thus, the hypothesised and more parsimonious reduced model might be preferred.

This initial test showed that via his greater *perceived* hypocrisy, participants wanted to punish a hypocritical criminal and award his victims larger punitive damages even when all circumstances leading up to a crime (and the crime itself) did not differ from those committed by an identical, less hypocritical defendant. That is, while the total effects of condition on punishment and punitive damages were *not* significant, there was a significant *indirect* effect of condition, through perceived hypocrisy, on these variables. When it came to the defendant's guilt, the indirect effect of condition was only marginally significant. Potentially, criminal guilt ratings were not as strongly (indirectly) affected by condition as were punishment and punitive damages because participants were able to distinguish between culpability, which should be decided only on the facts of the case, and punishment, which involves moral reasoning about the "costs" of the crime and the character of the criminal (Alicke, 1992, 2000). However, because the indirect effect of condition on criminal guilt was near significance ( $p = .095$ ) and in the hypothesised direction, and other conceptual mediators such moral outrage were not taken into account, this conclusion should only be accepted tentatively, because further studies might reveal that like punishment, even

<sup>3</sup> For effects involving a dichotomous exogenous predictor, unstandardised coefficients of indirect paths provide interpretable measures of effect size and can be understood as mean group-level differences in an outcome  $Y$  as a function of unit changes in  $X$  (Hayes, 2009; Rucker et al., 2011).



criminal guilt can be indirectly affected by perceptions of a defendant's hypocrisy.

## STUDY 2

To our knowledge, little published research on emotional reactions to hypocrisy has been conducted, although theoretical arguments for its role exist (e.g., Haidt, 2003; Rozin et al., 1999). Evidence has shown, however, that moral transgressions and violations of moral mandates are met with moral outrage, which may mediate distal outcomes (e.g., Alicke, 2008; Mullen & Skitka, 2006; Skoe et al., 2002), and that anger mediates judgements in legal contexts (e.g., Feigenson et al., 2001; Goldberg et al., 1999; Tetlock et al., 2007; Vidmar, 2001). In addition, Hutcherson and Gross (2011) suggested that disgust is also aroused by moral violations, and Haidt (2003) suggested that disgust is aroused by hypocrisy. Thus, hypocrisy in service of moral violations may lead to a mix of anger and disgust. Furthermore, self-reported disgust is often co-activated with anger and these two emotions may respond to different aspects of a moral violation (Gutierrez et al., 2012; Ugazio, Lamm, & Singer, 2011).

Study 2 explored the role of participants' moral outrage (i.e., a composite of anger and disgust) toward a criminal as a function of the criminal's perceived hypocrisy, using a new scenario where a woman was arrested and subsequently convicted for the crime of driving while intoxicated—which, as discussed earlier, mimics a case that actually transpired. We also decided to move beyond testing our hypotheses in a college student sample, and examine responses to hypocrisy in a sample drawn from a range of ages, religious beliefs, and political ideologies. Our primary hypothesis was that the experimental manipulation would again affect perceptions of hypocrisy, which would lead to greater negative moral emotion. We then expected that moral emotion would mediate ratings of criminal guilt and desire for retribution.

## Method

### *Participants, procedure, and materials*

Participants were 83 people ( $M_{\text{age}} = 34.37$  years,  $SD = 12.07$ ; 50 female, 30 male, one identified as "other/genderqueer") recruited through Amazon's MTurk website for a paid study on psychology and the law.<sup>4</sup> Participants mostly self-identified as white (60%), with 13.3% identifying as Asian or Asian American, 8.4% as black or African American, and 6% as Latino/Latina. The remaining participants reported a mixture of racial/ethnic backgrounds. Most participants (94%) reported that English was their first language, with the remaining 6% having spoken English for at least 11 years. Religious backgrounds were mixed, with 42.2% of the sample identifying as Christian, 31.3% as agnostic or atheist, and the remaining participants reporting other religious beliefs. Ideologically, the sample was also diverse, with a mean of 3.52 ( $SD = 1.62$ ) in response to the question: "Where would you place yourself on the following ideological spectrum?" (1 = *Very liberal*, 4 = *Moderate (middle of the road)*, 7 = *Very conservative*). The sample was also mostly well educated, with 90.4% reporting some college or an associate's degree, and with over half the sample (51.8%) reporting a college degree or graduate study.

After giving consent to participate, participants were told: "Our interest is in how jurors decide to apply verdicts in actual court cases that have previously taken place, in order to understand how future cases might be decided, and to compare how new jurors would decide verdicts and decisions that have already been handed down". Following this, participants were presented with "selected details" about an ostensibly real (actually, fictional) court case that had transpired in July of 2011 (full scenario available on request). In these details, the hypocrisy manipulation was imbedded by first introducing the defendant as a woman who was "President of the Iowa chapter of Mothers Against Drunk

<sup>4</sup>A check question that tested participants' attention to the details of the case was also included ("What type of car was Ms Jameson driving?"). Because all participants answered this question correctly, none were excluded.

Driving” (high hypocrisy condition) or of the “National Organization of American Businesswomen” (low hypocrisy condition). Following this, participants read that this woman had been spotted driving erratically (she had run into a house where no one was currently home, and an officer on traffic patrol saw her repeatedly crossing the double yellow lines), and were told that she was subsequently arrested for and found guilty of driving while intoxicated and reckless endangerment. Following presentation of the case details, participants were asked several questions about the case. Definitions of terms, such as “reckless endangerment”, were provided where appropriate, as were guidelines for punishment, ostensibly according to Iowa law.

First, participants were asked about her criminal guilt and recklessness, including confidence in guilt ratings (“Ms Jameson is probably guilty of driving while intoxicated, as was found”. “How confident are you that Ms Jameson is guilty of driving while intoxicated?” “To what extent do you agree that Ms Jameson is guilty of reckless endangerment?” “How confident are you that Ms Jameson is guilty of reckless endangerment?” “How reckless was Ms Jameson in your opinion?”). Because each guilt rating was highly correlated with its associated confidence rating (average  $r = .66$ ), and together the items seemed to represent an overall index of perceived guilt, items were combined into a single measure ( $\alpha = .81$ ). Each of these questions was asked on a 6-point scale, where higher numbers indicated greater agreement.

Next, two questions relating to punishment were assessed: “How much jail time, if any, should Ms Jameson be sentenced to serve?” (1 = *No jail time* to 7 = *10 years*) and “How much money, if any, should Ms Jameson be fined for her actions?” (1 = *\$0* and 7 = *\$7,000–10,000*). These were aggregated to form a measure of punishment ( $\alpha = .70$ ). A single item assessed the defendant’s

hypocrisy: “Ms Jameson is a hypocrite”. (1 = *Totally disagree* and 8 = *Totally agree*). Finally, before responding to demographic questions, participants answered two questions about their anger and disgust: “To what extent do you feel angered [disgusted] by Ms Jameson’s behaviour?” Responses were on 6-point scales from 1 = *Not at all* to 6 = *Extremely*. Responses to these questions were highly correlated ( $\alpha = .82$ ), and were combined into a measure of negative (moral) emotion.

## Results

As in Study 1, our primary hypotheses concerned mediation, but we initially explored the effects of condition on each dependent variable, and computed correlations between all dependent variables. As hypothesised, the perception of hypocrisy was substantially higher in the high hypocrisy condition than in the low hypocrisy condition,  $t(81) = 4.45, p < .001, d = 0.98$  (means and standard deviations of all dependent variables are reported in Table 1).<sup>5</sup> While negative emotion was somewhat higher in the high hypocrisy condition relative to the low hypocrisy condition, this comparison only approached significance (2-tailed) but did not reach it,  $t(81) = 1.63, p = .11$ . For all other dependent variables, there were no significant total effects of condition (all  $ps > .45$ ).

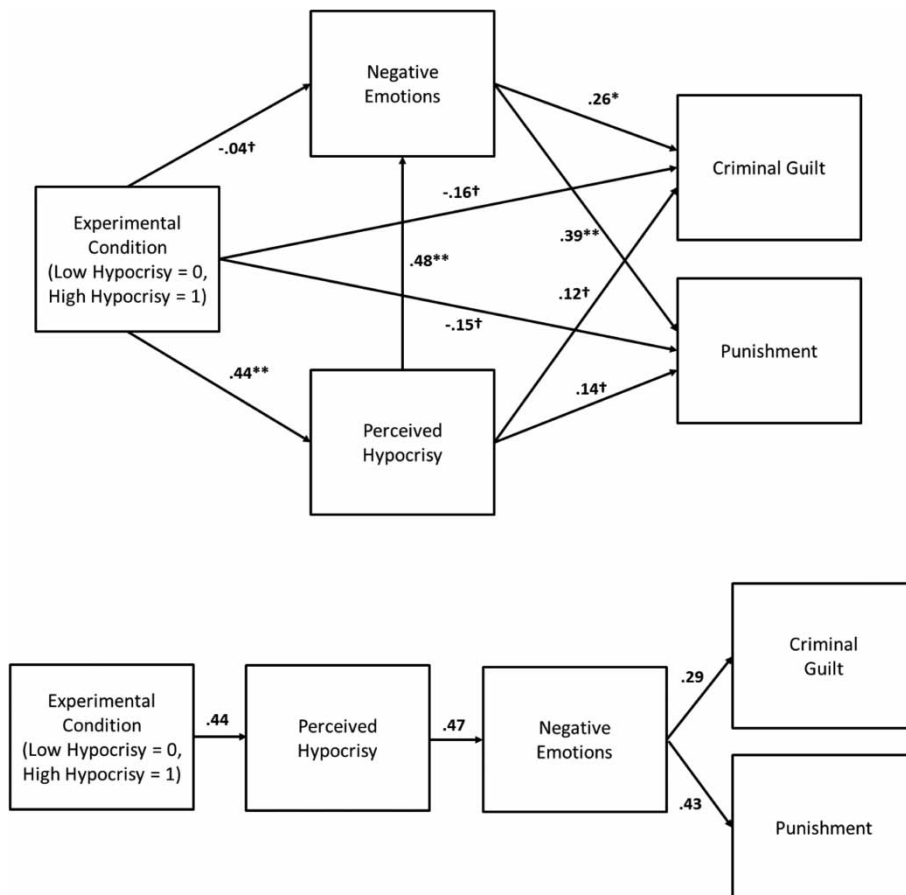
Also as expected, perceived hypocrisy was significantly correlated with negative emotion ( $r = .47, p < .001$ ) and punishment ( $r = .26, p = .02$ ). As in Study 1, the correlation between hypocrisy and perceived guilt was not significant, although it trended in the hypothesised direction ( $r = .17, p = .12$ ). Negative emotion was strongly correlated with both punishment ( $r = .43, p < .001$ ) and guilt ( $r = .29, p = .007$ ). Punishment and guilt were marginally related ( $r = .21, p < .06$ ).

Although (as in Study 1) our manipulation did not have any significant total effects on any

<sup>5</sup>In Study 2, a significant interaction between gender and condition on perceived hypocrisy ( $p = .01$ ) was found. This interaction showed that the effect of condition on perceived hypocrisy was stronger for males than for females. However, for both men and women, perceived hypocrisy was significantly greater in the high hypocrisy condition relative to the low hypocrisy condition ( $ps < .05$ ), and we therefore collapsed all analyses across participant gender.

variable except perceived hypocrisy—which is a topic we consider below, in the discussion section—our hypotheses again concerned the effects of perceived hypocrisy on other variables, and the indirect effects of condition, *through* perceived hypocrisy, on other variables. We therefore estimated a path model using the same methods as in Study 1. In an initial test (Figure 2, Top Panel), condition (low hypocrisy = 0, high hypocrisy = 1) served as an exogenous predictor of all other variables, with perceived hypocrisy and

negative emotion both predicting both guilt and punishment, and hypocrisy ratings predicting negative emotion. This model fit the data well,  $\chi^2(1, N=83) = 0.42, p = .52, TLI = 1.0, CFI = 1.0, RMSEA = .00, p\text{-close} = .56$ . Consistent with our hypotheses, the hypocrisy manipulation significantly predicted perceived hypocrisy, hypocrisy significantly predicted negative emotions, and negative emotions significantly predicted punishment and criminal guilt (all  $p$ s  $\leq .001$ , except for guilt on negative emotions,  $p = .04$ ).



**Figure 2.** Top panel: Diagram showing relations among experimental condition (0 = low hypocrisy, 1 = high hypocrisy), perceived hypocrisy, negative emotions, criminal guilt, and punishment from the full, unconstrained path model in Study 2. Note: Model fit was good,  $\chi^2(1, N = 83) = 0.42, p = .52, TLI = 1.0, CFI = 1.0, RMSEA = .00, p\text{-close} = .56$ . Coefficients shown are standardised. \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p \leq .001$ ; † $p > .27$ . Bottom panel: Diagram showing the reduced (hypothesised) path model from Study 2, with all non-significant paths removed, where condition predicts perceived hypocrisy, which predicts negative emotions, which in turn predicts criminal guilt and punishment. Note: model fit was good,  $\chi^2(6, N = 83) = 4.82, p = .57, TLI = 1.0, CFI = 1.0, RMSEA = .00, p\text{-close} = .68$ , and did not differ from the full model,  $\chi^2\Delta(5) = 4.2, p = .49$ . All direct and indirect paths were significant,  $p$ s  $\leq .003$ . Paths shown are standardised.

Also fully consistent with our expectations, there were no significant direct effects of condition on any variable except perceived hypocrisy, and paths from hypocrisy to guilt and punishment were not significant ( $p < .26$ ), suggesting that the effects of condition were fully carried through perceived hypocrisy, which then influenced negative emotions, which then influenced guilt and punishment. Removing these five non-significant paths did not decrease the fit of the model,  $\chi^2\Delta(5) = 4.2$ ,  $p = .49$ , which continued to provide excellent fit to the data,  $\chi^2(6, N = 83) = 4.82$ ,  $p = .57$ , TLI = 1.0, CFI = 1.0, RMSEA = .00,  $p$ -close = .68. In this model (Figure 2, Bottom Panel; see Table 2 for associated coefficients, confidence intervals, significance levels, and  $R^2$  of endogenous variables), all direct effects remained significant ( $p < .005$ ). Furthermore, working through negative emotions, hypocrisy ratings indirectly affected punishment ( $p < .001$ ) and criminal guilt ( $p = .002$ ) with higher perceived hypocrisy associated with greater guilt and harsher suggested punishment. Furthermore,

mediated by perceived hypocrisy, participants in the high hypocrisy condition reported more negative emotion than participants in the low hypocrisy condition ( $p < .001$ ), and via hypocrisy and moral emotions, had a greater desire to punish the criminal ( $p < .001$ ) and saw the hypocritical transgressor as guiltier ( $p = .001$ ).

#### Alternative model

We conducted an additional test to rule out whether rating criminals as more guilty and deserving of punishment influenced participants' emotional responses, rather than the reverse. In this model, perceived hypocrisy predicted criminal guilt and punishment, which then both predicted negative emotions. This model did not fit the data well,  $\chi^2(5) = 19.90$ ,  $p = .001$ , RMSEA = .19. Adding in a direct path from perceived hypocrisy to negative emotion improved the fit of the model ( $p < .01$ ); however, this model was not particularly close-fitting (e.g., RMSEA = .08), and direct paths from criminal guilt to negative emotion, and from hypocrisy to guilt were not significant,

Table 2. Bias-corrected path coefficients and associated statistics from path models (Study 2)

	<i>B</i>	[95% CI]	$\beta$	<i>p</i>	$R^2$
<i>Total effects (FM)</i>					
Condition → Hypocrisy	1.97	[1.10, 2.80]	0.44	< .001	.20
Condition → Negative emotion	0.45	[-0.10, 1.00]	0.18	.10	.22
Condition → Criminal guilt	-0.07	[-0.34, 0.18]	-0.06	.58	.11
Condition → Punishment	-0.04	[-0.56, 0.50]	-0.02	.89	.21
Hypocrisy → Negative emotion	0.27	[0.14, 0.41]	0.48	< .001	
Hypocrisy → Criminal guilt	0.07	[-0.01, 0.16]	0.25	< .10	
Hypocrisy → Punishment	0.18	[0.01, 0.33]	0.33	.04	
Negative emotion → Criminal guilt	0.13	[0.01, 0.26]	0.26	.04	
Negative emotion → Punishment	0.38	[0.15, 0.63]	0.39	.001	
<i>Direct paths (RM) (From → To)</i>					
Condition → Hypocrisy	1.97	[1.10, 2.80]	0.44	< .001	
Hypocrisy → Negative emotion	0.26	[0.15, 0.38]	0.47	.001	
Negative emotion → Criminal guilt	0.14	[0.05, 0.25]	0.29	.003	
Negative emotion → Punishment	0.42	[0.21, 0.61]	0.43	< .001	
<i>Indirect paths (RM) (From → To)</i>					
Condition → Negative emotion	0.52	[0.24, 0.88]	0.21	< .001	
Condition → Criminal guilt	0.07	[0.02, 0.16]	0.14	.001	
Condition → Punishment	0.22	[0.08, 0.44]	0.09	< .001	
Hypocrisy → Criminal guilt	0.04	[0.01, 0.08]	0.12	.002	
Hypocrisy → Punishment	0.11	[0.05, 0.19]	0.09	< .001	

Notes: Reduced model  $\chi^2(6, N = 83) = 4.82$ ,  $p = .57$ , TLI = 1.0, CFI = 1.0, RMSEA = .00,  $p$ -close = .68. Condition is coded so that 0 = low hypocrisy and 1 = high hypocrisy. FM = full (unconstrained) model. RM = reduced model (with non-significant paths removed).

nor was the indirect path from condition to guilt. Thus, this less parsimonious and non-hypothesised model did not provide as good a fit to the data as the hypothesised model, lending some confidence to the idea that the perception of hypocrisy (itself a function of condition) influenced participants' emotions, which then led them to see the criminal as more culpable and deserving of punishment, rather than the reverse.

## Discussion

Study 2 provided further evidence that a criminal, in this case a drunk driver, is punished not only for her crimes but also for her hypocrisy. Unlike in Study 1, ratings of criminal guilt in Study 2 were indirectly affected by condition, and we found this in a sample diverse in age, religious background, and political ideology. Of particular interest, when the agent was not only a criminal, but a hypocrite, moral outrage at her hypocrisy transmitted the effects of perceived hypocrisy to ratings of criminal guilt and deservingness of punishment. Although theoretically expected, this is the first direct experimental evidence we have seen that hypocrisy elicits a mix of anger and disgust, and that these moral emotions mediate guilt and punishment. However, this finding is consistent with prior theory and research suggesting that disgust is related to hypocrisy and moral violations (e.g., Haidt, 2003), and that anger mediates participants' evaluations of immoral actors (Goldberg et al., 1999; Tetlock et al., 2007), perhaps driven by a desire that criminals get their "just deserts" (Darley & Pittman, 2003). Although the causal relationships between hypocrisy, moral emotions, and criminal guilt and punishment may differ as a function of the crime committed (i.e., by the type of moral or legal transgression), the present data at least offer the suggestion that attributions of hypocrisy precede and exacerbate emotional reactions to a criminal transgression, and affect judgement *through* these reactions.

As in Study 1, there was little evidence in Study 2 of a total effect of our manipulation on all distal outcomes, which may have been a function of the criminals' clear guilt in both studies, the

fact that in both cases, the criminals clearly caused (or could have caused) great harm to others, or the fact that neither hypocritical criminal was likely aware of their hypocrisy as they acted. Another possibility is that because our manipulation strongly affected the perception of hypocrisy, which was itself strongly associated with emotional responses, and subsequently, with criminal guilt and punishment, the power to find the hypothesised indirect effect was simply much greater than the power to find a total (i.e., unmediated) effect (Rucker et al., 2011).

However, another possibility is that a different (unmeasured) variable related to our experimental manipulations also influenced participants' responses in a way that countervailed the effects of hypocrisy on distal variables. On examining our manipulations, we realised that in both studies, the hypocritical actors were qualitatively different than the non-hypocritical actors. In Study 1, the hypocrite was a spokesperson for an organisation promoting the benefits of peaceful, non-violent conflict resolution, while the non-hypocrite was a spokesperson for an organisation promoting awareness of the harms of mortgage and lending practices. In Study 2, the hypocrite was a chapter president of Mothers Against Drunk Driving while the non-hypocrite was a chapter president of the National Organization of American Businesswomen. Thus, in both studies, the hypocrites had publicly adopted strong and norm-conforming stances on what are obviously moral issues (stopping violence and drunk driving) prior to their hypocritical transgressions in the same domains. On the other hand, the non-hypocrites had either taken a stand on a morally ambiguous issue (stopping bad banking practices in Study 1), or had not clearly advocated any moral view (Study 2), before committing the same crimes, which were unrelated to their positions.

In some ways, the hypocrites in both studies were, therefore, pitiable figures, in that they first opted to march along a high moral road before walking (or falling) down the low road to hypocrisy. Thus, to the extent that perceivers felt pity for these actors, they might have wanted to "go easier" on them (relative to the non-

hypocritical actors) even though their hypocrisy simultaneously made them seem more guilty and deserving of punishment than their non-hypocritical counterparts. Another related possibility finds support in work by Effron and Monin (2010), who found that when people perform good deeds, observers are more likely to license (i.e., *excuse*) their subsequent bad behaviour—so long as the bad behaviour is ambiguous or in a different domain than the prior good deeds. However, and importantly, when actors commit blatant transgressions in the same domain in which they have been licensed, the perception of hypocrisy statistically suppresses licensing.

In the present studies, an analogous but reverse pattern might have been the case. That is, the hypocritical actors' prior good deeds might have suppressed the effects of condition on seeing the actors as guiltier and more deserving of punishment. Consequently, to the extent that perceivers felt the hypocritical actors were essentially *good people who made a mistake* (i.e., because of their prior good deeds), this variable might have provided an indirect path to judging the hypocritical actors as *less* guilty and deserving of punishment than the non-hypocritical actors who had not done any prior good deeds. Future research using scenarios and actors similar to those used in Studies 1 and 2 might measure these variables (i.e., pity and the perception that the hypocrites are, at heart, good people who made a mistake) to examine empirically whether this is the case.

In any case, although we expected and found support for the idea that our manipulations would work through a heightened perception of hypocrisy, we see the lack of total effects as a potential limitation of Studies 1 and 2. In Study 3, we attempted to correct for these limitations in several ways. First, when the agents (in this case, corporations) acted hypocritically, it was not because of a lapse in judgement. Instead, their hypocrisy was in furtherance of their own *self-interest*, which may be a particularly strong form of hypocrisy. Specifically, when an agent makes a claim that they never plan to uphold in behaviour, or acts in full awareness of their hypocrisy, perceivers should see the agent as particularly

hypocritical. Second, the hypocritical and non-hypocritical agents in this study were designed to not qualitatively differ, except for the hypocrisy of the hypocritical agents. That is, in Study 3, the hypocritical and non-hypocritical agents were both described as performing the same type of good deeds (working to help the environment), but only the hypocritical agents later betrayed this cause. Finally, to increase our generalisability, we also switched to the realm of civil cases (i.e., torts), to probe whether the findings in Studies 1 and 2 would also apply when the defendant was a corporation rather than an individual, and where the defendant's actions were punishable but not necessarily felonious, so that questions of guilt and innocence might be more subject to interpretation.

### STUDY 3

In Studies 1 and 2, the actors' hypocrisy was clearly not the result of planning, but instead reflected their poor judgement, at worst. In Study 1, a man who worked as an advocate for peaceful conflict resolution punched a friend in the nose, in what was apparently an act of passion (i.e., because of jealousy). In Study 2, a woman who was the head of a chapter of Mothers Against Drunk Driving got caught driving drunk, but it seems unlikely that she planned on doing so. In fact, she may not have realised how intoxicated she was, or may have been too drunk to consider the potential consequences of her actions. Thus in both studies, while participants were clearly sensitive to these actors' hypocrisy, they may have also forgiven their *actions* to some extent, perhaps because their actions were not easily controlled (e.g., Alicke et al., in press), because they pitied the actors, or because the actors were seen as having performed prior good deeds. Furthermore, in these studies, the hypocritical actors differed from the non-hypocritical actors in that they had previously adopted norm-conforming public stances in the same moral domains where they later transgressed, while the non-hypocritical actors had not. In Study 3, we explored what

happens when an actor does something that they know is hypocritical. In fact, acting in a way that is clearly and obviously hypocritical should work to increase the perception of hypocrisy, because when an actor knowingly violates an avowed moral standard for conduct, it suggests not just inconsistency, but insincerity, which has been suggested to be a necessary component of hypocrisy (Monin & Merritt, 2012). Additionally, all actors in Study 3 took the same stance on the same issue prior to their transgressions; the only difference between the hypocritical and non-hypocritical actors was the former's betrayal of that stance.

In Study 3, we again manipulated the hypocrisy of an iniquitous entity, using two new but conceptually related scenarios. In each, the defendant was a corporation—a “green” company who ended up polluting a lake with toxic waste, killing off fish and disturbing the local wildlife. Hypocrisy was manipulated in two different ways. In one version, the company was either unaware that they had been polluting and repentant when they discovered their actions (low hypocrisy), or were aware of polluting and unrepentant, deciding not to fix the problem because of the expense (high hypocrisy). In another version, the company was either presented as a “sincere green” company that “truly cared about the environment” (low hypocrisy) or that was simply “greenwashing” (i.e., trying to cash in on the green movement; high hypocrisy).

We then measured reactions to both companies and the CEOs of the companies, including perceived criminal guilt, desire for punishment (suggested jail time and punitive awards), perceived hypocrisy, and negative emotions (i.e., anger and disgust). Our primary hypothesis was that greater perception of hypocrisy in the high hypocrisy conditions would indirectly lead to greater perception of guilt and desire for punishment (as in Studies 1 and 2), mediated by moral emotions (Study 2).

## Method

### *Participants and procedure*

Participants were 110 people ( $M_{\text{age}} = 31.63$  years,  $SD = 11.48$ ; 55 female, 54 male, 1 reported gender as “other”) recruited on Amazon's MTurk website to participate in a paid study on psychology and law.<sup>6</sup> As in Study 2, the sample was relatively diverse (although not racially so), with most participants self-identifying as white (82.2%; 8.2% Asian or Asian American; 2.7% black or African American; 2.7% Latino/Latina, and 1.8% multiracial; one participant identified as “other”). Most participants (97.3%) agreed that English was their first language, with the remaining three participants having spoken English for more than 16 years. Religious backgrounds included 38.2% of the sample identifying as Christian, and 40% as agnostic or atheist, with the remaining participants identifying with various other religious beliefs. The sample was ideologically diverse although slightly liberal-leaning, with a mean of 3.38 ( $SD = 1.73$ ) in response to the same question used in Study 2 about ideology (1 = *Very liberal*, 4 = *Moderate (middle of the road)*, 7 = *Very conservative*). The sample was again mostly well educated, with 83.6% reporting at least some college education or an associate's degree (over one third of the sample reported having a college degree or some graduate study).

After giving consent to participate, participants were presented with selected details from an “actual” (in fact, fictional) court case that had transpired in Wisconsin, in September of 2009 (scenarios are available on request). In all versions, participants were first introduced to a company called “EarthCo.”, which was described as a large manufacturer of sustainable, environmentally responsible plastics, that grossed over \$750 million dollars a year. The CEO and founder, William Roberts, was described as a man who had earlier started a grass-roots organisation focused on fundraising for environmental issues. Describing the CEO in this way left open the possibility that

<sup>6</sup>The original  $N = 116$ , but six participants were removed from the sample for failing “check” questions (i.e., the name of the company in the scenarios) designed to test participants' attention to the task.

he founded the earlier organisation to make money, or because he cared for the environment.

Next, participants were told that the Wisconsin Lakes and Rivers Consortium (a fictional organisation), whose state-chartered mandate was to keep the lakes and rivers of Wisconsin clean, had discovered that fish were dying off in large numbers in a lake in Southern Wisconsin, with sick animals reported in the surrounding forests. Investigations had determined that beyond any doubt, EarthCo. was responsible for the environmental damage because of leaking toxic waste from an underground storage container.

In further details, the hypocrisy manipulation was embedded in one of two ways. In one version, EarthCo. was described as unaware of the leaking waste and horrified to find out they had been polluting (low hypocrisy), or as aware of the leak, but deciding to not repair it because of the cost (high hypocrisy). In the second version, no mention of awareness was made, but we manipulated the “sincerity” of the companies by describing EarthCo. as a “true green” company who really cared about the environment (low hypocrisy) or as a “fake green” company who were only greenwashing their message to sell their products (high hypocrisy).

### Materials

Following the manipulations, participants in all conditions responded to the same questions about EarthCo. and the company’s CEO, William Roberts.

*Manipulation checks.* Two manipulation checks were used in each scenario, and were specific to the scenario used. First, to assure that the company in the aware condition was perceived as more aware of the leaking toxic waste than in the unaware condition, we asked: “Was EarthCo. aware that they were leaking toxic waste into Lake Clearwater?” Possible responses were 1 = *No*, 2 = *Maybe*, and 3 = *Yes*. For the “real” versus “fake” green scenario, we asked: “Did EarthCo. care that they were leaking toxic waste into Lake

Clearwater?” Here, possible responses were 1 = *Yes*, 2 = *Maybe*, and 3 = *No*.

*Criminal guilt.* Two questions asked about criminal guilt and confidence in guilt ratings (“EarthCo. is probably guilty, as was found” and “How confident are you that EarthCo. is guilty?”). Responses to both questions were on 6-point scales where higher numbers indicated greater guilt and confidence in guilt ratings. Because these items were highly correlated, they were aggregated to form a guilt index ( $\alpha = .90$ ).<sup>7</sup>

*Punishment.* Participants were provided with an explanation of why punitive damages are sometimes awarded in similar cases, and were then asked: “What, if any, punitive damages do you think should be levied against EarthCo.? That is, how heavy a fine, if any, should the company pay for the environmental damage to Lake Clearwater?” Responses were from 1 = *\$0 to 9 = \$10 million or above*. Two other questions asked how much jail time, if any, the CEO should serve (1 = *None to 6 = More than five years*), and how much of a fine the CEO should pay (1 = *\$0 to 8 = More than \$1 million*). After standardising all items, they were averaged together to form a punishment index ( $\alpha = .72$ ).

*Hypocrisy.* To assess EarthCo.’s hypocrisy, participants were asked: “In your opinion, how hypocritical is EarthCo.?” This was measured on a 6-point scale (from 1 = *Not at all to 6 = Extremely*). A second question asked for participants’ agreement with the statement: “The CEO of EarthCo., William Roberts, is a hypocrite” (1 = *Disagree completely, 8 = Agree completely*). After standardising both items, they were averaged together to form a hypocrisy index ( $\alpha = .90$ ).

*Negative (moral) emotion.* Four questions probed participants’ anger and disgust reactions, using the same question stems and rating scales as were used for anger and disgust in Study 2, but asking about both the company and CEO. Responses were

<sup>7</sup>Analyses using the guilt question alone led to similar conclusions as using the composite measure.



averaged to form an index of negative moral emotion ( $\alpha = .95$ ).

## Results

Before conducting our main tests of interest, we examined responses to our manipulation checks using 2 (Hypocrisy: low vs. high)  $\times$  2 (Scenario: awareness vs. sincerity) analyses of variance (ANOVAs), with the awareness and caring variables serving as outcomes. As expected, for the awareness item, main effects of Hypocrisy ( $d = 1.77$ ) and Scenario ( $d = 0.45$ ) emerged ( $ps \leq .002$ ), along with a two-way interaction,  $F(1, 106) = 11.06$ ,  $p = .001$ . Examination of the means showed that across both scenarios, companies in the high hypocrisy conditions ( $M_{\text{Aware}} = 2.90$ ,  $SD = 0.31$ ;  $M_{\text{Insincere}} = 2.23$ ,  $SD = 0.51$ ) were seen as more aware of their actions than were companies in the low hypocrisy conditions ( $M_{\text{Unaware}} = 1.54$ ,  $SD = 0.64$ ;  $M_{\text{Sincere}} = 1.56$ ,  $SD = 0.64$ ), with the difference between hypocrisy conditions largest in the awareness scenario. For caring, only a main effect of Hypocrisy emerged,  $F(1, 106) = 84.09$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 1.75$ . In the high hypocrisy conditions ( $M = 2.55$ ,  $SD = 0.63$ ), participants thought the companies cared less about leaking toxic waste into Lake Clearwater than in the low hypocrisy conditions ( $M = 1.42$ ,  $SD = 0.66$ ).

Next, we examined the effects of condition on each of the dependent variables. As conjectured, the manipulations of hypocrisy affected all dependent variables to a greater extent than in Studies 1 and 2, with  $F_s(1, 106)$  ranging from a low of 6.39 for criminal guilt to a high of 50.80 for perceived hypocrisy, and  $ps$  ranging from .01 for guilt to  $< .001$  for all other dependent variables. There was no main effect of scenario on any dependent variable (Table 1 reports the means, standard deviations,  $p$ -values, and effect sizes for each of the dependent variables as a function of manipulated hypocrisy.) For perceived hypocrisy, negative emotion, and criminal guilt, interactions between manipulated hypocrisy and scenario also emerged,  $ps < .05$ . However, each interaction took on the same form, showing that differences between the high and low hypocrisy conditions tended to be

larger in the awareness scenario than in the sincerity scenario. Therefore, remaining analyses focus on the main effects of manipulated hypocrisy (i.e., analyses are collapsed across scenario).

As expected, correlations among all variables were significant (all  $ps < .001$ ). Specifically, perceived hypocrisy correlated with negative emotion ( $r = .85$ ), criminal guilt ( $r = .40$ ), and punishment ( $r = .63$ ). Negative emotion correlated with criminal guilt ( $r = .43$ ) and punishment ( $r = .65$ ). Guilt and punishment were also correlated ( $r = .34$ ).

### Path analyses

Based on Study 2 and our theoretical expectations, we hypothesised that the effects of the hypocrisy manipulation on criminal guilt and punishment would operate by first increasing the perception of hypocrisy, which would subsequently influence negative emotion, which would then mediate criminal guilt and punishment. In addition, particularly because our manipulation showed total effects on all variables, we again wanted to rule out reverse causal models, where, for example, the hypocrisy manipulation might have first caused a negative emotional response, which then led to perceptions of hypocrisy (and perhaps, from there, to guilt and punishment).

All path analyses were conducted using the same methods as Studies 1 and 2. Table 3 reports  $b$  (with 95% CIs),  $\beta$ ,  $p$ , and  $R^2$  for our hypothesised model. Our first test again examined a full model, where condition (low hypocrisy = 0, high hypocrisy = 1) predicted all other variables, perceived hypocrisy and negative emotions each predicted criminal guilt and punishment, and hypocrisy predicted negative emotions (Figure 3, Top Panel). As in Study 2, this model fit the data well,  $\chi^2(1, N = 110) = 0.61$ ,  $p = .43$ , TLI = 1.0, CFI = 1.0, RMSEA = .00,  $p$ -close = .49, with condition significantly predicting perceived hypocrisy, hypocrisy predicting negative emotions, and negative emotions predicting criminal guilt and punishment (all  $ps \leq .001$  except for emotions on guilt,  $p = .02$ ). Also as in Study 2, no other direct paths in the model were significant (all  $ps > .22$ ; an exception was a marginally significant path from perceived

**Table 3.** Bias-corrected path model coefficients and associated statistics path models (Study 3)

	<i>B</i>	[95% <i>CI</i> ]	$\beta$	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>
<i>Total effects (FM)</i>					
Condition → Hypocrisy	1.07	[0.77, 1.36]	0.56	<.001	.32
Condition → Negative emotion	1.66	[1.14, 2.12]	0.53	<.001	.73
Condition → Criminal guilt	0.46	[0.10, 0.83]	0.24	.01	.19
Condition → Punishment	0.63	[0.35, 0.89]	0.40	<.001	.45
Hypocrisy → Negative emotion	1.32	[1.13, 1.49]	0.81	<.001	
Hypocrisy → Criminal guilt	0.41	[0.12, 0.70]	0.40	.004	
Hypocrisy → Punishment	0.50	[0.35, 0.64]	0.60	<.001	
Negative emotion → Criminal guilt	0.21	[0.04, 0.43]	0.33	.02	
Negative emotion → Punishment	0.21	[0.10, 0.34]	0.40	.001	
<i>Direct paths (RM) (From → To)</i>					
Condition → Perceived hypocrisy	1.07	[0.77, 1.36]	0.56	<.001	
Perceived hypocrisy → Negative emotion	1.39	[1.24, 1.53]	0.85	<.001	
Negative emotion → Criminal guilt	0.28	[0.17, 0.41]	0.29	<.001	
Negative emotion → Punishment	0.34	[0.26, 0.41]	0.65	<.001	
<i>Indirect paths (RM) (From → To)</i>					
Condition → Negative emotion	1.49	[1.07, 1.91]	0.48	<.001	
Condition → Criminal guilt	0.41	[0.25, 0.65]	0.21	<.001	
Condition → Punishment	0.50	[0.33, 0.71]	0.31	<.001	
Perceived hypocrisy → Criminal guilt	0.38	[0.23, 0.57]	0.37	<.001	
Perceived hypocrisy → Punishment	0.47	[0.35, 0.60]	0.56	<.001	

Notes: Reduced model  $\chi^2(6, N=110) = 7.21, p = .30, TLI = 0.99, CFI = 1.0, RMSEA = .04, p\text{-close} = .47$ . Condition is coded so that 0 = low hypocrisy and 1 = high hypocrisy. FM = full (unconstrained) model. RM = reduced model (with non-significant paths removed).

hypocrisy to punishment,  $p = .07$ ). Removing these five paths did not decrease the fit of the model,  $\chi^2\Delta(5) = 6.6, p = .25$ , again suggesting that the more parsimonious, hypothesised model was preferable. This model fit the data well,  $\chi^2(6, N = 110) = 7.21, p = .30, TLI = 0.99, CFI = 1.0, RMSEA = .04, p\text{-close} = .47$  (Figure 3, Bottom Panel), and all direct and indirect effects were significant,  $p_s < .001$ .

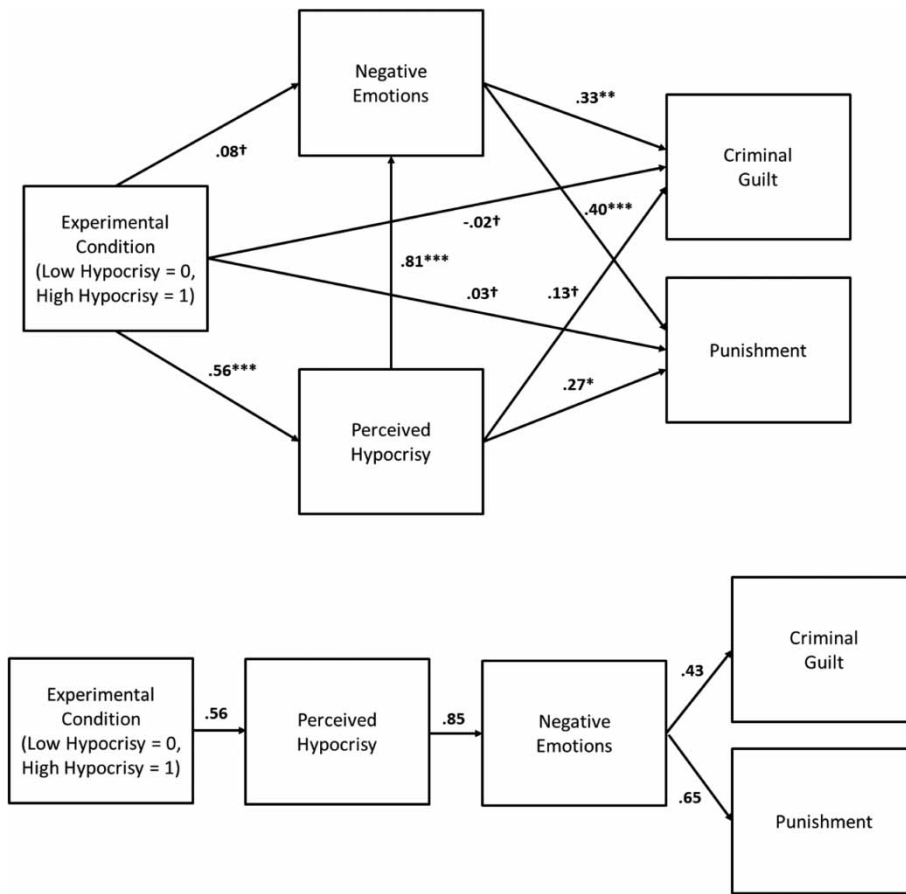
#### *Alternative final models*

As in Study 2, we again conducted several additional tests. Because condition significantly predicted all variables (i.e., significant total effects of condition), we examined each of the five basic models that reversed causality from our preferred theoretical model (e.g., where condition predicts criminal guilt and punishment, which both predict negative emotions, which then predicts perceived hypocrisy). None of these models fit the data at all well, i.e., in the best

fitting of these models,  $\chi^2(6) = 20.17, p < .001, RMSEA = .15$ .

## Discussion

Study 3 replicated findings from Studies 1 and 2 that when criminals are hypocrites as well as law-breakers, as a function of their perceived hypocrisy they are seen as more criminally guilty and are punished to a greater extent than the same criminals who are only guilty of crimes, and not hypocrisy. This replication used two new scenarios that involved a corporation's immoral transgression, rather than transgressions by individual actors (Studies 1 and 2). Study 3 also replicated the finding from Study 2 that perceived hypocrisy strongly predicts negative moral emotions, and that these variables respectively mediate punishment and guilt. As in Study 2, we ruled out possible alternative models, none of which fit the data well. Thus, the results of Study 3 lend greater confidence to the idea that the perception of



**Figure 3.** Top panel: Diagram showing relations among experimental condition (0 = low hypocrisy, 1 = high hypocrisy), perceived hypocrisy, negative emotions, criminal guilt, and punishment from the full, unconstrained path model in Study 3. Note: Model fit was good,  $\chi^2(1, N = 110) = 0.61, p = .43, TLI = 1.0, CFI = 1.0, RMSEA = .00, p\text{-close} = .49$ . Coefficients shown are standardised. \* $p = .07$ ; \*\* $p = .02$ ; \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ ; † $p > .22$ . Bottom panel: Diagram showing the reduced (hypothesised) path model from Study 3, with all non-significant paths removed, where condition predicts perceived hypocrisy, which predicts negative emotions, which in turn predicts criminal guilt and punishment. Note: Model fit was good,  $\chi^2(6, N = 110) = 7.21, p = .30, TLI = 0.99, CFI = 1.0, RMSEA = .04, p\text{-close} = .47$ , and did not differ from the full model,  $\chi^2\Delta(5) = 6.6, p = .25$ . All direct and indirect paths were significant,  $ps < .001$ . Paths shown are standardised.

hypocrisy precedes an emotional reaction to it, and that the emotional reaction leads to decisions regarding criminal guilt and desire for punishment, rather than the reverse. However, future work should examine these claims experimentally, or by using measures of reaction time, to increase confidence even further.

One final note of interest is that in Study 3, all dependent variables were directly affected by the hypocrisy manipulation, which was not the case in Studies 1 and 2. This is fully consistent with our

prediction that when an agent's hypocrisy results from a lack of attitudinal sincerity, or when an agent acts while clearly aware of the hypocrisy in their actions, it makes their hypocrisy seem more heinous and less forgivable. It is also consistent with the idea that when examining hypocrisy, unless one is specifically interested in countervailing indirect routes to distal outcomes, varying the respective moral backgrounds and credentials of hypocritical and non-hypocritical actors might not be advisable.

## GENERAL DISCUSSION

Examples of hypocrisy abound in the media and on the internet. And when a person is caught committing a crime that exposes their hypocrisy, the hypocrisy may catch peoples' attention to a greater extent than the crime itself, turning it into news (e.g., Hunter, 2011; Leibowitz, 2011). The present research set out to show that judgements of criminal guilt and punishment about moral and legal violations are exacerbated by hypocrisy. We found broad support for this hypothesis across three studies, using male and female criminals as well as a corporation as the moral actors, using different (criminal and civil) scenarios in each study (assault, drunk driving, and environmental polluting), and manipulating hypocrisy in different ways.

This is both a novel finding and one that fits into existing literature suggesting the blameworthiness of an offence is affected by the moral valence of factors involving the actor but not directly relevant to the crime itself (e.g., Alicke, 1992, 2000, 2008). It also supports other limited empirical work documenting that people dislike hypocrites (e.g., Barden et al., 2005; El-Alayli et al., 2008; Gilbert & Jones, 1986; Powell & Smith, 2009, as cited in Smith et al., 2009), but does so in a novel way, and is consistent with the idea that people respond to moral violations with blame and attributions of responsibility, including a desire to punish the transgressor (e.g., Averill, 1982; Darley & Pittman, 2003; Goldberg et al., 1999; Mullen & Skitka, 2006; Skitka, 2009; Skitka & Crosby, 2003; Tetlock et al., 2007; Vidmar, 2001). Furthermore, it informs research and theory on legal decision making and justice, more generally (e.g., Greene & Ellis, 2008; Maroney, 2006; Vidmar, 2001), showing that among other factors such as race (e.g., Eberhardt, Davies, Purdie-Vaughns, & Johnson, 2006; Lynch & Haney, 2011), hypocrisy can influence the way people make decisions regarding guilt and punishment. In addition, it provides support for theories suggesting that emotions and intuition may play a potent role in moral and legal decision making (DeSteno et al., 2004; Haidt, 2001, 2003; Skitka & Mullen, 2002; Skoe et al., 2002;

Skorinko, Laurent, Bountress, Nyein, & Kuckuck, in press; Vidmar, 2001).

### Hypocrisy and moral emotions

Past research has found strong support for the idea that in response to moral violations, perceivers feel moral outrage, particularly when violations concern strongly held values (Skitka, 2010). Since hypocrisy is inherently a moral violation (Monin & Merritt, 2012), it is not surprising that it makes people angry. Researchers have also suggested that hypocrisy should lead to disgust (Haidt, 2003; Rozin et al., 1999), and like anger, the effect of moral violations on disgust has been documented (e.g., Hutcherson & Gross, 2012; Russell & Giner-Sorella, 2011a, 2011b; Ugazio et al., 2011). The present research extends knowledge about the response of moral emotions to moral violations by confirming that anger and disgust do indeed respond to hypocrisy.

The finding that moral outrage evoked by hypocrisy leads in turn to a desire to punish the transgressors is consistent with other models describing how anger influences legal decision making (Bright & Goodman-Delahunty, 2006; DeSteno et al., 2004; Feigenson et al., 2001; Goldberg et al., 1999; Tetlock et al., 2007; Tiedens & Linton, 2001). It is also compatible with the idea that perceivers want to see those who violate moral rules get their just deserts (Darley & Pittman, 2003). However, we also found that disgust was activated in response to hypocrisy, which is consistent with the idea that it may co-occur with anger in response to moral and legal transgressions (Hutcherson & Gross, 2011; Russell & Giner-Sorella, 2011a).

Finally, the present research joins other work in providing support for the notion that although deliberative reasoning can take place alongside intuition (Carlo et al., 2010; Cushman et al., 2006; Monin et al., 2007; Moore, Clark, & Kane, 2008), people often make moral judgements intuitively (e.g., Alicke, 2008; Haidt, 2001, 2003; Merritt & Monin, 2011; Skoe et al., 2002; Tangney et al., 2007; Valdesolo & DeSteno, 2006; Wisneski et al., 2009). In fact, while our data cannot address this

directly, judgements of hypocrisy may be made intuitively. Although we concede that more work is needed, we found support in two studies for the idea that perceptions of hypocrisy work through emotional responses to impact judgements. While future work should explore whether there are forms of deliberative reasoning that better explain the relationship between hypocrisy and criminal guilt/punishment than do moral emotions, participants' emotional reactions in the present case ultimately predicted their judgements rather than the reverse.

### Limitations

As with all studies, there are limitations to the conclusions that can be drawn. In the present case, because we found evidence for our primary hypothesis and replicated it across three studies, we are confident that the effect exists; still, questions remain. For example, we believe that our findings have implications for how people arrive at judgements in legal domains. However, when juries deliberate together about a case, individual jurors may come to different conclusions than when they make decisions independently, which is how a majority of research on legal decision making is conducted (e.g., Bornstein, 1999; Nuñez, McCrea, & Culhane, 2011). The finding that joint deliberations can lead to different conclusions than individual deliberation is consistent with elements of Haidt's (2001) moral intuitionist theory, which focuses on perceivers' intuitions as the primary route to moral judgement, but also provides causal links for others' intuitions, judgements, and reasoning to influence an actor's initial intuition. Jury deliberations provide an ideal forum for this kind of reciprocal influence to occur, because when jurors discuss a case, they may initially use their intuitions to arrive at judgements. If jurors disagree in their judgements, though, some may form and posit post hoc arguments (supporting their own intuitions) that are used to persuade others of their own views, or that shift other jurors into a more deliberative reasoning style.

We tried to address other potential criticisms by including non-college student samples who varied

in age, religion, and ideology (e.g., Diamond, 1997; Nuñez, Dahl, Tang, & Jensen, 2007), but the use of vignettes rather than, for example, videotaped stimuli or mock trials (e.g., Diamond, 1997), somewhat limits our ability to generalise to what might happen in a real courtroom when jurors find out a criminal is also a hypocrite. However, our focus here is probably best defined as a study of psychological processes rather than a way to definitively understand real-world outcomes (Nuñez et al., 2011), and thus is valid in this sense. Furthermore, work on psychological processes in juror decision making has often used vignette studies (e.g., Nuñez et al., 2007).

Limitations aside, we feel that these studies contribute to theoretical and empirical work that cuts across several domains. For example, the processes we investigated inform work on intuition in moral judgement (e.g., Haidt, 2001; Merritt & Monin, 2011), particularly the role of emotions in moral judgements and the relationship of these judgements to blame in psychological and legal contexts (e.g., Darley & Pittman, 2003; De Cremer & van den Bos, 2007; Goldberg et al., 1999; Maroney, 2006; Mullen & Skitka, 2006; Skitka & Crosby, 2003; Tetlock et al., 2007). We also provided empirical evidence for theorised relationships between hypocrisy and moral emotions (Haidt, 2003; Rozin et al., 1999). Finally, we postulated and found novel evidence for a relationship between hypocrisy, criminal culpability, and retribution. In short, we believe the current studies provide a good initial foray into answering several important theoretical questions, while raising new questions for future research.

### Conclusion

Aristotle claimed that the law is reason free from passion. That is, "A core presumption underlying modern legality is that reason and emotion are different beasts entirely: they belong to separate spheres of human existence" (Maroney, 2006, p. 120). Thus, at least according to philosophy of law, legal decision making should be free from the influence and sway of information not directly

relevant to a case (e.g., a criminal's hypocrisy), including perceivers' emotional reactions. However, as past research shows, emotions do influence decision making in both legal and moral domains. The present research contributes to this discussion in several ways, suggesting that hypocrisy elicits passions, and that these passions strongly influence decisions about morality and justice.

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