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Organizational hypocrisy in business schools with sustainability commitments: the drivers of talk-action inconsistency

Abstract:

Business schools are criticized for not walking-the-talk given their sustainability rhetoric and the expectation they educate future managers to act responsibly, balancing economic aims with the social and environmental impacts of business operations. While hypocrisy has long been part of the debate, few studies have systematically analysed organizational hypocrisy in business schools which have made commitments to deliver sustainable management education. We address this gap by studying the extent of sustainability teaching or ‘action’ in MBA programs at UK business schools with sustainability ‘talk’ and strategic ‘decisions’ to implement sustainability. We contribute to organizational hypocrisy theory by developing a framework of organizational and lower-level factors which drive inadvertent organizational hypocrisy. Using fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA) we examine interviews with 23 MBA directors to understand how these factors, in combination, explain an inadvertent kind of organizational hypocrisy. Our results emphasize the importance of sustainability capability in delivering on sustainability commitments.

Keywords: Organized hypocrisy; sustainability; business schools; qualitative comparative analysis

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Organizational hypocrisy in business schools with sustainability commitments: the drivers of talk-action inconsistency

1. Introduction

Business schools, long accused of hypocrisy in their societal mission (e.g. Gioia & Corley, 2002), are under pressure to evolve their traditional approach to education. Specifically, they are asked to facilitate the development of sustainability literate managers who are socially responsible and environmentally aware and who see beyond the profit maximizing imperative to account for the common good and societal welfare (Bieger, 2011; Marshall, Vaiman, & Napier, 2010). In response to this many business schools have signed up to charters such as the United Nations' Principles of Responsible Management Education (UN's PRME) and taken other steps to signal a commitment to education that involves sustainable and responsible business practices. This commitment recognizes a requirement for business schools to integrate sustainability-related concepts into their curricula, research and other activities. Yet despite this organizational 'talk', questions remain about the extent to which these issues really do become embedded in business schools' 'action' (Burchall, Kennedy & Murray, 2015; Doherty, Meehan & Richards, 2015).

The failure of business schools to "walk-the-talk" (Boyle, 2004:47) when it comes to including sustainability in their educational programs, and particularly their MBAs, has been debated in recent years (e.g. Navarro, 2008; Rasche & Gilbert, 2015). Scholars argue that more is required of business schools to not only signal a commitment to sustainable and responsible business education, but also to deliver it (Cornuel & Hommel, 2015). This work suggests that hypocrisy is a feature of sustainability in management education where business school talk is, at times, inconsistent with action when it comes to educating managers about social and environmental responsibilities. Hypocrisy is also indicated by scholars who explain that superficiality can be expected for those business schools who face a continual pressure to boost

their own status (Alvesson & Gabriel, 2016). Issues relating to status and the management of image and reputation and the creation brand identities are also a growing concern in higher education more broadly, given an increasingly competitive environment (Hemsley-Brown, Melewar, Nguyen & Wilson, 2016). However, despite these literatures which recognize the existence of pressures to ‘look good’, less is known about how hypocrisy comes about in higher education and in particular, business schools.

Organizational hypocrisy involves a distinction between the formal organization, as articulated through policies and mission statements, and the informal organization, which reflects how the organization actually operates (Brunsson, 1993b). Organizational hypocrisy may stem from a case of “hypocrisy of duplicity” (Christensen, Morsing & Thyssen, 2013:378), where the intention is to deceive (Siano et al., 2017). But organizational hypocrisy can also arise less intentionally, where consistent action fails to materialize for other reasons (Christensen et al., 2013) and thus the result is an inadvertent rather than intended form of organizational hypocrisy. This unintended form of hypocrisy has received less empirical attention, despite being implicitly acknowledged (Lacey & Groves, 2014; Pettersen, 1999). While unintended organizational hypocrisy still manifests in double-standards, this is seldom the result of “intentional planning on the part of any one person” Brunsson (1993a:4).

Three reasons – resources, knowledge and control – are deemed by Brunsson (1993b) to be important in explaining the occurrence of organizational hypocrisy. We develop these factors and conceptualize them in a business school context as capacity, capability and latitude. To further extend Brunsson’s (1993b) work, we also explicitly account for the role of prestige and size in inadvertent organizational hypocrisy. Drawing organizational characteristics, such as prestige and size, into the discussion allows us to explore how different drivers of business school behaviour (Rasche & Gilbert, 2015; Snelson-Powell, Grosvold & Millington, 2016), impact on inadvertent organizational hypocrisy, in conjunction with lower-level factors.

While scholars have drawn on the notion of hypocrisy in business schools before, it has been treated as a more general idea (e.g. Boyle, 2004; Gioia & Corley, 2002). This paper instead seeks to theoretically underpin an empirical study of hypocrisy in business schools, by explicitly adopting the concept of organizational hypocrisy as a theoretical perspective (Brunsson, 1989). We operationalize organizational hypocrisy as the absence of sustainability in MBA programs with external sustainability commitments. If a school is to walk-the-talk, the presence of sustainability in a program that is typically emblematic of the school itself and seen as a ‘flag-ship’ (Schleigelmilch & Thomas, 2011), would be required for organizational appearances to be in keeping with organizational action. For business schools with external sustainability commitments we therefore propose a research question that examines multiple factors to determine how they, together, explain an unintended form of organizational hypocrisy: *What combinations of organizational characteristics and sub-group level conditions influence whether organizational hypocrisy arises at business schools with explicit sustainability commitments?*

We approach this question through an analysis of the literature and theory development work to first identify the individual conditions at play. Our aim is to learn more about these conditions, confirm their role in contributing to hypocrisy and to understand how these conditions operate together in the empirical context of sustainability implementation in business school curricula. To answer our research question we then examine interviews with both UK business school deans and MBA directors at those schools, and combine this with secondary data for each of our 23 cases. We use fuzzy set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA), which is increasingly adopted in business research (e.g. Misangyi et al., 2017; Seny Kan et al., 2016; Wagemann, Buche, & Siewert, 2016) providing a systematic approach to help identify cross-case patterns in qualitative data.

Our work makes several distinct contributions. Firstly, the theoretical refinements offered by this study relate to a specific focus on organizational hypocrisy as an inadvertent situation, which has otherwise received less systematic attention in studies thus far. This kind of hypocrisy, we argue, is less akin to strategic manipulation, where action is deliberately avoided or misdirected, and better accounted for as implementation inadequacies where managerial attempts to exert control, fail. This perspective involves taking account of the organizational hierarchy, and considering internal organizational factors further away from managerial control (Brunsson, 1993b). It integrates the factors that govern the circumstances of people inside the organization, who are closer to the action, with factors that relate to organizational effectiveness, such as prestige and size. Doing so responds directly to calls for research into the role of organizational facets that help or hinder sustainability integration (Slager, Pouryousefi, Moon & Schoolman 2018), as well as to more fully account for how talk, decision and action traverse hierarchies in organizations (Brunsson, 1993b), and to better conceptualize how different kinds of firms come to exhibit inadvertent forms of organizational hypocrisy.

Secondly, by drawing on fsQCA, a set-theoretic method, we are able to show how prestige, size, capability, capacity and latitude, in conjunction, facilitate or impede inadvertent organizational hypocrisy. The nuanced insight enabled by fsQCA also informs our final contribution, that of managerial implications. We find that business schools wishing to prevent hypocrisy relating to their sustainability commitments should focus on developing capability, the skills and knowledge that relate to sustainability, rather than adding capacity and simply increasing the resources available for the task.

This paper continues with an overview of the empirical context and a review of the literature on sustainability at business schools. We then develop our theory in relation to what shapes inadvertent organizational hypocrisy. Next, we outline our method and research design

before the presenting the results of the fsQCA performed. A discussion section interprets these results and finally a conclusion section summarises our key contributions to the theory of organizational hypocrisy, implications of the research and future research directions.

2. Sustainability at business schools

Sustainability is broadly defined and requires the economic activity of firms to also account for social and environmental responsibilities (Moon, 2007). The past decade has witnessed a surge in business schools across the world pledging to respond to the sustainability imperative (Locke, 2006). As educators of future managers and providers of tomorrow's corporate knowledge, business schools face an increased expectation to be more sustainable, responsible and ethical (Reficco & Jaén, 2015). In practice, this means that business schools are expected to teach students about sustainability-related concepts including business ethics and CSR (Matten & Moon, 2004). While there exists a wide range of interpretations (Matten & Moon, 2004) there is a broad understanding that all management students must appreciate the imperative for firms to address social and environmental responsibilities in their pursuit of economic returns (Doherty et al., 2015). However, with no precise formula for what sustainability education must be (Stubbs & Schapper, 2011) there remain practical challenges for how business schools might deliver on their missions and strategy.

There has been a sharp increase in business schools making explicit sustainability-related commitments in the form of membership of bodies such as the UN's PRME and the Academy for Business in Society (ABIS) or by incorporating these values into external strategic mission statements, creating a public face of compliance by indicating their organizational policy (Reficco & Jaén, 2015). Research to date suggests that some business schools respond to this pressure symbolically (e.g. Snelson-Powell et al., 2016), rather than

with substantive compliance. Moratis's (2016) study of Dutch MBAs suggests we should be skeptical of the role of PRME in implementing substantive change. He argues that such standards may be perceived as instruments that enable hypocrisy, rather than a means to align commitments with organizational activities. Moratis (2016:237) introduces the notion of "responsibility erosion" which can arise when CSR (corporate social responsibility) and sustainability is implemented through standards. Louw's (2015) critical discourse analysis of UK PRME signatories' Sharing Information on Progress (SIP) reports found that claims of organizational change as consequence of PRME adoption were exaggerated. There is thus a context where hypocrisy is readily apparent, but studies are yet to establish how this comes about.

Prior research, which has sought to understand what facilitates or hampers sustainability integration, has stressed the importance of faculty interest, as key to driving sustainability integration (Matten & Moon, 2004; Moon & Orlitzky, 2011, Murphy, Sharma & Moon, 2012) as well as the concentration of resources available (Rasche & Gilbert, 2015), such as dedicated research centres (Moon & Orlitzky, 2011). These ideas correspond with Doherty et al.'s (2015) findings that the barriers to responsibility in management education are largely down to factors relating to individual resistance as well as organizational resource constraints. In Slager et al.'s (2018) study of sustainability centres, they note that questions remain as to whether business schools, due their inherent links with private organizations, are even capable of supporting innovations around sustainability in the curriculum, in anything more than a superficial way. While the changes to accreditations' standards may encourage more formal compliance, it perhaps makes continuing hypocrisy just as likely, but less easy to observe, with ever-more window-dressing put to the task of keeping up appearances (Alvesson & Gabriel, 2016).

Among this research is an important tranche of scholarship that identifies business school prestige as an important driver in embedding sustainability in practice. Prestigious schools are expected to be in the vanguard of sustainable management education, but in practice are observed to be lacking in what they deliver (Rasche & Gilbert, 2015). On the other hand, Moon and Orlitzky (2011) find evidence of strong engagement with CSR and sustainability education for more prestigious business schools. A similar finding was identified by Snelson-Powell et al. (2016) who found that less prestigious business schools performed relatively less well in terms of the scope of the sustainability education provided. Given these conflicting findings, further research is required to examine these relationships.

Also absent from earlier work is a study of how these kinds of organizational characteristics, such as relative prestige, function together with internal reasons (Brunsson, 1993b) to shape sustainability integration. It is this gap in the literature we seek to contribute to by examining the role of prestige, size as well as capability, capacity and latitude in inadvertent organizational hypocrisy for business schools with sustainability commitments.

3. Facilitators and barriers of organizational hypocrisy

Organizational hypocrisy (Brunsson, 1993b) provides an alternative lens to more traditional perspectives which assume an organization's espoused aim naturally leads to consistent managerial decisions and that these consistent decisions lead to actions that are thus consistent with the espoused aim. Counter to this view, Brunsson (1993b) provides a perspective which may better reflect realities for organizations, like universities, where tangible products are hard to demonstrate in practice (Brunsson, 1989). In this view of organizational behaviour there is no such strong connection between talk, decisions and action of organizations.

As such, a key tenet of hypocrisy involves the explicit independence of these three distinct components (Brunsson, 1993b). The ‘talk’ part is increasingly well articulated in the sustainability reporting literature where scholars have explored the role of hypocrisy in corporate sustainability disclosures (Cho et al., 2015) and CSR communications (Fassin & Buelens, 2011). In this literature scholars examine qualities of the organizational façade (Cho et al., 2015) and develop means to evaluate the proneness of organizations to hypocrisy given the nature of the rhetorical devices they employ (Fassin & Buelens, 2011). This work emphasises organizational hypocrisy brought about by inconsistency between talk and decision, aspects which are, naturally, closer to managerial influence (Brunsson, 1993b). Thus this paper adds to these earlier studies of inconsistency at the talk-decision interface, by looking instead at the inconsistency at the decision-action interface, which has received limited conceptual and empirical attention in the prior literature.

In other words, while these studies (e.g. Cho et al., 2015) advance our understanding of how organizational rhetoric may be subject to strategic manipulation, which can result in organizational hypocrisy, they do not account for a situation where hypocrisy arises despite plans to be consistent. (Brunsson, 1993b; 2007) suggest that hypocrisy emerges when different parts of the organization respond independently to competing demands. In this instance, hypocrisy as an ultimate outcome occurs, but as a failed attempt to motivate action that is consistent with its talk and decisions. Brunsson (1993b:502) notes that hypocrisy is indeed something which can also arise despite “*good intentions*”. Yet this kind of hypocrisy, as a consequence of an operational failure to implement, is less well studied. Counter-posed with a view of hypocrisy as a cynical strategic manipulation this inadvertent kind of hypocrisy is not planned, but nonetheless generates the same risks and concerns associated with stakeholder perceptions of ‘green-washing’ (Bowen, 2015). Here firms are viewed negatively if they are seen to signal commitment to the natural environment, but in reality neglect the issue in their

organizational practices (Bowen, 2015; Walker & Wan, 2012). If the risks that follow are unplanned, they are perhaps yet more important for organizations to recognise, even if they are overlooked by the current literature.

Therefore, to better understand this kind of inadvertent organizational hypocrisy, we explicitly seek to explore how talk and decision, which reside in close proximity to one another and relate to executive management, travel across the organizational hierarchy to be translated into action, at lower organizational levels (Brunsson, 1993b). Further, we focus on a particular situation where there is already an established organizational consistency between this ‘talk’ and ‘decision’. The hypocrisy thus arises when inconsistency arises in relation to the ‘action’.

This action tends to occur at a lower organizational level, relating to the sub-groups of individuals tasked with carrying out the action. There is usually a spatial and hierarchical separation between these sub-groups and executive management. Specifically, Brunsson (1989) notes that the action required to be consistent with talk and decision rarely involves the same people in the same sub-groups or organizational divisions.

Business schools provide a context where gaps between organizational rhetoric and actual activities might be expected (Alvesson & Gabriel, 2016). The MBA program in particular, is an example of an established sub-group for many business schools (Wedlin, 2007). Its curriculum is also particularly important when appraising the seriousness with which business schools are taking their sustainability commitments, since it’s centrally and symbolically important to school strategy (Schliegmilch & Thomas, 2011). In this scenario, we position the dean’s office as responsible for the role of executive management including devising the organizational talk and deciding on school direction. While the challenge for a business school in implementing strategy is wider than any one department or program, the MBA program, as a sub-group of the business school, can be thought of as representative of

the school's action. For a school that has committed to sustainability, and has consistent talk, decision and action, it follows that a presence of sustainability in the MBA can be reasonably expected.

The literature on sustainability in management education also reflects this hierarchy and locates the drivers and barriers to implementation at multiple levels of analysis. It suggests that organizational factors, as well as factors at the 'coal-face' involving the resources available, research interests and latitude of faculty are important (Matten & Moon, 2004; Moon & Orlitzky, 2011). The influence of three factors, capacity, capability and the latitude of those tasked with delivering their business schools' sustainability promise, are therefore of prime interest to this study and reflect the reasons Brunsson (1993b) gives to explain organizational hypocrisy. Adding to this theorizing and drawing the role of organizational characteristics into the conceptualization also importantly reflects literature which suggests that two further factors in particular, prestige and size, may influence sustainability integration at business schools (e.g. Matten & Moon, 2004; Snelson-Powell et al., 2016). These five key factors are each outlined in detail below.

3.1 Prestige

Brunsson (2007) argues that for organizations to be effective they must simultaneously address contradictory demands, and that they can achieve this through hypocrisy. For example, some demands are met with talk, others with decision, and others with action, where the inconsistencies between these allows multiple competing issues to be reconciled at the same time. Since this kind of talk-action inconsistency is linked to effective organizations it might thus be expected of prestigious organizations who can be viewed as among the most effective in a given field.

In the empirical context of business schools, scholars bring organizational status and market pressures into the explanation of how different schools behave in response to their stakeholders (Alvesson & Gabriel, 2016; Pfeffer & Fong, 2002). Business school prestige is tightly linked to research quality and outputs (Armstrong, 1995), rather than teaching (Pfeffer & Fong, 2002). Thus by leveraging its research excellence, a business school gains prestige, which in turn enables it to attract the best MBA students, who subsequently receive a salary premium upon graduation as a result of being awarded a degree from a more prestigious university (Pfeffer & Fong, 2002). This dynamic means that MBA program changes and teaching innovations, such as the inclusion of sustainability material, may be less relevant in the competition for students, if they are attracted, primarily, by the prestige of the awarding school (Pfeffer & Fong, 2002).

Alvesson and Gabriel's (2016) work on grandiosity in management education supports this contention that the quest to gain or maintain prestige results in an emphasis of image over substance, or hypocrisy. Brand identity has been found to be particularly important for students' choice of postgraduate study in higher education more broadly (Nguyen, Yu, Melewar & Hemsley-Brown, 2016). Alvesson & Gabriel (2016:465) argue that a drive to improve perceptions of status in the business school sector "involves the application of some smoke screens". Applying the concept of grandiosity to organizations reveals a situation where a persistent attempt to improve status, involves activities which provide a positive and socially desirable organizational image, with less concern for the reality. Business schools are examples of organizations for which the appeal of grandiosity is palpable (Alvesson & Gabriel, 2016), thus efforts to attain prestige, imply linkages to activities that involve smoke-screens, and superficiality.

For less prestigious business schools, that don't have the ability to compete for MBA students on the same terms as more research intensive counterparts (Pfeffer & Fong, 2002;

Navarro, 2008), status concerns may be less salient and innovations in the MBA may be viewed differently. For example, sustainability teaching can instead be a different way to establish competitive differentiation. Further, less prestigious business schools may have more to lose from hypocritical behavior if it's revealed to stakeholders to be green-washing (Bowen, 2015). A less prestigious school, less well known in the market, does not have other forms of reputational capital to offset negative judgments of green-washing. We therefore anticipate, when it comes to the MBA program, that prestige will be associated with organizational hypocrisy and that less prestigious business schools will be associated with organizational consistency, specifically, that they will experience a greater pressure to develop sustainability-related innovations in their MBA curriculum in order to align their activities with their school's commitments.

3.2 Size

Organizational size is included in this analysis as a characteristic which is also expected to be linked with organizational hypocrisy. While prestige is linked to rankings (Wedlin, 2007), size is a broader measure of success and market power both in terms of potential research and teaching capacity. Despite large organizations having amplified external expectations (Pfeffer & Salacnik, 1978) and experiencing enhanced pressures to be seen as consistent in their practices (Bromley & Powell, 2012) with greater external legitimacy at stake (Josefy, Kuba, Ireland, & Hitt, 2015) large organizations are in fact prone to "symbolic gaps" (Bowen, 2015:64). Here organizational approaches have a greater tendency to be inconsistent, with an emphasis on symbolic over substantive corporate environmentalism (Bowen, 2015). Wickert, Scherer and Spence's (2016) work supports this view, where they argue that large firms do more symbolic CSR and small firms do less CSR communication, but more in practice.

While previous studies of business school size and sustainability have shown that the relationship can be complex (Moon & Orlitzky, 2011), we have nonetheless established a general expectation that large business schools will be linked to organizational hypocrisy. In summary, the success that size offers may consolidate a market-driven dynamic where pressures to continue with business-as-usual and conform via traditionally structured MBA offerings (Pfeffer & Fong, 2002) means that incorporating sustainability-related teaching innovations might be less compelling for larger schools.

3.3 Capacity

An organization's capacity, such as its access to resources, influences the rate and the depth of organizational change (Ramirez, 2002). Brunsson (1993b:491) explains that "ideas are cheaper than actions". Bromley, Hwang and Powell's (2012) study finds a lack of resources an important reason for organizations' failure to implement plans. The same arguments apply at our lower level of analysis where we define capacity as the material resources available to individuals charged with policy implementation in a particular organizational structure, and thus we similarly expect less capacity to be linked with hypocrisy.

Capacity has been shown to be a factor in the implementation of sustainability-related activities, such as CSR policies (Bowen, 2002). And when it comes to the context of business schools implementing sustainability, case studies regularly feature the lack of resources as a key constraint which slows down the business school's ability to integrate sustainability in the curriculum (Exter, Grayson & Maher, 2013). Coopey (2003) argues that in the UK business schools sector this tension of building and maintaining capacity to deliver on sustainability is particularly acute as a result of the increased pressure for business schools to become more financially independent. Changes to business schools' funding (Wilson & McKiernan, 2012) means they must increasingly be more attuned to what the market place

wants rather than what the sustainability imperative may suggest is required. Following from this business schools that do not have sufficient capacity may end up exhibiting organizational hypocrisy, with resources diverted to activities that appeal more directly to student recruitment (Doherty et al., 2015).

3.4 Capability

Capability, specifically the skills and knowledge residing in an organization is, like capacity, linked to the ability of an organization to implement a policy or commitment (Lounsbury & Ventresca, 2003; Bansal, 2005; Weber, Davis, & Lounsbury, 2009). Similarly, Brunsson (1993b) suggests a lack of knowledge contributes to organizational hypocrisy. He notes that while we may know how things *ought* to be, there is often less certainty in bringing them about in practice (Brunsson, 1993b). Doh and Tashman (2014) found that pedagogical constraints, and limitations in instructors' knowledge, time and access to teaching material was a central reason why business schools did not comprehensively assimilate and integrate sustainability teaching in business schools. Such a lack of capability is indeed identified as a key barrier to implementation across the literature on sustainability integration in management education, and has been found to impede adoption in practice of sustainability and responsibility content in the curricula (Jones, Selby & Sterling, 2006; Maloni, Smith & Napshin, 2012; Solitander, et al., 2012). Consequently, we anticipate that business schools with less capability will be associated with inadvertent organizational hypocrisy.

3.5 Latitude

We define latitude as the scope, desire and influence of individuals to achieve change within the organizational element in which they are situated. This is especially important when organizational rhetoric is confusing or when an imperative is ambiguously conceptualized (Bromley & Powell, 2012). Sustainability is a broadly defined term (Moon,

2007) and, by definition, requires some latitude in its interpretation for the implementation to be successful in a specific local context, where opacity is expected between those that ‘talk’ and create policies and those that ‘act’ and implement practices (Wijen, 2014). Brunsson (1993b) reflects on the limited scope top management has in imposing control over talk-action consistency. In fact a degree of individual latitude may be needed by internal actors responsible for implementation if they are required to interpret the policy into meaningful terms and enact the new practice themselves (Bromley & Powell, 2012).

Sustainability in business schools is an area where resistance to imposed change features strongly. Where faculty teaching sustainability on an MBA program were themselves given latitude in how sustainability teaching was incorporated, they become more committed to its implementation (Benn & Dunphy, 2009). Other literature on sustainability in management education cites faculty support as the most important factor in determining the integration of sustainability in the curricula (Matten & Moon, 2004). And correspondingly, faculty resistance is a reason for obstruction to the organizational change intended (Maloni et al., 2012; Solitander et al., 2012). We therefore propose that latitude both in the degree of autonomy and the scope to make change is an important condition in determining whether consistent action follows the organizational commitment.

3.6 Conceptual model

Cumulatively, we view the three factors of capability, capacity and latitude and the relative prestige and size of the business school as the five key influences on whether business schools are able to deliver on their sustainability commitment, or whether despite commitments and intentions to deliver on top management’s decisions to integrate sustainability, organizational hypocrisy arises.

With this framing we are interested in the effects of these factors together, and how they may interplay with one another to generate the outcome of interest, organizational hypocrisy, in different ways. For example, having developed arguments for how both prestige and size are organizational factors that may be linked to organizational hypocrisy, studying them together allows to examine whether they are complementary or substitutable. Other interdependencies are also of interest, such as those that might reveal nuance in the nature of available resources, is capacity or capability crucial, or are they both required and how these might interplay with organizational factors.

Figure 1 summarizes this conceptual framing, integrating hypocrisy theory (with separate talk, decision and action elements) with the factors, or conditions, which are expected to operate together to explain either consistent or inconsistent action.

Insert Figure 1 about here

In sum, Brunsson (1993b) already suggests there are internal factors that help align ideas and action and make hypocrisy less likely as an outcome; these relate to the capability, capacity and latitude available. Our theoretical contribution involves integrating these with other, organization-level factors that we also conceptualise as fundamental in shaping inadvertent organizational hypocrisy. If the most effective organizations leverage inconsistency and value organizational hypocrisy, then artefacts of their success, such as prestige and size, might play a part in explaining when organizational hypocrisy comes about and are thus required in how we conceptualise the drivers of this phenomenon.

4. Method and research design

4.1 Sample selection

We invited all 122 UK business schools to participate in this study, and 80 agreed to provide an interview with the dean, the MBA program director, or both. This resulted in 123 interviews in total. As our study is explicitly concerned with only those business schools that had both sustainability commitments and consistent talk and decisions, our final sample was a sub-set of these schools which had made these commitments, had provided an interview with the dean so that we could establish talk-decision consistency and where they had also provided an interview with their MBA director, so we could establish consistency of action. The final sample was 23 business schools.

Thus creating this final sample involved two steps. First, to determine whether the business school had a sustainability policy we looked for evidence that they either claimed adherence to a sustainability emphasis within the mission statement of the school, or they made some form of external sustainability-related commitment such as being a current signatory to UN's PRME, ABIS or prior inclusion in the Aspen Institute's Beyond Grey Pinstripes Ranking index. Second, an examination of the deans' accounts was performed to determine that there was a strategic decision to engage with sustainability at an organizational level. The 23 business schools included in the sample therefore all had the intention to fulfil the external organizational talk and can be thought of as having consistent talk and decisions. This allowed us to explore the determinants of inadvertent organizational hypocrisy and conversely, organizational consistency, measured by the presence of sustainability in the MBA program.

4.2 Measure of organizational hypocrisy

The MBA curriculum was selected as the measure of hypocrisy since it provides a common basis for comparison between business schools. MBA programs are regarded as a “*standard feature*” (Wedlin, 2007:24) which are often similarly arranged in terms of their ‘silo’ based structure (Navarro, 2008) and, in the UK, MBA programs are governed by a similar set

of regulation and accreditation requirements (Wilson & McKiernan, 2012). It should be noted that at the time of our study, sustainability was not a requirement of accreditations bodies which might otherwise be expected to influence business school behaviour (Alajoutsijarvi, Kettunen, & Sohlo, 2018; Wedlin, 2007).

Importantly, for this study, the MBA program is usually thought of as a key product or ‘flag-ship’ of the school (Schleigelmilch & Thomas, 2011). This allows us to examine an organizational sub-group that represents the ‘technical core’ (Zucker, 1987) and is arguably a key activity of the business school. We can therefore consider it an instance of organizational hypocrisy if there are organizational commitments to sustainability at the same time as the opposite action - an absence of sustainability in this core aspect of the organization.

4.3 Interviews

Data was collected in a series of telephone interviews by a single researcher during a six-month period in 2011. Analysing data collected in 2011 gives unique insights into organized hypocrisy since it relates to a particular point in time where pressures to appear responsible and sustainable were high, but where there was little in place to mandate corresponding activities in practice. This is because we study a time following the financial crash of 2007/2008 which alerted broader stakeholders to the role of the business school in the corporate irresponsibility that occurred, but before ethics, responsibility and sustainability (ERS) were mandated in 2013 by accreditation bodies like EQUIS which stipulate that sustainability should be reflected in school activities (Rasche & Gilbert, 2015). Our data therefore relates to a particularly salient time, where amplified expectations generated organizational talk (evidenced through a growing membership of PRME (see Godemann, Haertle, Herzig & Moon, 2014)) but where pressures to take action and implement sustainability in practice were less urgently experienced by business schools.

Participants of the interviews, business school deans and MBA program directors, were assured that their responses would be treated anonymously, such that their identity and that of their business school would not be disclosed in any published research. Interviews were semi-structured, with the use of open questions followed by questions to encourage further disclosure or to probe for clarification. Pilot interviews were conducted initially, before refinements to improve the flow and encourage participation. Typically interviews lasted approximately 25-30 minutes, however some were shorter than this and some were significantly longer (up to about an hour). The interviews were transcribed in full where transcriptions ranged from 2,000 to 5,500 words long. The average word-count for a transcribed interview was about 4,000 words. The dean interviews and the MBA program director interviews were coded with two different purposes in mind. The dean interviews were coded to gauge whether the school had made decisions consistent with an executive intention to implement commitments to sustainability, for sample selection purposes. The MBA program director interviews provided the basis on which to establish whether action had been taken in practice, in relation to sustainability in the MBA curriculum in particular. Further these interviews provided the basis on which to code for the presence of capability, capacity and latitude.

All interviews were coded by the interviewer, with a sub-sample of six interviews coded by three researchers for rating robustness. The sub-sample was coded first by two researchers, who met initially to establish thresholds and then met again with the third researcher to compare results and agree the coding. Coding conclusions were similar, but in the few instances where divergence occurred, discussion between all three researchers established agreed measures collectively. Remaining differences in opinion of the two researchers' initial coding were handled by asking the third researcher for their rating. From this base-line, coding was completed for all the remaining interviews by one researcher.

Further, in approaching the data, we were also alert to evidence of organizational consistency and organizational hypocrisy in the responses given, to help qualitatively illustrate the outcomes identified in the data by the fsQCA method adopted below. In line with earlier QCA scholars, example quotes were collected that exhibited the outcomes of interest (Crilly, Zollo & Hansen, 2012; Snelson-Powell et al., 2016).

4.4 Fuzzy set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA)

FsQCA is a set-theoretic approach designed for outcome-based work and is thus naturally suited to the study of organizational hypocrisy as an outcome. Our selection of fsQCA follows the work of several other scholars who have increasingly adopted it in business research in particular (e.g. Fiss, 2011; Mas-Verdu, Ribeiro-Soriano & Roig-Tierno, 2015; Mikalef & Pateli, 2017; Plewa, Ho, Conduit & Karpen, 2016; Toth, Thiesbrummel, Henneberg & Naude, 2015).

FsQCA assesses cross-case patterns by analysing subsets and superset relations, allowing researchers to draw conclusions about relationships between concepts. For a given sample, it identifies combinations of factors, or conditions, that are associated with an outcome (Ragin, 2008) by comparing the presence or absence of conditions across multiple cases. In our study the presence of the outcome is organizational hypocrisy and the absence of the outcome is organizational consistency. Each case, or business school, exhibits either the presence or absence of the outcome and each represents a collection of relative memberships in the conditions. Viewing cases together, an algorithm based on Boolean logic, identifies configurations of conditions which are associated with each outcome.

While fsQCA is increasingly used for large-sized samples (Misangyi et al., 2017), it is also well suited to our medium-sized sample (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012). FsQCA has a further advantage when it comes to dealing with phenomenon occurring at different analytical

levels since it does not require perfect nestedness (Lacey & Fiss, 2009), a requirement which limits the applicability of traditional linear methods and the strict assumptions imposed (Ragin, 2000).

Ragin's (2008) freely available software (fsQCA v.3.0) was used to analyze the data provided by the 23 MBA program directors' accounts of activities relating to the MBA curriculum and secondary data relating to the business school itself.

4.5 Condition calibration

Great consideration is given to the selection and definition of the conditions under study and this requires researchers' theoretical and context-based knowledge of the area to identify the conditions which are potentially important (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012). Then for each condition, thresholds for what defines membership, partial membership or exclusion require careful specification (Ragin, 2008). The term 'fuzzy' in fsQCA does not describe conceptual or statistical ambiguity (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012), but rather it reflects the inclusion of degrees of membership as well as full membership in sets. Other forms of QCA include crisp-set QCA (e.g. Rey-Marti, Porcar, Mas-Tur, 2015), where membership is either in or out, and multi-variate QCA, where the condition can take on various values.

The analysis of the conditions in this study involved coding of both crisp (for the outcome condition and for prestige) and fuzzy sets (for size, capability, capacity and latitude) where more granularity was valuable. As per procedure in fsQCA (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012) the thresholds were determined based on researcher knowledge with a 4-way coding as follows; fully out (given a value of 0), mostly out (given a value of 0.33), mostly in (given a value of 0.67) and fully in, (given a value of 1). Crisp sets were coded for the prestige condition, with either 0 or 1 to indicate whether it was a member of the prestigious business

schools set or not and the outcome condition, where MBA programs were also judged in a 2-way to be consistent (1) or not (0) in including sustainability.

For each of the 23 cases we analysed the accounts of MBA program directors, to determine their membership of the internal conditions identified. Thresholds were defined, or ‘calibrated’ (Ragin, 2008), by developing criteria for the degree of inclusion in the ‘set’ or condition. How the measures were calibrated from the qualitative data or from secondary data sources is detailed in Table 1 below.

Insert Table 1 about here

Outcome condition. Having already selected a sample with consistent ‘talk’ and ‘decision’ the outcome condition was the degree to which business schools had aligned this commitment to sustainability, with the inclusion of sustainability in the MBA program, its ‘action’. The outcome condition relates to the presence of sustainability integration efforts. If this condition was present, this action was deemed ‘consistent’. If sustainability integration efforts were absent, the action was deemed ‘hypocrisy’. We sought to assess each MBA program director’s account of their sustainability integration efforts in terms of the strength of the evidence they provided. Future plans or deflective responses were not viewed as evidence of activity, and were coded as ‘0’ and out of the set of ‘consistent’ business schools. Weak evidence, such as isolated examples of minimal activity such as trials or audits were rated similarly as an absence of the outcome condition and ‘hypocrisy’. Substantive activity that may still be ad-hoc, but represented meaningful inclusion of sustainability-related material, was included within the set of ‘consistent’ business schools and coded ‘1’. Other kinds of strong evidence, such that substantive activity had gone beyond inclusion of electives, including a sense of active monitoring and management were similarly coded in this set of consistent business schools. By this measure those programs with sustainability in the core

content of the curricula, where MBA students are certain to graduate with exposure to these concepts, are viewed as walking-the-talk. Of the 23 cases in the sample 11 were attributed to an organizational consistency and 12 to an organizational hypocrisy.

Prestige. Business schools listed in the Financial Times (FT) Top 100 European Business Schools or in the top quartile of the Complete University Guide (CUG) 2011 for Business and Management Studies, were coded 1 to indicate prestige. Those that did not appear in either were coded 0 to indicate their relatively lower prestige.

Size. Size was gauged by the number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) academic faculty at the business school. This secondary data was obtained from The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), which collects and disseminates data related to publicly funded higher education institutions in the UK. We calibrated thresholds for size based on the approximate distribution of schools in the population of UK business schools. We coded size using a 4-way measure, 0-49 FTE was coded as 0 (out of the set of large business schools), 50-99 FTE was 0.33 (mostly out), 100-150 was 0.67 (mostly in) and 150+ was coded as 1 (in the set of large business schools).

Capability. Capability is measured by the presence of existing internal expertise that is available to the MBA program director. We coded capability using a 4-way measure. A relationship between the MBA program and a sustainability-related research centre may be a strong indication of the availability of internal expertise (and coded as fully in the set of those that have capability), as is the presence of multiple members of staff where this is a primary teaching or research interest (mostly in). An absence of capability is measured by no (fully out) or little (mostly out) interest or expertise residing in the faculty that may be deployed by the MBA program.

Capacity. Capacity is related to the resources that are available to internal actors that are required to make change such that sustainability is integrated in the MBA program. We coded capacity using a 4-way measure. A presence of capacity is described by sufficient support (fully in) or some resources (mostly in) such that sustainability can be integrated. An absence of capacity is identified as a lack of resources that is constraining (mostly out) or preventing (fully out) new activities.

Latitude. Latitude relates to the ability of internal actors to influence change, both in terms of autonomy and the level of resistance faced by the MBA program director in making change happen in practice. We coded latitude using a 4-way measure. MBA program directors who have no scope to make change (fully out) or face significant resistance (mostly out) are displaying an absence of latitude. Those who evidence progression of change they have been able to make (mostly in) or a large level of control over the content of the MBA program (fully in) have a presence of latitude.

4.6 Data analysis

Analysing data with fsQCA involves three steps. Once the values for each condition for each case have been determined the first step is to construct a ‘truth table’ of logically possible combinations of conditions (Ragin, 2008). A truth table has 2^k rows, where k indicates the number of causal conditions included in the analysis (Fiss, 2011). While logically possible, some rows may not feature among the cases, while other rows may represent more than one case with the same set of causal conditions. The rows are then sorted by frequency of empirical instantiation, with the most often occurring combination of causal conditions at the top.

The next step is to reduce the number of rows in the table, using two criteria. The first being a frequency cut-off decision for the minimum number of cases that are necessary for a

configuration to be considered legitimate. Our frequency cut-off was a single case, in-line with earlier studies involving a similar sample size (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012). The second criteria relates to the ‘consistency’ threshold of greater than 0.8 (Schneider & Wageman, 2012). The truth tables are presented in appendices at the end of this paper. A final step, with a further algorithm produces a simplified output of the statistically consistent combinations. Results of an fsQCA procedure, involve a ‘solution’ for both the presence and absence of the outcome. This solution comprises ‘configurations’, which are combinations of conditions that are found to be statistically robust and empirically important for the outcome under study (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012).

5. Results

FsQCA is inherently a configurational perspective. However, to ensure that the results are best represented configurationally, a necessity pre-test ensures that no condition, individually, is necessary for the presence or absence of the outcome. The results of this test are reported in the appendices (see Table 6). A necessary condition features whenever the outcome is present (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012) and we confirmed that neither a presence nor an absence of the individual conditions were required for either the presence or absence of the outcome.

A table of results of the fsQCA solutions for the presence and absence of the outcome, ‘Organizational hypocrisy’ and ‘Organizational consistency’ is presented in Table 2, where two configurations comprise the solution for the presence and absence of the outcome. A configuration, or path, is a combination of several conditions that operate conjunctionally.

Insert Table 2 about here

5.1 Consistency and coverage values

Understanding consistency values and coverage values, which feature in the results table above, is important in interpreting the results. Consistency values indicate the degree to which the empirically observed cases agree with the proposed subset relation (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012). More precisely the *consistency* value is the percentage of cases' set-membership values that reflect a subset (or superset) relation (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012). Consistency values are reported for each of the individual configurations that comprise the solution for each outcome as well as the consistency values for the overall solutions in each case. A consistency value greater than 0.8 is considered acceptable (Fiss, 2011). Our result for the solution consistency value for the outcome of organizational consistency is 0.868 and for organizational hypocrisy is 0.91. The configurations presented here have consistency values between 0.835 and 1.0 and are thus above the recommended threshold.

The term, *solution coverage* provides a proportionate indication of the number cases that are explained by the overall solution (Ragin 2008). Coverage can be thought of as an expression of the relevance of a configuration (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012). More precisely, solution coverage is the percentage of the cases' set membership in an outcome (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012). Solution coverage values indicate the proportion of the cases which have set-membership in the outcome; organizational consistency (0.395) and for organizational hypocrisy (0.278). *Raw coverage* and *unique coverage* values relate to individual configurations, or paths, within the solution. Raw coverage is the percentage of the cases' set membership in an outcome for that single path of the solution (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012). Unique coverage is the percentage of the cases' set membership in an outcome *only* for that single path of the solution (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012).

5.2 FsQCA solutions

FsQCA results can be presented in different ways from the simplest presentation of the empirical findings being the ‘parsimonious’ solution to the increasingly more conservative presentations of the ‘intermediate’ and then the ‘complex’ solution (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012). The parsimonious and intermediate solutions involve computer and researcher guided assumptions respectively in the solution simplification process. Complex solutions are not based on simplifying assumptions but can be less easy to interpret. To aid interpretation, scholars are therefore guided to denote those conditions that also feature in the parsimonious solution as ‘core’ and the remaining conditions as ‘peripheral’ (Fiss, 2011). This achieves a balance in preserving both the clarity of the parsimonious solution and the fullness of the explanation in more complex solutions.

The fsQCA solutions produced here in Table 2 are based on the most conservative solution, without simplifying assumptions and, having looked also at the parsimonious solution, core and peripheral notation is added to aid interpretation. The solutions comprise two configurations for ‘organizational consistency’ (configurations 1a and 1b) and two configurations for ‘organizational hypocrisy’ (configurations 2a and 2b). The configurations for organizational consistency (1a and 1b) feature the following combination: the absence of prestige with the presence of capability as core conditions in combination with the presence of latitude as a peripheral condition. 1a and 1b differ in that they each feature a different peripheral condition, one being the absence of size and the other being the absence of capacity. What these configurations show, primarily, is that less prestigious business schools that have capability in sustainability are linked with consistent action in their approach to actually integrating sustainability into the MBA curriculum.

The two configurations for organizational hypocrisy (2a and 2b) feature the following combination: the presence of prestige, the absence of capability with the presence of latitude as core conditions. 2a and 2b differ in that they each feature a different peripheral condition,

one being the presence of size and the other being the presence of capacity. What these configurations show, primarily, is that inconsistent action, where sustainability content remains absent from the MBA curriculum despite organizational promises, is linked to more prestigious business schools that don't have high levels of sustainability capability in their organizations, and where the MBA program director has some discretion in the change they are able to impact in the curriculum. Referring to the qualitative evidence collected, see the table below, relating to the absence and presence of the outcome of interest; organizational consistency and organizational hypocrisy, there is support for the idea that organizational hypocrisy and organizational consistency are experienced as different states by MBA program directors.

Insert Table 3 about here

These quotes demonstrate something about the requirement for the agenda to traverse organizational hierarchies if organizational hypocrisy is to be prevented (Brunsson, 2007). In the event there is a disconnect, organizational hypocrisy is a feature, for example in the comment from one MBA program director, "*the discourse has been initiated from the top, but I don't know whether there has been very much engagement with that, I think it is very much at the level of rhetoric rather than reality and practice*" can be counter-posed with one where the agenda has been able to work through the school "*it is part of the ethos of the school and it does work through into the way that people think about the way they put courses together*".

6. Discussion

This section interprets these results and discusses the implications for theory by considering how combinations of factors and the relations between them explain consistent or inconsistent action at business schools in our sample. This section concludes with a summary of the consequences of this analysis for organizational hypocrisy theory.

6.1 Explaining organizational hypocrisy

Our results suggest that hypocrisy, as gauged by the lack of sustainability in the MBA for those schools in our sample, with explicit sustainability commitments, is primarily linked with prestigious business schools that lack capability in sustainability and where MBA program directors have latitude to influence the curriculum. While earlier work has suggested these factors individually are important, we can inform the debate showing how they might operate in conjunction, and in doing so improve understanding of these effects. For example, some studies find that more prestigious business schools may enjoy a ‘buffer’ from social expectations (Rasche & Gilbert, 2015), where they do not experience pressure to change their MBA curriculum, because their prestige flows from their research and not from their teaching innovations, such as sustainability. Yet other scholars find a positive association between prestige and sustainability engagement across the school more broadly (Matten & Moon, 2004; Snelson-Powell et al., 2016). Our results offer some specificity to the research to date and show a different picture when looking at the MBA in particular, and reflect a model where hypocrisy is associated with prestigious business schools when they lack relevant capability and the MBA program director has latitude.

Recognizing that different stakeholders have different measures of organizational hypocrisy, where they have different and partial perceptions of what organizational action occurs (Cho et al., 2015), may aid our overall interpretation of these findings. In higher education contexts Plewa et al. (2016) find differences even amongst how different types of students; domestic or international – perceive HEIs and whether they attend to course-level aspects, support available or the wider university context. Thus, the absence of sustainability in the MBA, may not be problematic to all constituents. Certainly, despite well-argued criticism (Gioia, 2002) business schools have been found to enjoy marked success in recent times (Dyllick, 2015) continuing to grow and prosper, all the while disconnecting their rhetoric

from reality (Rasche & Gilbert, 2015). While this success is odds with an organization which is apparently green-washing and should expect to face disapproval (Bromley & Powell, 2012; Bowen, 2015) these results suggest that the organizational hypocrisy exhibited, may not be similarly apparent or important to all stakeholders. Conversely, the finding that the less prestigious business schools with sustainability capability are able to deliver on their sustainability commitment aligns with our theorizing, and is perhaps the clearest evidence yet that differently positioned business schools experience different competitive pressures. Scholars understand that HEIs with different levels of reputational capital handle competitive threats differently (Rutter, Roper & Lettice, 2016). This finding tells us something more specific; developing teaching innovations and achieving sustainability integration may become a key differentiator for less prestigious business schools, which cannot compete with more prestigious business schools who are valued instead for the enhanced career prospects of graduates who expect greater salaries and accelerated promotion (Pfeffer & Fong, 2002).

The importance of this capability, in combination with prestige, is clearly reflected in the fsQCA solutions, which tell us something of the particular salience of capability in successfully implementing sustainability in MBA programs, and thus preventing organizational hypocrisy at less prestigious business schools. This result follows theoretical expectations that capability is paramount when implementing sustainability and supports the findings of earlier surveys (e.g. Matten & Moon, 2004), case-studies (e.g. Maloni et al., 2012) and chimes with Brunsson's (1993b) ideas that knowledge helps align ideas and action.

The combination of prestige with lack of capability and latitude discussed above, operates with two additional, though peripheral, factors. Specifically, one configuration adds a large size to this explanation, and the other configuration includes the capacity, or availability of resources. We discuss these two peripheral aspects of the model in turn. First the additional visibility and success of the large schools may similarly serve to buffer those schools from the

need to change their MBA programs to include sustainability, despite their rhetorical commitments. This finding is in line with Rasche and Gilbert's (2015) explanations for why some business schools may not walk their talk and also supports Bowen's (2015) work on symbolic gaps where large firms are more likely to engage symbolically with corporate environmentalism, but are not more likely to substantively implement. The second peripheral factor that combines with our main model involves a presence of capacity implying that despite resources being available to the MBA program they are not naturally applied to sustainability integration efforts. This has implications for both theory (Brunsson, 1993b) and the business school literature which suggest the converse - that lack of capacity is a barrier (Moon & Orlitzky, 2011; Solitander et al., 2012). From this we can infer a clarification; by taking a combinational-view of determinants providing capacity may of course be helpful in principle, but when viewed alongside factors such as capability, capacity is not a necessity.

6.2 Explaining organizational consistency

Comparing the results for organizational hypocrisy with organizational consistency, there is some symmetry across these findings that relate to the combination of prestige and capability, as noted above. The symmetry applies also to the peripheral conditions of size and capacity, reflecting the arguments discussed above. However, latitude which features as a peripheral condition, operates asymmetrically. At the same time the results show that latitude is part of the configurational explanation of hypocrisy it also features to explain organizational consistency (as a peripheral condition) for the converse outcome. It is possible to derive explanations for both of these positions. On the one hand to enact the sustainability signalled by the organization is not trivial and requires some latitude at the sub-group level to work out what is required in practice. Key literature on sustainability in higher education argues that 'bottom-up' processes are necessary for sustainability integration efforts (see Jones et al., 2006). However, the argument applies in reverse in that to resist organizational instructions to

implement sustainability, also requires some authority, or latitude. Our findings, in part, support earlier literature which identifies faculty barriers among the key reasons stopping business schools from implementing sustainability (Moon & Orlitzky, 2011; Maloni et al., 2012), as well as revealing that the situation is more nuanced than earlier literature reflects.

6.3 Implications for the organizational hypocrisy perspective

Organizational hypocrisy is a feature of effective firms (Brunsson, 1989). Yet we also know that when organizational hypocrisy relates to social responsibilities stakeholders are expected to disapprove (Bromley & Powell, 2012). Scholars have found that organizational performance may suffer when green-washing (Bowen, 2015) or corporate irresponsibility is revealed (Price & Sun, 2017; Sweetin et al., 2013) which may damage an organizations' prestige or standing (Herzig & Moon, 2013).

Our analysis has introduced some nuance to these existing views of corporate social irresponsibility and organizational hypocrisy by demonstrating the relevance of organizational characteristics, in combination with sub-group level factors, where there is differentiation in how this phenomenon is observed for different kinds of organizations. Brunsson's (1993b) conceptualisation of sub-group level factors as reasons which explain how organizational hypocrisy arises is already convincingly argued. However, what had been missing is an account of how these may play out differently for different kinds of organizations, depending on their prestige or size for example, and this is where this research contributes.

7. Conclusion

In sum, this paper lends support to Brunsson's thesis that talk and action are independent and demonstrates inadvertent organizational hypocrisy as an empirical outcome in a business school context. This is no surprise given that a university setting has been used to elaborate and exemplify the concept of organizational hypocrisy (Brunsson, 1989) and that business schools are subject to criticisms for not walking-the-talk (Rasche & Gilbert, 2015).

However, in completing this research, our findings allow us to offer some additions to earlier work. By studying organizational hypocrisy arising from inconsistency between decision and action, in particular, we contribute to the literature by illuminating an unintended kind of organizational hypocrisy and its key determinants. Further, within this analysis we have been able to establish the requirement to include organizational characteristics, such as prestige and size into the theoretical framing. In doing so, we have been able to make some particular contributions to theory and the literature in our empirical context, learning about the salience of prestige and the importance of capability, together, to understand how organizational hypocrisy can arise at business schools.

This paper has focused on the idea that organizational hypocrisy is not always something that is strategic or managed, but rather something that can arise for other reasons (Brunsson, 1993b). Scholars have indicated this possibility before. For example, Bowen (2015) urges us to think beyond a purely deliberative view of strategic greenwashing to include more inadvertent perspectives where symbolic gaps also arise as unintended consequences. However, this perspective has not received systematic empirical attention in earlier literature, and this paper addresses this gap, by looking in particular at a situation where organizational hypocrisy arises at business schools with sustainability commitments and is a consequence of inconsistent action in relation to including sustainability in their MBA programs. With a focus on the activity in a business school's MBA program in particular, further work is recommended to examine both the other ways in which business schools can enact commitment to sustainability and the degree to which they are successful at developing graduates who become responsible managers.

The insights provided by this study of organizational hypocrisy assume business schools are under pressure to respond to public concerns over corporate irresponsibility. At the time the data was collected, these expectations were not mandatory requirements. Recent

institutional developments may provide fertile ground for further research. In particular, accreditation agencies (Slager et al., 2018) have more recently moved to explicitly call for sustainability in the curriculum and further research is therefore suggested to determine whether these criteria have more impact than PRME commitments. Although Moratis (2016) and Louw (2015) give grounds for skepticism regarding the extent of organizational change, Slager et al. (2018) see more links between the developments in accreditation requirements and the pressure business schools face to implement sustainability in practice. These developments in accreditation criteria provide an opportunity, in future work, both to investigate the extent of hypocrisy under stronger external mandates and to explore the impact of these mandates on the motivations for both planned and inadvertent organizational hypocrisy.

Our work also has implications for other educational services providers and higher education settings more generally. With increasing moves to commercialise education and a more competitive market for students, ideas of brand management, reputation and image are becoming ever more important (Hemsley-Brown et al., 2016). As corresponding tensions arise from these emerging pressures, organizational hypocrisy may be similarly predicted, where organizational facades (Cho et al., 2015) increasingly serve an organizational purpose. Our work and findings around prestige, capability and latitude, suggest new studies to unpack hypocrisy in higher education settings like universities, where the pursuit of prestige is important (Alvesson & Gabriel, 2016), but where relevant sustainability knowledge and the power to implement change may be challenging to secure.

Finally, the results of this study offer some practical implications for the implementation of sustainability in business school programs in particular. Generically increasing resources available to the MBA might not be the answer. An important insight of our work is the finding that, within our data, the local context is relevant in explaining organizational hypocrisy. In particular, we found that capability is a key component of our

explanations of hypocrisy and that business school leaders seeking to avoid inadvertent organizational hypocrisy and implement their sustainability commitments, should recruit specialist skills and knowledge providing the MBA with the required capability to deliver the 'action' to meet the 'talk'.

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Figure 1. Conceptual framing

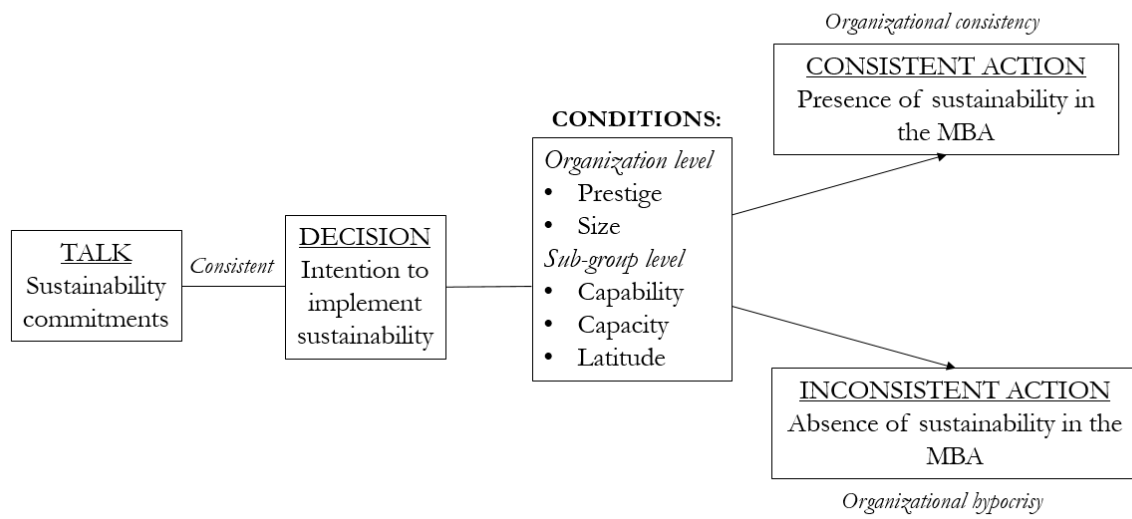


Table 1. Calibration table

Conditions	Membership criteria	Calibration	Illustrative quotes
Prestige	Featured in either or both of two rankings (FT Top 100 European Business Schools or ranked in the top quartile of the Complete University Guide for business and management studies)	Fully in	N/A – secondary data sources
	Not featured in either the two rankings	Fully out	
Size	0-49 academic faculty	Fully in	
	50-99 academic faculty	More in than out	
	100-150 academic faculty	More out than in	
	150+ academic faculty	Fully out	
Capability	Relationship with internal research centre	Fully in	<i>we are working together with our colleagues here from the research centre in sustainability</i>
	Presence of a number of MBA lecturers with sustainability as key interest	More in than out	<i>we have got a <u>hardcore</u> of people in the business school who are very keen on and aware of the sustainability issue</i>
	Presence of MBA lecturers with associated interests	More out than in	<i>sustainability is one of the features of some of the staff here</i>
	No academic interests in sustainability	Fully out	<i>we are weak on the ground [in terms of sustainability experts]</i>
Capacity	Necessary level of required resources and support in place	Fully in	<i>we don't have a problem with resources</i>
	Some resources and support available	More in than out	<i>resources were available, but it was resource-light initially</i>
	Lack of resources constraining activity	More out than in	<i>the school says it supports [sustainability] but it would help to get more resources</i>
	Lack of resources stopping activity	Fully out	<i>we'd need to be more convinced we can 'sell' sustainability to the marketplace first [before it gets resources]</i>
Latitude	Demonstrates autonomy/control/discretion over MBA	Fully in	<i>it is not a big deal for us to make sure that they [faculty] are doing it [teaching sustainability] – we do check that it is done with monitoring in the background.</i>
	Minor resistance, change is largely progressed	More in than out	<i>We have a critical mass [of sustainability-supportive lecturers] but we still have some way to go</i>
	Significant resistance, change is largely resisted	More out than in	<i>the challenge is getting faculty 'there', that is going to be the difficult bit</i>
	No scope for autonomous change	Fully out	<i>I sort of inherited this programme and had to just run with it [as it is]</i>
Outcome Condition:	Sustainability present in core modules of the MBA	Fully in	<i>most modules have a learning outcome related directly sustainability, whether that be social, economic or environmental</i>
	Sustainability not included in current MBA	Fully out	<i>I don't think we will have the headroom...I think at the moment there isn't the time.</i>

Table 2. QCA results table

Conditions	Organizational consistency configurations		Organizational hypocrisy configurations	
	1a	1b	2a	2b
<i>Organization-level factors</i>				
Prestige	⊗	⊗	●	●
Size		⊗		●
<i>MBA-level factors</i>				
Capacity	⊗		●	
Capability	●	●	⊗	⊗
Latitude	●	●	●	●
Raw coverage	0.303	0.273	0.223	0.194
Unique coverage	0.122	0.092	0.08	0.056
Consistency	0.835	0.901	0.89	1
Solution coverage	0.395		0.278	
Solution consistency	0.868		0.910	

Black circles indicate the presence of a condition

Crosses in a white circle indicate the absence of a condition

Larger symbols denote a core condition, smaller symbols denote a peripheral condition

KEY:

- A larger black dot indicates the presence of a condition (core)
- ⊗ A larger white circle containing a cross indicates the absence of a condition (core)
- A smaller black circle indicates the presence of a condition (peripheral)
- ⊗ A smaller white circle containing a cross indicates the absence of a condition (peripheral)

Table 3. Example quotes from MBA program director interviews

Explanatory quotes	
Organizational consistency	Organizational hypocrisy
<p>“I think to some extent everybody is integrating it, but it is a matter of degree”</p> <p>“[sustainability is not seen here as a] typical challenge, where oh it is something else we need to do, as if we do not have already enough boxes to tick”</p> <p>“I think it is part of the ethos of the school and it does work through into the way that people think about the way they put courses together and how they teach them”</p>	<p>“sustainability is an incidental issue rather than a core theme”</p> <p>“I wouldn’t call us evangelists or pioneers...we are kind of foot in the water people at the moment”</p> <p>“the discourse has been initiated from the top, but I don’t know whether there has been very much engagement with that, I think it is very much at the level of rhetoric rather than reality and practice”</p> <p>“at the level of rhetoric our dean will say sustainability is very very important part of what the business school is trying to achieve...But at a programme level and level of ordinary everyday learning and teaching I don’t think it features”</p> <p>“I think if you talk to our dean they will emphasise that sustainability is critical and it is a key theme of the business school but it is rather interesting we have just revalidated our MBAs...And that didn’t actually feature at all, sustainability issues didn’t come into it.”</p>

Appendices

Table 4. Truthtable for organizational consistency

Prestige	Size	Capacity	Capability	Latitude	number	utcomeMBA_Cris	cases	raw consist.	PRI consist.	SYM consist
0	0	0	1	1	1	1	cases	0.857759	0.857759	0.857759
0	0	1	1	1	2	1	cases	0.835	0.835	0.835
0	1	0	1	1	2	1	cases	0.819178	0.819178	0.819178
0	0	0	0	0	2	0	cases	0.779264	0.779264	0.779264
0	1	0	0	1	2	0	cases	0.665829	0.665829	0.665829
0	1	0	0	0	1	0	cases	0.634615	0.634615	0.634615
1	1	1	1	1	3	0	cases	0.415493	0.415493	0.415493
1	0	1	1	1	1	0	cases	0.381395	0.381395	0.381395
1	0	1	0	0	2	0	cases	0.287554	0.287554	0.287554
0	0	1	0	0	1	0	cases	0.284483	0.284483	0.284483
0	0	1	0	1	2	0	cases	0.24812	0.24812	0.24812
1	0	1	0	1	2	0	cases	0.141631	0.141631	0.141631
1	1	0	0	1	1	0	cases	0	0	0
1	1	1	0	1	1	0	cases	0	0	0

Table 5. Truthtable for organizational hypocrisy

Prestige	Size	Capacity	Capability	Latitude	number	utcomeMBA_Cri	cases	raw consist.	PRI consist.	SYM consist
1	1	0	0	1	1	1	cases	1	1	1
1	1	1	0	1	1	1	cases	1	1	1
1	0	1	0	1	2	1	cases	0.858369	0.858369	0.858369
0	0	1	0	1	2	0	cases	0.75188	0.75188	0.75188
0	0	1	0	0	1	0	cases	0.715517	0.715517	0.715517
1	0	1	0	0	2	0	cases	0.712446	0.712446	0.712446
1	0	1	1	1	1	0	cases	0.618605	0.618605	0.618605
1	1	1	1	1	3	0	cases	0.584507	0.584507	0.584507
0	1	0	0	0	1	0	cases	0.365385	0.365385	0.365385
0	1	0	0	1	2	0	cases	0.334171	0.334171	0.334171
0	0	0	0	0	2	0	cases	0.220736	0.220736	0.220736
0	1	0	1	1	2	0	cases	0.180822	0.180822	0.180822
0	0	1	1	1	2	0	cases	0.165	0.165	0.165
0	0	0	1	1	1	0	cases	0.142241	0.142241	0.142241

Table 6. Results of the necessity analysis for both the absence (organizational consistency) and presence (organizational hypocrisy) of the outcome

<i>Condition</i>	<i>Organizational consistency</i>		<i>Organizational hypocrisy</i>	
	<i>Consistency value</i>	<i>Coverage value</i>	<i>Consistency value</i>	<i>Coverage value</i>
<i>Prestige</i>	<i>0.273</i>	<i>0.300</i>	<i>0.583</i>	<i>0.700</i>
<i>Size</i>	<i>0.530</i>	<i>0.493</i>	<i>0.499</i>	<i>0.507</i>
<i>Capacity</i>	<i>0.395</i>	<i>0.336</i>	<i>0.723</i>	<i>0.666</i>
<i>Capability</i>	<i>0.636</i>	<i>0.678</i>	<i>0.277</i>	<i>0.322</i>
<i>Latitude</i>	<i>0.607</i>	<i>0.488</i>	<i>0.585</i>	<i>0.512</i>
<i>~Prestige</i>	<i>0.727</i>	<i>0.615</i>	<i>0.417</i>	<i>0.385</i>
<i>~Size</i>	<i>0.470</i>	<i>0.462</i>	<i>0.501</i>	<i>0.538</i>
<i>~Capacity</i>	<i>0.605</i>	<i>0.667</i>	<i>0.278</i>	<i>0.333</i>
<i>~Capability</i>	<i>0.723</i>	<i>0.684</i>	<i>0.723</i>	<i>0.685</i>
<i>~Latitude</i>	<i>0.393</i>	<i>0.465</i>	<i>0.415</i>	<i>0.535</i>