

Do As I Say, Not As I've Done:

Suffering for a Misdeed Reduces the Hypocrisy of Advising Others Against It

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### Abstract

Not everyone who has committed a misdeed and wants to warn others against committing it will feel entitled to do so. Six experiments, a replication, and a follow-up study examined how suffering for a misdeed grants people the legitimacy to advise against it. When advisors had suffered (vs. not suffered) for their misdeeds, observers thought advisors had more of a right to advise and perceived them as less hypocritical and self-righteous; advisees responded with less anger and derogation; and advisors themselves felt more comfortable offering strong advice. Advisors also strategically highlighted how they had suffered for their wrongdoing when they were motivated to establish their right to offer advice. Additional results illustrate how concerns about the legitimacy of advice-giving differ from concerns about persuasiveness. The findings shed light on what prevents good advice from being disseminated, and how to help people learn from others' mistakes. *(145 words)*

Keywords: Advice, hypocrisy, inconsistency, psychological standing, suffering, legitimacy, self-monitoring

### Do As I Say, Not As I've Done:

#### Suffering for a Misdeed Reduces the Hypocrisy of Advising Others Against It

People who have previously engaged in bad habits or ethical transgressions may want to help others avoid making the same mistake. For example, a manager who used to procrastinate or inflate expense reports may now wish to dissuade employees from doing so, or a scientist may want to advise students against using questionable research practices that she herself used to employ. Experience committing a misdeed may make people particularly qualified to give sound advice, but their exhortations to “do as I say, not as I’ve done” could be met with charges of hypocrisy. Anticipating this, would-be advisors may be reluctant to offer their counsel, and good advice may not get disseminated. Is there a way to comfortably offer advice in such situations without incurring advisees’ wrath? The present research reveals conditions under which it is socially acceptable to preach what you have not practiced. In so doing, we demonstrate how perceptions of legitimacy play a crucial role in people’s willingness to give advice and in others’ reactions to receiving advice.

We propose that people who preach against misdeeds that they themselves have committed will be seen as illegitimate spokespersons unless they paid a price for those misdeeds. We define “misdeeds” broadly as behaviors that, although tempting, are harmful, socially frowned upon, or maladaptive – from ethical transgressions such as fraud and infidelity to bad habits such as smoking and procrastination. People typically commit misdeeds to capture a personal benefit: They may cheat for financial gain, smoke because it feels good, or procrastinate on unpleasant tasks so that they can enjoy more pleasurable activities in the moment. Advising against misdeeds that they have committed, we suggest, seems less hypocritical if any benefits derived have been tempered by personal suffering. For example, if a manager used to profit from

overbilling her clients and never got caught, then her employees would likely find it illegitimate for her now to advise them to bill honestly. On the other hand, they might find such preaching especially legitimate if her dishonesty had cost her important clients, damaged her reputation, and resulted in litigation. Importantly, having suffered for dishonesty does not ensure that that the manager will be persuasive, only that she will be seen, unlike the manager who did not suffer, as having the right to inveigh against overbilling. More generally, we propose that suffering for a misdeed legitimizes advising against it.

In what follows, we explain this claim and predict three important consequences: (a) advising others to avoid a misdeed that one has committed elicits less negative reactions when one has suffered for the misdeed, (b) anticipating this, advisors who have benefitted from a misdeed express less disapproval of it than they actually feel, and (c) when required to advise another person to avoid a misdeed that they themselves committed, people will present themselves as having suffered for it – particularly if they are sensitive to perceptions of social legitimacy.

### **Suffering as a Source of Psychological Standing**

Not everyone is perceived as equally entitled to express a view about an issue. Sometimes, personal characteristics disqualify people from speaking up. For example, among men and women with similar attitudes related to health care coverage of abortion, women felt more comfortable publicly expressing these attitudes (Ratner & Miller, 2001). Because abortion is considered more of a “women’s issue,” men apparently felt that it was not their place to speak up. Other times, past actions disqualify people from expressing a view. For example, in leaving their home country, emigrants may be perceived as forfeiting their right to criticize it (Hornsey & Imani, 2004). In a similar manner, previously succumbing to a temptation can deny people the

legitimacy to advise others to resist it. We describe the subjective sense of legitimacy or entitlement to act or to speak up as *psychological standing* (Miller, 1999; Miller & Effron, 2010; Miller, Effron, & Zak, 2009). When people lack the psychological standing to express a particular attitude, even one with which others agree, they will feel uncomfortable and inhibit themselves from speaking up, or risk censure.

Whereas some personal characteristics and past behaviors deprive people of standing, other characteristics and behaviors provide standing (e.g., Hornsey, Trembath, & Gunthorpe, 2004). For example, whereas uttering racial epithets would be grossly inappropriate for most people, membership in the relevant racial group can grant a person standing to utter them. Relatedly, we propose, whereas it would be inappropriate for most people to preach against a misdeed that they have practiced, suffering for the relevant misdeed can provide standing to so preach. Thus, we predict that those who have suffered for a misdeed are perceived as more entitled to advise others against committing it, are less likely to inhibit themselves from so advising, and elicit less negative reactions when they do advise.

Although a person will have difficulty persuading others to follow her advice if she lacks the psychological standing to offer it, psychological standing is conceptually distinct from persuasiveness. An unpersuasive advisor fails to influence people's attitudes and behavior, whereas an advisor who lacks psychological standing commits a worse sin: violating a social norm about who is allowed to say what. Advisors who lack standing risk being perceived not only as ineffective, but also as insensitive, dislikeable, and – if they lack standing specifically because they have not practiced what they now preach – hypocritical. Their message will be met not with mere shrugs, but with anger and hostility from those they presume to advise. The anticipation of such negative reactions should make would-be advisors feel uncomfortable

offering even what they and others would see as good advice. Thus, whereas unpersuasive advice may get offered but be ignored, advice that a person lacks the standing to deliver may not even get offered. For these reasons, we suggest that a complete account of advice-giving requires considering not only persuasiveness but also psychological standing. In addition to assessing whether people will follow her advice, a would-be advisor needs to know whether people will perceive her as entitled to offer it.

### **Hypocrisy, Self-Righteousness, and the Standing to Give Advice**

Hypocrisy, defined as “the practice of claiming to have moral standards or beliefs to which one’s own behavior does not conform” (hypocrisy, n.d.), occurs when people fail to practice what they preach (Stone & Fernandez, 2008), when they display lower moral standards for themselves than for others (Lammers, 2012; Lammers, Stapel, & Galinsky, 2010; Valdesolo & DeSteno, 2007), when they “say one thing, but do another” (Barden, Rucker, & Petty, 2005; Barden, Rucker, Petty, & Rios, 2014), or when they create a false appearance of morality (Batson, Thompson, Seufferling, Whitney, & Strongman, 1999; Gilbert & Jones, 1986). Hypocrites elicit more anger, condemnation, and punishment from observers than non-hypocrites do for the same misdeeds (Effron, Lucas, & O'Connor, in press; Effron & Monin, 2010; Laurent, Clark, Walker, & Wiseman, 2013; Powell & Smith, 2012). One reason that hypocrites rankle is that they seem self-righteous – that is, they evince an unfounded certainty in their moral superiority (Hale & Pillow, 2015; self-righteous, n.d.). When people preach against the same misdeed they practice, it seems that their preaching “does not come out of a concern for moral principles, but rather, [is] for the sake of gaining the moral high ground over another person” (Hale & Pillow, 2014). Even people who are not themselves the targets of such preaching (e.g., those who are not tempted to commit the misdeed) should recognize that the hypocrite’s claim to

the moral high ground is illegitimate and think that he or she lacks the standing to preach. However, the hypocrite's self-righteousness should be particularly galling to the targets of the preaching (e.g., advisees); as the ones being told to forego a temptation, they are liable to feel looked down upon, which provides an extra motive to derogate the preacher (Minson & Monin, 2012).

Advising against misdeeds you currently practice is blatantly hypocritical, but advising against misdeeds you *used* to practice is more ambiguous (Barden et al., 2005; Barden et al., 2014). On the one hand, the fact that you once flouted the advice you now encourage others to follow can make your advice seem like a self-righteous attempt to present yourself as more virtuous than you are. On the other hand, the fact that you no longer flout the advice could make you seem like you have seen the light, and that your preaching is a genuine attempt to help others keep their steps upon the path to virtue. We propose that people resolve this ambiguity differently depending on whether the advisor has suffered versus gotten away with the misdeed.

When advisors have enjoyed the misdeed's benefit without suffering, the advice will seem self-righteous and hypocritical. The advisors will seem to be making an illegitimate claim to the "moral high ground." The advice will be construed very differently when advisors have suffered for their misdeeds. The advice will seem less like an assertion of false moral superiority (an illegitimate act), and more like a genuine attempt to help others (a legitimate act). Appearing to have "learned their lesson," advisors will seem less hypocritical, judgmental, or "preachy" – in short, more "holy" and less "holier-than-thou." The advice may not be more convincing, but the advisor will seem less self-righteous. As a result, the indignation captured by the expression "what right do they have to say that ..." will not arise when the advisor has suffered. In summary, we argue, people are seen as lacking the standing to preach against misdeeds from

which they have benefitted, but as particularly entitled to preach against those for which they have suffered.

### **Previous Research on Advice**

The literature on advice has focused mainly on identifying factors that affect the weight people give to others' advice. These factors include characteristics of the advisor, such as expertise, experience, age, and confidence (Feng & MacGeorge, 2006; Harvey & Fischer, 1997; Phillips, 1999; Price & Stone, 2004; Sniezek & Buckley, 1995; Van Swol & Sniezek, 2005); features of the advice, such as its costliness (Gino, 2008; Patt, Bowles, & Cash, 2006), its quality (Yaniv & Kleinberger, 2000; Yaniv & Milyavsky, 2007), and its deviation from the advisee's initial opinion (Yaniv, 2004); features of the decision context, such as its difficulty or importance (Gino & Moore, 2007; Harvey & Fischer, 1997); and psychological experiences of the advisee, such as incidental emotion (Gino, Brooks, & Schweitzer, 2012; Gino & Schweitzer, 2008) and power (See, Morrison, Rothman, & Soll, 2011; Tost, Gino, & Larrick, 2012).

Our focus differs substantially. First, unlike prior work that examined advice on such topics as how to estimate numerical quantities and answer trivia questions, we focus on advice to avoid misdeeds – a type of advice that lends itself to charges of hypocrisy and self-righteousness because it involves making a moral pronouncement (Graham, Meindl, Koleva, Iyer, & Johnson, in press; Monin & Merritt, 2012). Second, we address the underexplored question of how people feel about giving and receiving advice. Third, whereas previous research examined how much people follow advice once it has been offered, our research addresses perceptions of whether an advisor has a right to be offering advice in the first place, and the consequence of these perceptions on people's comfort giving advice, the nature of the advice they give, their attempts at self-presentation, and the way others perceive their character once they have offered advice.



## Hypothesis Development

Our main goal in the present research was to demonstrate that people lack the standing to advise against committing a misdeed that they previously committed unless they suffered for it. We tested several hypotheses based on this idea and its consequences for advisors, advisees, and impartial observers.

Our first set of hypotheses predicts how impartial observers respond to advice:

***Hypothesis 1a:** Committing a misdeed will deprive people of standing to advise others against it, in the eyes of observers.*

***Hypothesis 1b:** Suffering for a misdeed will grant people standing to advise others against it, in the eyes of observers.*

***Hypothesis 1c:** People who advise against a misdeed they have committed will seem less hypocritical and less self-righteous to an observer when they have suffered for their misdeed than when they have not.*

Hypothesis 2 predicts how an advisor's suffering affects people's reaction to receiving their advice. Although even impartial observers should recognize how much standing an advisor has, advisees should react particularly negatively to advisors who lack it. Advisees are the ones who are being asked to forego a tempting misdeed. To the extent that they perceive the advice as an attempt to restrict their freedom to undertake a potentially pleasurable activity, and to the extent that they feel negatively judged, they can be expected to express anger and to derogate the advisor (J. Brehm, 1966; S. S. Brehm & Brehm, 1981; Dillard & Shen, 2005; Minson & Monin, 2012; Rains, 2013; Smith, 1977; Wicklund, 1974). We expect such negative reactions to be especially strong when the advice-giving seems an illegitimate social influence attempt – that is, when the advice is proffered without standing. To the extent that suffering for a misdeed grants advisors standing to inveigh against that misdeed:

***Hypothesis 2:** Advisors who inveigh against a misdeed they have committed will elicit less anger and derogation from an advisee when they have suffered than when they have not.*

Because impartial observers are not themselves the targets of influence and are not being asked to forego a temptation, they should have less reason to feel angry with the advisor to begin with. Thus, their reactions to observing the advice should be less affected by their perceptions of the advisor's standing.

Our third and fourth hypotheses pertain to the behavior of advisors. People should feel uncomfortable advising audiences who they expect will react negatively to their advice. Anticipating negative reactions from advisees, advisors should be reluctant to offer advice that they lack the standing to offer. If suffering for a misdeed provides standing to inveigh against it, then:

***Hypothesis 3:** People will feel more comfortable delivering strong advice against a misdeed they are known to have committed when the advisee is aware (vs. unaware) of how they have suffered for the misdeed.*

If people have greater standing to advise against their past misdeed when they have suffered for it, then people who are motivated to establish this standing should strategically highlight their suffering. We consider two factors that should motivate people to establish their standing. The first is whether they have publicly advised against a misdeed. For example, after her peers overhear her exhorting new employees to avoid procrastination, a manager should prefer to tell the peers about how she herself has suffered for procrastinating than about how she has enjoyed the benefits of procrastination. Even though she has no reason to convince her peers not to procrastinate, she will be motivated to convince them that she did not act hypocritically when advising the new employees. Second, individuals who are most inclined towards self-presentation should feel especially acutely the need to establish standing in the eyes of others. If

the manager were the kind of person who would not notice or care that her peers thought she was disentitled to inveigh against procrastination, then she would have little reason to convince them of her standing.

We thus formulated the following hypothesis:

***Hypothesis 4:** People will be more likely to present themselves as having suffered for a misdeed that they committed if they both (a) are known to have advised against it, and (b) are dispositionally inclined towards self-presentation.*

To summarize, the claim that suffering for misdeeds grants a person standing to advise against them predicts who impartial observers think has and does not have the right to give such advice, how people react to receiving such advice themselves, and how willing people are to give such advice.

### **The Present Research**

We tested our hypotheses in six studies (plus a replication and a follow-up study, both reported in the Online Supplement). In Study 1, impartial observers rated the standing and hypocrisy of advisors who told others to avoid marital infidelity or illegal drug use. We tested Hypotheses 1a-1c by manipulating whether the advisors had committed these misdeeds themselves, and, if so, whether they had paid a price for it. Study 2 tested Hypothesis 2 by assessing negative reactions to anti-smoking advice from a former smoker who either had or had not developed health problems from smoking. It also tested Hypothesis 1c by examining whether people construed the advice-giving as less self-righteous when the advisor had paid a price. Study 3 tested whether such self-righteousness mediated the effect of paying a price on standing, and Study 4 probed a key boundary condition. Study 5 tested Hypothesis 3 by assessing advisors' reluctance to deliver an anti-procrastination message to an audience who knew about their history of either suffering for procrastination or getting away with it. Finally, Study 6 tested

whether the need for standing would lead advisors who were chronically inclined towards self-presentation (i.e., high self-monitors) to strategically present themselves as having suffered for a misdeed (Hypothesis 4).

### **Study 1: Suffering for a Misdeed Grants Standing to Advise Against It**

Participants evaluated the standing that two target people had to advise others against committing a misdeed. One target (the transgressor) had committed the misdeed herself, and we manipulated (between subjects) whether she had suffered for it. The other target had no experience with the misdeed; thus, she had neither resisted nor succumbed to the temptation to commit it. Hypotheses 1a and 1b predict, respectively, that committing the misdeed will deprive a person of standing if she has not paid a price, but will grant her standing if she has suffered. Thus, we expected that when the transgressor had not suffered, she would be seen as less entitled to offer advice than the inexperienced target, whereas the reverse would be true when she had suffered. Hypothesis 1c predicts that paying a price would make the transgressor seem less hypocritical for having failed to practice what he now preaches. We also assessed robustness by testing whether these hypothesized effects would be independent of two factors related to a person's persuasive ability: expertise and the ability to generate convincing arguments.

### **Method**

In this and all subsequent studies, we report all measures and manipulations.

**Participants.** In advance of data collection, we chose to recruit 75 participants on Amazon.com's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) service. Participants received \$.31 each. As no one failed attention-check questions, we retained all participants for analysis (41 females, 34 males;  $M_{\text{age}} = 33.73$  years,  $SD = 12.16$ ).

**Vignettes and manipulation.** Each participant read two vignettes (see Appendix A,

Online Supplement). The *adultery vignette* described two married men: one who had had an extramarital affair (the transgressor), and one who, “due to the nature of his work and social life, ...[had] never had an opportunity to have an affair” (the non-transgressor). Participants randomly assigned to the *price* condition ( $n = 37$ ) read that the transgressor’s wife found out and left him. In the *no-price* condition ( $n = 38$ ), his wife never found out and he remains happily married. The *drug vignette* described two high school students: one who had secured admission to Harvard after using an illegal drug to improve her academic performance (the transgressor), and one who had never had an opportunity to use the drug (and in fact had never heard about the drug until recently) because “such drugs are not available at her high school” (the non-transgressor). In the price condition, the transgressor’s drug use is discovered, her admission to Harvard is revoked, and she has to repeat her final year of high school. In the no-price condition, her drug use stays secret and she matriculates to Harvard as planned. Both vignettes emphasized that the transgressor had voluntarily discontinued the relevant misdeed (in the price condition, this occurred before their misdeed was discovered).

Participants were randomly assigned to the same condition for both vignettes. The order of the vignettes was counterbalanced.

**Standing.** For each vignette, we assessed the amount of standing participants thought that transgressor had, relative to the non-transgressor, to inveigh against the misdeeds that he or she had committed. In the adultery vignette, participants indicated the characters’ relative standing to advise a friend to call off an extramarital affair. The items were: (1) “who is more entitled to urge his friend to break off the affair,” (2) coming from whom “would advice to break off the affair be seen as more legitimate”, (3) “who has more of a right to criticize his friend for having an affair,” and (4) “who is more likely to be told, “It’s not your place to criticize someone for

having an affair” (reverse-coded). Participants responded on a scale from -3 to +3 that referenced the names of each character (i.e., from *definitely Smith* to *definitely Jones*) where higher numbers indicate granting more standing to the transgressor. The four items were highly intercorrelated, so we averaged them into a single measure of standing ( $\alpha = .77$ ). We used the same four items in the second vignette to measure which student had more standing to convince her sister not to take the performance-enhancing drug ( $\alpha = .70$ ).

**Control variables.** In each vignette, participants next rated the target people on two factors related to persuasive potential: the ability to generate good arguments (i.e., “Who would be able to come up with the most convincing reasons not to” commit the relevant misdeed), and expertise (i.e., “Who knows more about the risks of” the misdeed). Response options were the same as for the standing measure. (The two items were only modestly correlated,  $r < .39$  in each vignette, so we analyzed them separately). We expected the effects of paying a price on standing to emerge even when statistically controlling for these two measures.

**Hypocrisy.** We measured hypocrisy in the adultery vignette: “How hypocritical would [the transgressor] seem if he criticized his friend for having an affair?” (*not at all, slightly, somewhat, very, and extremely*, coded 1-5). A programming error rendered an analogous question unusable for the drug vignette.

## Results and Discussion

**Standing.** We first examined whether the transgressors were granted more standing when they had paid a price than when they had not. To account for the fact that each participant responded to two vignettes, we performed a mixed multilevel regression with random intercepts that predicted standing from condition and vignette (both dummy-coded). As Figure 1 shows, the transgressors were seen as having greater standing to advise others not to commit their prior

misdeeds when they had paid a price ( $M = .50$ ,  $SD = .95$ ) than when they had not ( $M = -.78$ ,  $SD = 1.13$ ),  $z = 2.47$ ,  $p = .01$ ,  $d = 1.23$ . Neither standing perceptions nor the manipulation's effect differed significantly by vignette ( $ps = .17$  and  $.59$ , respectively), so we averaged responses across vignettes for follow-up analyses.

Comparing the transgressor to the non-transgressor confirmed our specific predictions. In the no-price condition, the mean of the standing scale was significantly lower than the midpoint,  $t(37) = 4.25$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $d = -.69$ , indicating that transgressors who had paid no price were seen as having less standing than non-transgressors (consistent with Hypothesis 1a). By contrast, in the price condition, the mean was significantly higher than the midpoint, indicating that transgressors who had paid a price were seen as having more standing than non-transgressors (consistent with Hypothesis 1b),  $t(36) = 3.23$ ,  $p = .003$ ,  $d = .53$ .

**Hypocrisy.** Consistent with Hypothesis 1c, the transgressor in the adultery vignette also seemed less hypocritical when he had paid a price for the misdeeds that he now advised others to avoid ( $M = 3.08$ ,  $SD = 1.28$ ) than when he had not ( $M = 4.32$ ,  $SD = .96$ ),  $t(73) = 4.73$ ,  $p < .0001$ ,  $d = -1.10$ . (As noted, the drug vignette did not include a usable hypocrisy measure).

**Control variables.** Could suffering have granted people standing to advise simply because it made them seem like they could more effectively or expertly argue against committing the relevant misdeeds? The data did not support this possibility: The effect of paying a price on standing remained significant and in the same direction when controlling for the measures of expertise and the ability to generate convincing arguments in the mixed regression model described earlier,  $z = 3.30$ ,  $p = .001$ . The data also showed another disjunction between standing and the other two measures.. As noted earlier, the transgressors who had not suffered were seen as having less standing to offer advice than the non-transgressors – but, compared to the non-

transgressors, they were also seen as significantly more knowledgeable and marginally better able to generate convincing arguments, as indicated by mean scores above the scales' midpoint of 0, ( $M = 2.08$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ ),  $t(37) = 12.86$ ,  $p < .0001$ , and ( $M = .38$ ,  $SD = 1.37$ ),  $t(37) = 1.72$ ,  $p = .09$ , respectively. Thus, committing a misdeed may suggest that people have special insight into why it should be avoided – but without having suffered, committing it also deprives people of the right to share these insights with others.

Together, Study 1's results suggest that wrongdoing can undermine people's right to advise against the same wrongdoing and make them appear hypocritical if they do advise – unless they paid a price for their wrongdoing, in which case their right to advise is enhanced.

### **Study 2:**

#### **Suffering For a Misdeed Reduces Negative Reactions When One Advises Against It**

Study 2 assessed the generalizability of our analysis by examining advice to avoid a bad habit (smoking). We assessed smokers' and non-smokers' reactions to a former smoker who advised people to quit smoking. We manipulated whether this target person had suffered health consequences from smoking, and we also included a baseline condition in which he had neither suffered nor offered advice. Hypotheses 1a-1c predict that when the target paid a price for smoking, smokers and non-smokers alike will grant him greater standing to advise against smoking and will construe his advice as less self-righteous.

Study 2 also tested whether an advisor elicits less anger and derogation from advisees when he suffered for the misdeed he inveighs against than when he did not suffer (Hypothesis 2). Consistent with research on reactance, we expected smokers to react negatively to a target who sought to restrict their freedom to smoke if he had “gotten away with” smoking himself (Dillard & Shen, 2005; Smith, 1977). However, these negative reactions should be muted when the



target's suffering has granted him standing. This pattern should be less pronounced among non-smokers, for whom the freedom to do something they want is not threatened by the target and who are not themselves the targets of potentially illegitimate moralizing, and who should therefore be less bothered by his lack of standing.

## Method

**Participants.** Participants were 405 MTurk users who were paid \$.51 each. The sample size was based on our goal of running approximately 100 smokers. We ran a first wave of 200 people, found that 25% were smokers, and thus ran a second wave of 200 (5 additional subjects completed the study without signing up). After excluding people who failed at least one attention or comprehension check (described below;  $n = 16$ ), our final sample was 389. An equivalent proportion of smokers and non-smokers were excluded,  $\chi^2(1) = .05, p = .82$ , exclusions did not differ significantly by condition,  $\chi^2(1) = 3.91, p = .14$ , and the results were identical in direction and significance without exclusions. In this and all subsequent MTurk studies, we prevented participants from signing up if they had completed a previous study in the series (Peer, Paolacci, Chandler, & Mueller, 2012).

We categorized people as smokers if they indicated at the beginning of the study that they had smoked at least 100 cigarettes in their life and they currently smoked at least some days (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014). Our sample included 88 smokers and 301 non-smokers. Smokers indicated that they had been smoking for an average of 12 years; the median smoker smoked 3 packs of cigarettes per week; 38% said they were currently trying to quit. Gender, age, and highest parental education did not differ between smokers and non-smokers,  $ps > .14$ . Smokers reported significantly lower annual income than non-smokers,  $t(387) = 2.37, p = .02$ , but this variable was not a significant covariate in our analyses.

**Materials and manipulation.** Participants imagined that an older man named Mark strikes up a conversation while seated next to them on a plane (see Appendix B, Online Supplement). Smokers were told that Mark makes some comments about smoking to them directly; non-smokers were instead told that Mark explains how he previously made these comments to a smoker he was seated next to on a recent flight who was about participants' age. Mark describes how he smoked for decades before quitting last year, and mentions several ways in which he initially benefitted from smoking: it helped him relax, it felt good, and people thought he was cool. The remainder of his comments depended on the randomly assigned condition.

In the baseline condition ( $n = 32$  smokers and 101 non-smokers), Mark says that he never experienced any negative health consequences of smoking, and how, according to his doctor, at this point he never would. He makes no effort to persuade anyone not to smoke. In the remaining two conditions, he advises against smoking. The no-price condition ( $n = 26$  smokers and 101 non-smokers) was identical to the baseline condition, except that Mark began his comments by saying, "You have to quit smoking," attributes his lack of smoking-related health complications to luck, and enumerates several negative healthy consequences of smoking that happen to "plenty of people" (e.g., emphysema, tooth loss, and lung cancer), and condemns smoking as "stupid," "disgusting," and "filthy." The price condition ( $n = 30$  smokers and 99 non-smokers) was identical to the no-price condition, except that all of the negative health consequences of smoking that Mark describes happened to him instead of "plenty of people." It is important to note that Mark condemns smoking equally harshly and makes equally strong arguments about the dangers of smoking in both the price and the no-price conditions; the only difference was whether he had suffered for smoking.

**Negative reactions to Mark.** Participants indicated how they would “feel while listening to what Mark had to say about smoking.” The six key items were: annoyed, pleased (reverse-coded), irritated, interested (reverse-coded), mad, and aggravated (response options: *not at all*, *slightly*, *somewhat*, *very much*, and *extremely*, labeled 1-5). Four filler items (sympathetic, grateful, amused, and guilty) were not included in the composite measure described below (although results were identical when they were, with the first three items reverse-coded). Next participants used 7-point scales to rate Mark on five semantic differentials: likeable/dislikeable, disagreeable/agreeable, polite/impolite, mean/nice, sensitive/insensitive. Finally, they responded to a single item indicating whether they wanted to hear more about what Mark thinks about smoking (response options: *definitely not*, *probably not*, *maybe not*, *unsure*, *maybe yes*, *probably yes*, and *definitely yes*, labeled -3 to 3). As these 11 items were all highly intercorrelated ( $\alpha = .91$ ), we averaged them into a single measure of negative reactions after standardizing each.

**Standing.** Three items were averaged to form the measure of standing ( $\alpha = .92$ ): how appropriate it is for Mark to criticize someone for smoking, how legitimate it is, and how entitled he is to do so, given what participants know about him (1-7 scale from *not at all* to *completely*). (In the baseline condition, in which Mark did not actually criticize smoking, these items measure how much standing he would be granted if he did so). The order of the standing measure and the negative reactions measure was counterbalanced.

**Perceived self-righteousness.** A free-response question asked participants to “tell us more about your impression of Mark.” Two coders, blind to hypothesis and condition, categorized these responses as characterizing Mark or his advice-giving as well-intentioned, judgmental, both, or neither. If people perceive the advice as self-righteous, they should spontaneously describe it as more judgmental and less well-intentioned. We told the coders that

examples of *well-intentioned* included statements that Mark means well, has others' interests at heart, worries about others' health, or cares about helping others, and that examples of *judgmental* included descriptions of Mark as arrogant, pushy, "holier than thou," hypocritical, a "know-it-all," or that otherwise implied Mark thinks he is better than others. We also told them that they should not simply base their coding on how positive or negative a response was. Only responses in the two conditions in which Mark gave advice were coded. The coders agreed 87% of time about the "well-intentioned" category and 92% of the time about the "judgmental" category ( $\kappa$ s = .75 and .76, respectively), and they resolved disagreements through discussion.

**Attention-checks.** Participants indicated whether Mark used to smoke and paid a price for it, used to smoke and never paid a price, or saw a TV show about someone who paid a price for smoking. A second attention-check item (adapted from Oppenheimer, Meyvis, & Davidenko, 2009) asked them to provide a particular response if they were reading the directions. As detailed above, we excluded participants who failed at least one of these attention-checks.

**Beliefs about smoking.** To examine whether the manipulation affected beliefs about smoking, we asked people to indicate how dangerous they thought smoking is on a continuous scale from 0 (*not at all dangerous*) to 100 (*one of the most dangerous things you can do*).

## Results

**Standing.** Results of the standing measure, plotted in Figure 2, conceptually replicated the results of Study 1. Consistent with Hypotheses 1a and 1b, participants granted a former smoker more standing to condemn others for smoking when he had suffered for smoking than when he had not. We tested the significance of this pattern by submitting the standing measure to a 3 (condition: price/persuasion vs. no-price/persuasion vs. no-price/no-persuasion) X 2 (smoking status: smoker vs. non-smoker) ANOVA, which revealed only a main effect of

condition,  $F(2, 383) = 37.36, p < .0001, \eta^2_p = .16$ , and no interaction,  $F(2, 383) = .06, p = .94, \eta^2_p < .001$ . Testing simple effects confirmed that Mark had more standing when he had paid a price ( $M = 5.26, SD = 1.48$ ) compared to when he had not – regardless of whether he actually had condemned smoking (no-price condition:  $M = 4.00, SD = 1.68, F(1, 383) = 28.31, p < .0001, d = .80$ , or not (baseline condition:  $M = 3.28, SD = 1.69, F(1, 383) = 73.10, p < .0001, d = 1.25$ ). (Participants also thought that he had more standing to criticize a smoker when he had actually done so, in the no-price condition, than when he had not, in the baseline condition,  $p = .005, d = .43$ . Perhaps taking an action suggests that the actor had at least some standing to act, or perhaps the fact that Mark does not mention the dangers of smoking in the baseline condition made him seem misleading).

**Perceived self-righteousness.** The free-responses suggested that people spontaneously characterized Mark and his advice as less self-righteous when he had suffered for smoking. Specifically, fewer than half as many people characterized Mark and his advice as judgmental when he had paid a price (14.84%) than he had not (34.65%),  $\chi^2(1) = 13.44, p < .001$ , and more people characterized Mark and his advice as well-intentioned when he had paid a price (55.47%) than when he had not (39.37%),  $\chi^2(1) = 6.63, p = .01$ . Logistic regression analyses showed that neither of these effects was significantly moderated by whether participants were smokers,  $ps > .55$ . (We did not code responses in the baseline condition, because Mark did not offer advice in it).

**Negative reactions.** We next examined the predictions that smokers (but not non-smokers) would react more negatively to Mark when he communicated an anti-smoking message, but that smokers' negative reactions would be attenuated when he had paid a price for smoking. Figure 3 shows that the data supported both predictions. To test the significance of

these effects, we first performed a 3 X 2 ANOVA, which revealed only a main effect of condition,  $F(2, 383) = 6.46, p = .002, \eta^2_p = .03$ , and the predicted interaction,  $F(2, 383) = 8.79, p = .0002, \eta^2_p = .04$ . We then used planned contrasts to test our specific predictions (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1985).

***Smokers react negatively to an anti-smoking message.*** An initial contrast confirmed our prediction that smokers derogated the target significantly more when he delivered an anti-smoking message without having paid a price (no-price condition:  $M = .38, SD = .97$ ) than when he delivered no such message (baseline condition:  $M = -.40, SD = .45$ ),  $F(1, 383) = 18.44, p < .0001, d = 1.03$ . Also as expected, non-smokers did not react negatively to the anti-smoking message; their reactions to Mark were statistically equivalent in the no-price and the baseline conditions (respectively,  $M_s = .03$  and  $.10, SD_s = .67$  and  $.66$ ),  $F(1, 383) = .39, p = .53, d = -.10$ .

***Paying a price reduces negative smokers' negative reactions.*** A second contrast confirmed our central prediction that smokers would react less negatively to Mark's advice when he had paid a price ( $M = -.03, SD = .70$ ) than when he had not ( $M = .38, SD = .97$ ),  $F(1, 383) = 4.97, p = .03, d = -.48$ . The effect among non-smokers was smaller, as expected ( $M_{\text{price}} = -.09, M_{\text{no-price}} = .03, SD_s = .70$  and  $.67$ , respectively),  $d = -.18$ , and was not statistically significant,  $F(1, 383) = 1.68, p = .20$ , which comports with the previous finding that the anti-smoking message did not elicit particularly negative reactions from non-smokers to begin with.

**Mediation by standing.** To examine whether perceptions of standing could explain why smokers reacted less negatively to Mark's advice when he had paid a price, we conducted a mediation analysis, the results of which are shown in Figure 4. To test the significance of the indirect effect of paying a price on negative reactions via standing, we mean-centered the standing measure, created a dummy code that compared the price condition (coded 1) to the no-

price condition (coded 0), and computed the bootstrapped, bias-corrected 95% confidence interval with 5000 resamples (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). We limited the analyses to smokers and omitted the baseline condition. The indirect effect was significant,  $b = -.48$ , 95% CI = [-.90, -.19]. Thus, as predicted, paying a price for smoking granted Mark standing to offer anti-smoking advice, which in turn decreased smokers' negative reactions to him. This mediation by standing accounted for all of the variance in the total effect of the manipulation on negative reactions (i.e., the ratio of the indirect to the total effect was > 100%). Increasing confidence in our proposed causal ordering of the variables, negative reactions did not significantly mediate the effect of the manipulation on standing among smokers,  $b = .47$  [-.005, 1.12]), and this alternative indirect effect accounted for less of the variance in the total effect (i.e., 34%) than in hypothesized model. Thus, standing mediated the manipulation's effect on negative reactions better than negative reactions mediated the manipulation's effect on standing.

**Perceived dangerousness of smoking.** Because we expected that most participants would already be familiar with the arguments in the anti-smoking message, and because the message contained the same arguments in both the price and the no-price conditions, we predicted that the manipulation would have no effect on how dangerous participants perceived smoking to be. That is, we did not expect that smokers' negative reactions in the no-price condition would be due to Mark's lack of standing rendering his arguments less persuasive. Unsurprisingly, a 2 X 3 ANOVA on beliefs about smoking revealed a main effect of smoking status, such that smokers believed smoking to be less dangerous than non-smokers did ( $M_s = 71.10$  and  $79.85$ , respectively;  $SD_s = 16.30$  and  $17.29$ ),  $F(1, 382) = 17.50$ ,  $p < .0001$ ,  $\eta^2_p = .04$  (one participant did not respond to this measure). Most critically, the experimental manipulation had no significant effect on this measure,  $F(2, 382) = 1.94$ ,  $p = .15$ ,  $\eta^2_p = .01$ , nor did it interact

significantly with smoker status,  $F(2, 382) = .42, p = .66, \eta^2_p = .002$ . A focused contrast comparing the price to the no-price condition was also not significant,  $F(1, 382) = .01, p = .90$ . Moreover, controlling for this measure did not eliminate the significant interaction between the manipulation and smoking status on negative reactions to Mark, described earlier. Thus, the negative reactions to Mark among smokers, produced by his lack of standing, seem not to have been due to the non-persuasiveness of his anti-smoking message.

### **Replication**

We tested the robustness of Study 2's central results in a new sample of 111 smokers. The results replicated (see Appendix C, Online Supplement).

### **Discussion**

Conceptually replicating the results of Study 1 in a new domain, Study 2 found that people granted a target person greater standing to advise against an unhealthy habit that he once had when he had suffered for having this habit than when he had not (Hypotheses 1a and 1b). The free-response data also showed that such advice-giving seemed less self-righteous when the advisor had suffered for the habit (Hypothesis 1c). For example, in the price condition, representative descriptions of the target included, "He means well" and "He is just trying to help;" in the no-price condition, people were less likely to write descriptions like those, and more likely to write descriptions like, "I think he is kind of preachy" and "He's kind of pushy and self-righteous."

The results also reveal that reactions to a perceived lack of standing depended on the relevance of the advice to the self. Our study included both advisees (i.e., smokers), who were directly advised to give up a bad habit that they enjoyed, and impartial observers (i.e., non-smokers), who did not engage in the habit and were probably not tempted to do so, and thus were



not targets of the advice. Advisees and observers alike thought that paying a price for a bad habit made advising against it more legitimate. In the case of the advisees, their perceptions of legitimacy in turn predicted less negative reactions to being told to give up the habit, as shown by a mediation analysis. By contrast, observers were not particularly bothered by advice that was illegitimately offered to someone else but irrelevant to themselves, so increasing their perceptions of the advice's legitimacy did not affect how negatively they reacted to it.

For several reasons, it is unlikely that a former smoker simply seemed more persuasive when he had paid a price. He made the same widely-known and credible anti-smoking arguments in the price and the no-price conditions; it is not obvious that the persuasiveness of these arguments would be undermined by his statement that although smoking harms “plenty of people,” it did not harm him. Moreover, participants said they were just as persuaded of the dangers of smoking regardless of whether these dangers had harmed the former smoker himself. Thus, while being hectored by an ex-smoker was less annoying for smokers when he had paid a price, this was not because they found his message more persuasive; they simply found his delivering it more legitimate.

### **Study 3: Mediation By Self-Righteousness**

We have argued that paying a price grants standing by making advice seem less self-righteous (Hypothesis 1c). Study 2 found supportive evidence in open-ended responses; Study 3 sought convergent support by measuring self-righteousness with closed-ended items, and testing them as a mediator of the effect of paying a price on standing.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Method**

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<sup>1</sup> Additional analyses showed that Study 2 also provided evidence of such mediation (see Appendix C, Online Supplement).

**Participants.** We aimed to have 100 MTurk participants (paid \$.31 each) in each of four between-subject conditions; we oversampled to allow for exclusions. Of the 423 people who began the study, 413 completed it and we excluded 17 for failing attention checks, leaving 396 people (242 males and 154 females;  $M_{\text{age}} = 29.84$ ,  $SD = .95$ ). An equivalent number was excluded from the price and the no-price conditions,  $\chi^2(1) = 1.51$ ,  $p = .22$ , and the results' direction and significance were identical without exclusions.

**Design and vignettes.** The design was a 2 (paid a price: yes vs. no) X 2 (vignette) between-subjects factorial. Participants read one of two vignettes about a manager who had committed, and then voluntarily stopped committing, a misdeed: using the company credit card for personal expenses or having sex with an intern (see Appendix D, Online Supplement). Depending on randomly assigned condition, he had either paid a price (i.e., after giving up the misdeed, he had been found out and fired, and then had to accept a lower-paying job after a year of unemployment;  $n_s = 93$  in the credit card vignette and 103 in the intern vignette) or had gotten away with it (i.e., he had given up the misdeed and never been found out, and he eventually chose to leave his company for a higher paying job;  $n_s = 95$  in the credit card vignette and 101 in the intern vignette). Finally, the vignettes described how the manager advised an employee at his new job to avoid the same misdeed.

**Measures.** Participants completed two measures in counterbalanced order. A 7-item scale, adapted from Study 2's free-response coding scheme, measured how self-righteous they construed the manager and his advice-giving as being. Specifically, they indicated how much they agreed that the manager "is being judgmental," "is a hypocrite," "thinks he's better than [the advisee]," "is giving "preachy" advice," "is arrogant," "is acting like a know-it-all," and "is pretending to be more virtuous than he really is" ( $-3 = \textit{strongly disagree}$ ;  $+3 = \textit{strongly}$ ;  $\alpha = .93$ ).

Participants used the same scale to indicate agreement with the four items on a measure of the manager's standing, adapted from our previous studies: "it's not really [his] place" (reverse-coded), "it's completely appropriate," he "isn't really entitled," (reverse-coded), and "it was entirely legitimate" to offer the advice ( $\alpha = .87$ ).<sup>2</sup> Three attention-check questions were interspersed throughout the survey (see Appendix D, Online Supplement).

**Results and Discussion.** We collapsed across vignettes because they did not significantly moderate the results,  $ps > .59$ . Consistent with our previous studies, participants thought that the manager had more standing to advise against his prior misdeeds when he had paid a price than when he had not (respectively,  $M_s = 1.19$  and  $.78$ ,  $SD_s = 1.26$  and  $1.48$ ),  $t(394) = 2.94$ ,  $p = .003$ ,  $d = .30$ . Also, as expected, participants construed the manager and his advice as less self-righteous when he had paid a price than when he had not (respectively,  $M_s = -1.38$  and  $.17$ ,  $SD_s = 1.25$  and  $1.38$ ),  $t(394) = 11.74$ ,  $p < .0001$ ,  $d = -1.18$ . Finally, as Figure 5 shows, perceived self-righteousness mediated the effect of paying a price on standing,  $b = .97$  [ $.77, 1.22$ ] for the indirect effect and its bias-corrected 95% CI, computed using 5,000 bootstrap resamples (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). This indirect effect accounted for all of the variance in the total effect of the manipulation on standing (i.e., the ratio of the indirect to the total effect was  $> 100\%$ ). We also found significant support for an alternative model in which standing mediated the effect of paying a price on self-righteousness,  $b = -.23$  [ $-.39, -.08$ ] for the indirect effect, but this indirect effect accounted for only 15% of the variance in the total effect. Thus, self-righteousness mediated the manipulation's effect on standing more than standing mediated the manipulation's effect on self-righteousness. Together, these results support our contention that suffering for

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<sup>2</sup> Confirmatory factor analysis indicated that these two measures loaded onto separate factors.

misdeeds provides standing to advise against them by making one's advice-giving seem more righteous than self-righteous.

#### **Study 4: Boundary Condition**

Does suffering for *any* misdeed grant one standing to give advice against misdeeds generally? The answer should be no if, as Studies 2 and 3 suggest, suffering grants standing by modifying how self-righteous the advice-giving seems. Suffering for a reason unrelated to the misdeed should have little influence on how self-righteous the advice is construed as being. If a manager were fired for inflating expense reports, then she would have the standing to advise others against inflating them; however, if she paid no price for inflating her expense reports but was fired because of corporate downsizing, then she should not have the standing necessary to advise against inflating expense reports. Suffering for committing a misdeed should only grant a person standing to advise against that misdeed, not against other misdeeds. Study 4 tested this boundary condition.

#### **Method**

**Participants.** Based on Study 3's effect sizes, we sought 200 MTurk users (paid \$.31 each) in each of three conditions; we oversampled in anticipation of exclusions. Of the 660 people who began the study, 642 completed it. We excluded 56 people who failed attention checks, and one set of responses from someone who had already participated (there was no such multiple responding in our other studies). The final sample size was thus 585 (335 males, 250 females;  $M_{\text{age}} = 30.95$ ,  $SD = 10.16$ ). More participants were excluded from the no-price condition than from the other two,  $\chi^2 = 10.53$ ,  $p = .005$ , but the results' direction and significance level were identical without exclusions.

**Procedure.** Participants read the vignette from Study 3 about the manager who had a sexual relationship with an intern, decided to end the relationship, and then was either found out and fired (price condition,  $n = 203$ ) or left for a new job without being caught (no-price condition,  $n = 184$ ), and then advised a new employee against sex with interns. In a new *unrelated suffering* condition ( $n = 198$ ; see Appendix D, Online Supplement), he was not caught, but experienced the same negative consequences as he did in the price condition for reasons unrelated to the sexual relationship (i.e., the company was downsizing). The only measures were Study 4's 4-item standing scale and attention-checks (listed in Appendix D).

**Results and Discussion.** As expected, suffering only granted the manager standing to advise against his misdeed when it was the cause of his suffering. Perceived standing differed significantly among the three conditions ( $M_{\text{price}} = 1.00$ ,  $M_{\text{unrelated\_suffering}} = .57$ ,  $M_{\text{no\_price}} = .78$ ,  $SDs = 1.42$ ,  $1.38$ , and  $1.47$ , respectively),  $F(2, 582) = 4.58$ ,  $p = .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ . Planned, orthogonal contrasts confirmed our specific hypothesis: Standing perceptions were significantly higher in the price condition (coded +2) than in the other two conditions (each coded -1),  $F(1, 582) = 6.93$ ,  $p = .009$ ,  $d = .23$ , and did not differ significantly between the no-price and unrelated-price conditions (coded +1 and -1),  $F(1, 582) = 2.07$ ,  $p = .15$ .<sup>3</sup> Thus, suffering itself is insufficient to grant one standing to inveigh against one's past indiscretions; one must have suffered as a result of those indiscretions.

### Study 5: Suffering for a Misdeed Increases Comfort Advising Against It

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<sup>3</sup> We also conducted post-hoc analyses of the remaining pairwise comparisons. Consistent with our claim that unrelated suffering is insufficient to grant standing, the manager's standing was perceived as significantly greater in the price condition than in the unrelated-suffering condition,  $p < .005$ ,  $d = .31$ . As in our previous studies, his standing tended to be perceived as higher in the price condition than in the no-price condition, but this difference was not significant in this sample,  $p = .13$ ,  $d = .15$ .

Studies 1-4 examined how advisors' standing affects observers and advisees. Studies 5 and 6 examine how standing affects advisors themselves. Study 5 participants recalled a time when they had procrastinated and suffered, and a time when they had benefitted from procrastination without suffering. Then they imagined that they were about to deliver an anti-procrastination speech to an audience who, depending on condition, knew about one of the two incidents that participants had recalled. Having all participants recall both types of incidents, though the audience would only know about one, ensured that the manipulation would not affect how salient procrastination's costs and benefits would be to participants. Participants indicated their feelings about delivering a pre-written speech, estimated their audience's reactions, and revised the speech until they felt comfortable delivering it. We predicted that when the audience was aware (vs. unaware) of how participants had suffered for procrastination, participants would expect the audience to react less negatively (consistent with the results of Study 2) and would feel more comfortable delivering a stronger anti-procrastination speech (Hypothesis 3).

## **Method**

**Participants.** Students at a private Midwestern university ( $N = 130$ ) were run in groups and received \$15 each. The sample size was determined by the number of participants available during the academic term. We excluded data from one person who had already completed the study, and from 23 people who failed attention-checks (described below). More participants were excluded from the benefitted condition than the price condition,  $\chi^2(1) = 6.61, p = .01$ , but results were identical in direction and significance without this exclusion. The final sample size was 106 people (64 females, 41 males, 1 unknown).

**Preliminary tasks.** In private cubicles in the lab, participants completed Study 5 as part of a longer series of unrelated studies. Everyone was prompted to recall a time when they had

procrastinated on an assignment and paid a price (e.g., had an unpleasant experience, received a bad grade), as well as a time when they had procrastinated and benefitted from it (e.g., got to do something they enjoyed instead of working, received a good grade). The prompts (shown in full in the Online Supplement's Appendix E) were displayed in counterbalanced order. After each prompt, participants described an assignment on which they procrastinated, what they did instead of working on it, and (depending on the prompt) what price they paid or what benefit they gained from procrastinating. We used three items as a manipulation check ( $\alpha > .67$ ): For each of the two incidents they had described, participants rated how much they regretted procrastinating, were glad they procrastinated (reverse-coded), and paid a price for procrastinating (response options: 1 = *not at all*, 2 = *slightly*, 3 = *somewhat*, 4 = *very*, 5 = *extremely*).

Participants next completed two filler items (how easy or difficult it was to respond to each prompt), and used 7-point scales to indicate their agreement with the following statements: "All things considered, college students should do their best to avoid procrastination," "Procrastination is harmless," "Procrastination is a bad habit," and "All things considered, college students should procrastinate as much as they feel like" (-3 = *strongly disagree*, +3 = *strongly agree*). We averaged these four items ( $\alpha = .77$ ), reverse-coding the first and third items, into a measure of the favorability of attitudes towards procrastination.

**Manipulation.** Participants next read a speech that strongly condemned procrastination (see Appendix E, Online Supplement), and imagined that they were going to deliver this speech to a group of high school seniors to help them develop study skills. After indicating how much they agreed or disagreed with the main message of the speech (-3 = *strongly disagree*, +3 = *strongly agree*), they viewed the manipulation (emphasis in original, bracketed text varied by random assignment to the price condition,  $n = 59$ , or the benefitted condition,  $n = 47$ ):

Suppose that a few days before you speak to the group of high school students, you wrote a post on Facebook describing the time when you *procrastinated and [paid a price / benefitted]*. Now you're about to give your speech, and you learn that the high school students you are about to address have read this post.

Thus, although all participants had written about times when they paid and did not pay for procrastination, they imagined that the audience would only know about one of these incidents.

**Measures.** Participants' feelings about delivering the anti-procrastination speech were measured with seven items, averaged into a *comfort* scale (starred items were reverse-coded): comfortable, uncomfortable,\* anxious,\* calm, nervous,\* self-assured, embarrassed,\* and confident ( $\alpha = .89$ ). Another seven items assessed their beliefs about how the high school students would feel after seeing the Facebook post and hearing the anti-procrastination speech, averaged into a measure of *others' reactions*: annoyed, pleased,\* irritated, interested,\* mad, aggravated, and grateful\* ( $\alpha = .87$ ; starred items reverse-coded so that higher numbers indicated more negative reactions). All responses were made on 5-point scales (1 = *not at all*, 2 = *slightly*, 3 = *somewhat*, 4 = *very*, 5 = *extremely*).

To assess how strong an anti-procrastination speech participants would feel comfortable delivering, we showed them the speech again and asked them to rewrite it, "Mak[ing] any changes to its content and tone so that [they] would actually feel comfortable delivering it to this group of students." We instructed them that they could copy word-for-word any parts of the speech that they did not wish to alter. Two coders, blind to hypotheses and condition, independently rated how much each revised essay condemned procrastination relative to the original essay (see Appendix F, Online Supplement). Their ratings, which correlated highly ( $r = .89$ ), were standardized and averaged. Responses from ten participants were uncodable.

## Results and Discussion



**Manipulation check and descriptive statistics.** Indicating that participants followed directions, they said that they regretted procrastinating more when they had paid a price for it ( $M = 3.87, SD = .77$ ) than when they had benefitted from it ( $M = 2.23, SD = .98$ ), paired  $t(105) = 15.79, p < .0001, d = 1.86$ . On average, participants had negative attitudes towards procrastination ( $M = -1.66, SD = .96$ ) and agreed with the anti-procrastination speech ( $M = 1.19, SD = 1.45$ ; response options on both scales ranged from -3 to +3).

**Anticipated audience reaction.** As expected, participants believed that the audience would respond less negatively to their speech in the price condition ( $M = 2.49, SD = .70$ ) than in the no-price condition ( $M = 3.35, SD = .74$ ),  $t(104) = 6.11, p < .0001, d = -1.19$ . Complementing the results of Study 2, this result suggests that people anticipate negative reactions when they deliver messages that they lack the standing to deliver.

**Comfort delivering the speech.** Consistent with Hypothesis 3, participants felt more comfortable delivering the anti-procrastination speech when the audience knew that they had paid a price ( $M = 3.22, SD = .81$ ) than when the audience knew that they had not ( $M = 2.30, SD = .70$ ),  $t(104) = 6.20, p < .0001, d = 1.22$ .

**Strength of anti-procrastination speech.** Also consistent with Hypothesis 3, the revised speeches were marginally more condemning of procrastination in the price condition ( $M = .16, SD = .90$ ) than in the no-price condition ( $M = -.20, SD = .94$ ),  $t(94) = 1.94, p = .056, d = .39$ . (The degrees of freedom are lower for this analysis due to 10 uncodable responses). Thus, participants tended to show less inclination to weaken the anti-procrastination speech when its audience knew they had paid a price for procrastinating than when it knew they had not paid a price.

In summary, the results suggest that participants felt more comfortable delivering stronger advice against a misdeed they had committed when their target audience knew the advisor had paid a price for the misdeed than when they knew they had benefitted from it. These findings provide further support for the claim that suffering for a misdeed grants one standing to inveigh against it.

**Correspondence between private attitudes and public pronouncements.** Normally, the more people privately endorse an attitude, the more comfortable they will feel publicly expressing it, but even people who have a strong private attitude will feel uncomfortable publicly expressing it if they lack standing (Morrison, 2011). An important implication of this is that standing should increase the correspondence between private attitudes and public pronouncements. Thus, if paying a price grants standing, then the correspondence between how much participants agreed with the researcher-provided procrastination speech and how comfortable they felt delivering it in public should be higher in the price condition than in the no-price condition. Indeed, in the price condition, the more participants agreed with the message of the researcher-provided procrastination speech, the more comfortable they said they would feel delivering it,  $r(59) = .30, p = .02$ . By contrast, participants in the no-price condition felt comparatively uncomfortable delivering the speech regardless of how much they agreed with the its message,  $r(47) = -.20, p = .17$  – a significant difference in correlations by Fisher's  $r$ -to- $z$  transformation,  $z = 2.57, p = .01$  (see Figure 6). This pattern is consistent with the claim that those who lack standing inhibit themselves from publicly expressing their personal opposition to counterproductive behavior that they themselves committed.

### **Study 6: High Self-Monitors Strategically Present Their Suffering to Gain Standing**

Study 6 examined whether people will be more likely to present themselves as having suffered for a misdeed when they require standing to denounce that misdeed (Hypothesis 4). As noted, we expected that people would need standing when (a) they are known to have advised against the relevant misdeeds, and (b) they are chronically inclined towards self-presentation.

Undergraduate participants described an instance when they procrastinated to an audience of their peers. We manipulated whether the audience ostensibly knew that participants had previously advised high school students against procrastination. We expected that participants would most want to establish psychological standing when the audience knew that they had both procrastinated and advised others against procrastinating. Moreover, we expected that this effect would be particularly likely to occur among people who are more inclined towards self-presentation. These are individuals high in self-monitoring (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000), who previous research has shown are particularly likely to modify their behavior based on their psychological standing (Miller, Zak, & Efron, 2008). Thus, we predicted that the manipulation would affect (a) the frequency with which participants opted to tell the audience about having suffered (vs. benefitted) because of procrastination, and (b) how much they claimed to have suffered, and that high self-monitors would drive these effects.

## **Method**

**Participants.** We paid 101 affiliates of a West Coast university \$10 each. The sample size was determined by the number of people who signed up during the academic term. Missing data prevented us from analyzing two participants' responses, leaving a final sample of size 99 (53 males, 44 females, 2 unknown gender;  $M_{\text{age}} = 19.63$ ,  $SD = 1.48$ ). We did not administer attention checks because running participants one-by-one and in-person reduced concerns about inattentive responding.

**Baseline measures.** A female experimenter introduced participants to a two-part study on procrastination. Part 1, ostensibly an effort to understand why avoiding procrastination is difficult, asked them to write about two times when they had procrastinated: once when they paid a price for it, and once when they benefitted from it. Then, by moving computerized sliders on 100-point scales, they indicated how much of a price they had paid for the first instance of procrastination using four items: how intensely they regretted it, how negative the consequences were, how much they suffered from it (all anchored at *not at all* and *extremely*), and how large or small the price they paid was (anchored at *extremely small* and *extremely large*). They also indicated how much they had benefitted from the other instance of procrastination using three items: how happy they were about having procrastinated, how positive the consequences were (both anchored at *not at all* and *extremely*), and how large or small the benefits were (anchored at *extremely small* and *extremely large*). These baseline measures were planned covariates.

**Advising against procrastination.** In Part 2, we induced all participants to give strong anti-procrastination advice. The experimenter used a rigged drawing to “randomly” select what she said was the strongest anti-procrastination speech from among eight speeches on the topic. (The selected speech was from Study 5; see Appendix E, Online Supplement). Then she video-recorded participants delivering the speech twice; after the first delivery, she asked them to try again with greater passion. Ostensibly, this video would be shown to high school students as part of a study skills intervention.

**Manipulation.** Participants were informed that the procrastination study was complete, and then received printed materials said to be for a new study by a different researcher who wanted to draw on some of the tasks in the procrastination study for her research on impression formation. After completing a bogus consent form, participants read a cover letter explaining that

their responses to a new survey about procrastination would be reviewed by an audience of undergraduates who would rate participants on traits such as likeability, arrogance, and social sensitivity.

In the control condition ( $n = 51$ ), the cover letter contained no additional information. In the *standing-needed* condition ( $n = 48$ ), it stated that the audience would view the video participants had recorded earlier. Thus, only in the standing-needed condition were participants expected to have a reason to present themselves as having standing to inveigh against procrastination, because only in this condition would the audience know of their anti-procrastination video. Importantly, this audience (undergraduate peers) was different than the people whom participants had advised against procrastination (high school students). Although participants had little reason to persuade their fellow undergraduates of the dangers of procrastination, we assumed they would be motivated to present themselves in a positive light, which we predicted would drive them to demonstrate that they had the standing to deliver an anti-procrastination message.

**Measures.** The paper survey that the undergraduate audience would ostensibly examine contained the measures of self-presentation. After answering filler questions (e.g., age, school affiliation), participants again wrote about a time when they had procrastinated with negative consequences, and about another time when they had procrastinated with positive consequences. Several items assessed the magnitude of the negative and positive consequences. The items were identical to the baseline measures describe earlier, except that participants now responded by

drawing a dash through a 100-mm line; we measured how many mm from the leftmost endpoint they drew it. Our focus was on ratings of the negative consequences.<sup>4</sup>

We next assessed which experience with procrastination participants chose to present to the audience. Specifically the survey stated that it might not be necessary for the audience to examine all of their responses, and asked them to choose whether to show the audience their “responses to questions about the time [they] paid a price for procrastinating” or their “responses to questions about the time [they] benefitted from procrastinating.”

**Self-monitoring.** Participants next completed the 13-item revised self-monitoring scale (Lennox & Wolfe, 1984), framed as a separate pilot test of a personality measure (sample item: “I have the ability to control the way I come across to people, depending on the impression I wish to give them”).

**Post-experimental questionnaire.** Finally, participants provided demographics, gave written responses to suspicion probes (e.g., “What do you think the researchers were hoping to find?”), and were debriefed.

## Results

**Suspicion probes.** No one guessed the hypothesis, but 17 people expressed mild suspicion, speculating that we were studying how delivering the speech ( $n = 15$ ) or sharing the speech with the peer audience ( $n = 1$ ) affected attitudes towards procrastination, or that we were testing which experience with procrastination they chose to present ( $n = 1$ ). We retained these participants by *a priori* decision; excluding them resulted in slightly stronger results (i.e., the marginally significant interaction reported below became significant).

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<sup>4</sup> Exploratory analyses showed that ratings of the positive consequences did not respond to the manipulation.

**Choice of responses to present.** We first tested whether expecting their peers to review the video would increase the likelihood that participants would tell their peers about a negative (instead of positive) experience with procrastination – and that this effect would be driven by high self-monitors. Results were consistent with this prediction (see Figure 7). Self-monitoring scores did not differ significantly by condition, and thus could be tested as a moderator,  $t(97) = .83, p = .41$ . We submitted participants' choice of which procrastination experience to share (1 = negative, 0 = positive) to a logistic regression model with condition (standing needed = 1; control = 0), self-monitoring (standardized), and their interaction as predictors. To reduce error variance explained by baseline ratings of the negativity and positivity of experiences with procrastination, we added these ratings (standardized) as covariates in a second model.

Table 1 displays the results. As predicted, self-monitoring was associated with a stronger effect of the manipulation, as shown by a marginally significant Self-monitoring x Condition interaction,  $p = .054$  in the model without covariates,  $p = .059$  in the model with covariates. Computing simple slopes revealed the predicted pattern (see Figure 7). High self-monitors (1 *SD* above the scale mean) were more likely to present the negative experience with procrastination they expected their video to be evaluated by their peers. This effect was marginally significant without covariates and significant with covariates,  $ps = .056$  and  $.038$ , respectively. No such effect emerged among low self-monitors (1 *SD* below the scale mean),  $p = .31$  and  $.42$  without and with covariates, respectively. In fact, Figure 7 indicates that the only participants who had an above-chance probability of choosing to present the negative experience (i.e., higher than .50) were high self-monitors in the standing-needed condition – the very people who should be most motivated to establish their standing. These results provide behavioral evidence that people are

more motivated to present the price they paid for a misdeed when others will find out that they inveighed against that same misdeed.

**Reported magnitude of suffering.** We next tested whether participants would say that they had paid a higher price for their own procrastination when they expected their peers to evaluate their anti-procrastination video than when they did not – and whether this effect would be driven by high self-monitors. Examining the post-manipulation measure of the magnitude of negative procrastination consequences yielded no support for this prediction. We submitted this measure to an ANCOVA with condition, self-monitoring (standardized), and their interaction as predictors. Contrary to predictions, participants said that they had paid a marginally higher price in the control condition ( $M = 58.20, SD = 21.48$ ) than in the standing-needed condition ( $M = 51.67, SD = 18.84$ ),  $F(1, 95) = 3.50, p = .06$  – an effect not significantly moderated by self-monitoring,  $F(1, 95) = 1.32, p = .25$ . However, suggesting that this marginal main effect was driven by random baseline differences, controlling for the baseline measure of negative consequences reduced it to non-significance,  $F(1, 94) = 1.42, p = .24$  (without making the interaction with self-monitoring significant,  $F[1, 94] = 2.63, p = .11$ ). Thus, we found no evidence that the need for standing led participants to exaggerate the price they had paid for procrastination.

## Discussion

Study 6's results supported the hypothesis that people would be more likely to present themselves as having suffered for a misdeed when they needed standing (Hypothesis 4). Given a choice between telling an audience about how they had suffered for procrastination versus gotten away with procrastination, participants were more likely to choose the former option when (a) the audience knew that they had strongly advised others against procrastination, and (b) they



were also high in self-monitoring, a trait linked to higher motivations for self-presentation (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000) and a greater sensitivity to psychological standing (Miller et al., 2008). Although the predicted statistical interaction just missed meeting standard levels of significance, Study 6 suggests that high self-monitors recognize that a record of suffering for a misdeed grants them standing to preach against it and will strategically make claims on such standing when they find themselves having to preach.

Whereas the need for standing increased the likelihood that high self-monitors would tell their audience about their suffering, it did not appear to affect how much suffering they claimed to have experienced. At least in this context, exaggerating the price they paid for their misdeed may have been too great a self-presentational stretch (Kunda, 1990), perhaps because there is only so much suffering that can plausibly result from procrastinating on school assignments. Future research should examine misdeeds whose negative consequences can vary more in severity, and that would thus give people more room for exaggeration.

It is unlikely that a motivation to persuade their audience about the dangers of procrastination is what motivated high self-monitors to present their suffering. Participants recorded the anti-procrastination speech as advice to high school students; the manipulation varied whether a separate audience of undergraduate peers would know about this speech when forming an impression of participants' likeability, social sensitivity, and related traits. It is difficult to believe that participants would want to persuade this second audience to avoid procrastination; it seems more likely that they worried that this audience would form a negative impression of them if the audience thought they had inveighed against procrastination without standing. Moreover, the moderation by self-monitoring does not fit well with the persuasion explanation. It is unclear why high self-monitors would be more motivated to persuade others of

their opinions – if anything, high self-monitors' greater comfort in acting inconsistently with their private attitudes (e.g., Ajzen, Timko, & White, 1982) suggests that they would be *less* intent on persuasion than low self-monitors. By contrast, high self-monitors' tendency to be particularly sensitive to what others think of them, and to psychological standing in particular, fits with our proposed role for psychological standing. Thus, the motivation to establish psychological standing provides a better account of the data than the motivation to persuade.

### **General Discussion**

People frequently regret their past misdeeds, even when they did not suffer for them (Connolly & Zeelenberg, 2002). With the wisdom of hindsight, habits or actions that a person previously enjoyed without adverse consequences may now seem immature, reckless, or unethical. Although people may want to help others by imparting such wisdom, the present research indicates that they will feel and be perceived as disentitled to do so. That is, having previously committed a misdeed deprives people of the standing to advise against it, even if they have stopped committing it. Our research also shows, however, that suffering for committing the misdeed restores and even enhances people's standing to offer such advice. Preaching against what you have practiced is socially acceptable, so long as you paid a price for what you practiced.

Our six studies demonstrated how an advisor's suffering for a prior misdeed affects the reactions his preaching against that misdeed produces in advisees, third-party observers, and the advisors themselves across domains including employee fraud, inappropriate relationships at work, marital infidelity, illegal drug use, smoking and procrastination. Third-party observers and advisees thought that it was more legitimate for someone to advise against a misdeed that he himself had committed if he had suffered for it than if he had not (Hypotheses 1a and 1b; Studies

1 and 2). These perceptions of legitimacy in turn reduced anger and derogation among advisees, whose freedom the advice sought to restrict (Hypothesis 2, Study 2). Anticipating this, advisors felt more comfortable inveighing against their past misdeeds when they had paid a price for them than when they had not (Hypothesis 3, Study 5), and – if they were particularly sensitive to issues of psychological standing (i.e., high self-monitors; Miller et al., 2008) they strategically highlighted the price they paid when they were known to have advised against the misdeed (Hypothesis 4; Study 6). Importantly, not just any suffering can grant standing; one must have suffered for the specific misdeed that one has committed (Study 4). Together, these findings demonstrate how one's past behavior and its consequences can liberate or constrain advice-giving.

Why does suffering for misdeeds grant a person the standing to advise against them? Studies 1 and 2 suggest that advice to avoid a misdeed seems especially hypocritical, judgmental, and preachy coming from someone who committed the misdeed without adverse consequences (Hypothesis 1c). The same advice is construed differently coming from someone who committed the misdeed but suffered for it: It seems more well-intentioned and less self-righteous (Study 2). In fact, a mediation analysis supported the prediction that suffering would increase perceptions of standing by reducing perceptions of self-righteousness (Study 3). Preaching against what you used to practice appears to make your preaching seem like an attempt to feel undeservedly moral at others' expense – unless you have paid a price for your past practice.

### **Standing is Not a Proxy for Persuasiveness**

Advisors who lack legitimacy will often find it difficult to change advisees' attitudes or behavior. When advisees are convinced that an advisor has no right to tell them what to do, even strong arguments by the advisor will likely fall on deaf ears. This does not mean, however, that

having psychological standing is the same as having persuasive ability, or that lacking psychological standing is the same as lacking persuasive ability. Just because an advisor has the right to be heard does not mean that her advice will be convincing. Also, the same experience that enhances people's persuasive ability for some reasons can deprive them of standing for other reasons. For example, in Study 1, committing a misdeed made people appear that they could more expertly and (marginally) more convincingly advise against the misdeed, but also made them seem less entitled to offer such advice.

Our results provide varied forms of empirical support for a distinction between standing and persuasiveness. In Study 2, the advisor made the same, well-known anti-smoking arguments in all conditions, and the experimental manipulation had no effect on perceptions of smoking's dangers, but it still increased the advisor's standing. Someone who lacks standing also produces different reactions in audiences than someone who simply lacks persuasiveness. Smokers reacted with more anger and aggravation and described the anti-smoking advocate as more dislikeable and insensitive when he lacked standing – not reactions expected to someone who is merely unpersuasive. Relatedly, it is unclear why Study 5 participants would feel uncomfortable delivering an anti-procrastination speech and soften their arguments if they were only worried about being unpersuasive. An account that conflates standing and persuasiveness also has difficulty explaining why the need for standing would lead only high self-monitors to present their suffering to a different audience than the one they were tasked with persuading (Study 6). Finally, a persuasiveness explanation cannot easily account for the mediation by standing and self-righteousness that we observed in Studies 2 and 3. In short, advisees' ire and advisors' inhibition seems not to have been related to the quality of the advice, but rather to the perceived legitimacy of offering it.

**Does Suffering Grant Standing or Does Benefitting Diminish Standing?**

Our studies compared situations in which people had suffered for a misdeed to situations in which they had enjoyed the misdeed's benefits without suffering. We chose this comparison because people typically commit misdeeds to gain some benefit; thus, the alternative to suffering for a misdeed is typically to benefit without suffering. Still, it is theoretically interesting to ask whether suffering grants standing, benefitting diminishes standing, or both. This question can be answered with respect to two different baselines: (1) an advisor who has not committed the misdeed (and never had an opportunity to do so), or (2) an advisor who has committed the misdeed and neither suffered nor benefitted. Study 1 found that, relative to the first baseline, committing a misdeed and suffering for it increased standing, whereas enjoying the benefits of committing it without suffering decreased standing. A study not previously discussed found the same pattern relative to the second baseline (see Appendix G in the Online Supplement).

Subject-pool members in London, England read about a student who started using an illegal drug because she expected it to enhance her academic performance, although she knew it could have unpleasant side effects. We manipulated what happened when she took the drug. Consistent with our previous studies, the student had more standing to advise others against using the drug when she suffered its side-effects without experiencing its expected benefits ( $M = 4.45$ ,  $SD = .59$ ,  $n = 40$ ) than when she enjoyed its benefits without suffering ( $M = 2.72$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ,  $n = 40$ ),  $p < .0001$ . Importantly, she was seen as having an intermediate amount of standing when she neither benefitted nor suffered ( $M = 3.63$ ,  $SD = .99$ ,  $n = 42$ ), and this mean was significantly different from each of the other two,  $ps < .004$ . These results indicate that benefitting from a misdeed can deprive people of the standing to advise against it – but independent of this effect, suffering for the misdeed can grant people standing.

## Theoretical Contributions

**Implications for advice.** The present research advances the study of advice, which has focused on how receiving advice affects people's judgments, confidence, and accuracy (for a review, see Bonaccio & Dalal, 2006). For example, previous research finds that signals of an advisor's expertise increase people's willingness to rely on her advice, but that in general people give less weight to advice than they should (e.g., Liberman, Minson, Bryan, & Ross, 2012; Minson, Liberman, & Ross, 2011). We suggest that in addition to assessing the accuracy of advice, people consider whether the advisor has the right to offer an opinion – and they respond with anger and derogation if she lacks this right (Study 2). As Study 1's results showed, the same experience that provides a person with expertise can also make her disintitiled to offer advice. Thus, people may fail to follow good advice not only because they underestimate the advisor's knowledge relative to their own (Liberman et al., 2012; Minson et al., 2011), but also because they perceive her as disintitiled to advise.

In its focus on willingness to take advice, previous research has not examined willingness to *offer* advice (see Bonaccio & Dalal, 2006). Our results show that people feel uncomfortable giving good advice that is inconsistent with their past behavior, inhibit themselves from offering this advice as forcefully as they would like (Study 5), and shape their self-presentations to minimize others' knowledge of this inconsistency (Study 6). Thus, the advice people receive depends not only on the advisor's knowledge and motivation to offer an opinion, but also on his or her perceptions of the legitimacy of offering one (cf. Leyens, Yzerbyt, & Schadron, 1992; Yzerbyt, Schadron, Leyens, & Rocher, 1994). In short, our results broaden the scope of the advice-giving literature, and provide the first suggestion that a complete understanding of advice-giving and receiving requires considering the role of psychological standing.

**Implications for hypocrisy.** Our research sheds new light on when and why people dislike inconsistencies between words and deeds. Whereas prior research showed that people are labeled as hypocrites and harshly judged when they fail to practice what they preach (Barden et al., 2005; Effron & Monin, 2010; Laurent et al., 2013; Powell & Smith, 2012), our studies demonstrate that people do have license to preach what they failed to practice if they suffered for failing to practice it. In this way, our results establish an important boundary condition on when inconsistency leads to ascriptions of hypocrisy and negative reactions. Advising others to avoid misdeeds that you yourself have committed only appears illegitimate if you enjoyed the misdeeds' benefits without paying a price. Our research thus supports recent calls to expand the study of hypocrisy beyond mere inconsistency aversion (Hale & Pillow, 2015; Monin & Merritt, 2012). In our view, inconsistent behavior is liable to seem hypocritical if it makes a person appear self-righteous. By mitigating these negative attributions, paying a price for a past misdeed can legitimize moral inconsistency.

**Implications for psychological standing and legitimacy.** Our results also advance understanding of how psychological standing regulates social behavior. Previous research has identified position in a hierarchy, personal stakes, moral values, and membership in particular groups as sources of psychological standing, and has shown that standing can license people to advocate for a cause, express indignation about their treatment, give orders, or express prejudice (Effron & Knowles, 2015; Effron & Miller, 2012; French & Raven, 1959; Hornsey, Oppes, & Svensson, 2002; Hornsey et al., 2004; Miller, 1999; Morrison, 2011; Ratner & Miller, 2001). We reveal a novel source of standing – paying a price for a misdeed – as well as several new consequences of having it: increased perceptions that advice-giving is legitimate, greater comfort giving advice, and less negative reactions from advice-receivers. Along with previous research

on standing, our results speak to how perceptions of legitimacy can liberate or constrain behavior (Miller & Effron, 2010; Miller et al., 2009). Failure to advocate for a cause, express an attitude, or offer advice need not indicate that one lacks the motivation to do so; instead, it may reflect a perceived lack of standing.

### **Future Directions**

Our studies focused on material suffering, such as job loss, divorce, and poor health. Future research should explore whether emotional suffering, such as guilt or regret, are sufficient to provide people the standing to inveigh against their past misdeeds. We suspect that, if it is perceived as genuine, emotional suffering can indeed grant standing, but that observers will doubt its genuineness more readily than they will doubt the genuineness of material suffering. For example, if a manager previously inflated her expense reports with impunity but claims to be wracked with guilt about it, the employees she now advises to report expenses honestly might question how “wracked” she actually is, and consequently see her as lacking the standing to offer this advice.

We have focused on one factor – suffering – that can grant people standing to advise against their prior misdeeds. Future research should examine other factors as well, such as changes in the consequences of committing the misdeed. For example, the rise of AIDS may have granted people standing to advise against unprotected sex despite previously practicing it themselves; likewise, increased scrutiny of employee expense reports could allow someone who used to exaggerate her expenses to urge others not to. Increased awareness that a behavior represents a misdeed could also grant standing. For example, in light of modern awareness of global warming, an executive could seem entitled to advocate for the adoption of more environmentally friendly corporate practices even though he himself ignored environmental



issues decades ago. In each of these examples, people may be able to derive standing from the fact that it is psychologically or materially costlier to do now what one could previously do with impunity. It would also be interesting to examine whether having a personal connection to someone who suffered for a misdeed could grant a person standing to advise against it. For example, a former smoker might seem particularly entitled to urge current smokers to quit after a friend of his had died of lung cancer (cf. Miller, Ratner, & Zhao, 2010).

### **Applications and Extensions**

Our findings suggest several applications and extensions for future research to test. First, people who have benefitted from a misdeed may be less likely to be asked for advice than people who have never committed the misdeed, even though the experience of the former may lend them greater expertise (see Study 1). For example, some of the individuals most responsible for the 2008 financial crisis may regret their reckless financial decisions even though they escaped prosecution and even received handsome bonuses (Morgenson & Story, 2011; Quinn, 2009). These individuals may have the greatest expertise about what went wrong and how others can avoid their past mistakes, but they may be least likely to be given a platform to express their views.

A second implication is that people who regret a past misdeed but have not demonstrably suffered for it will inhibit themselves from warning others against it, which could result in the misdeed's perpetuation. Imagine an organization where many employees have gotten away with overbilling their clients. Over time, some of these employees may come to realize how this practice harms the clients, feel guilty, and adopt more honest billing practices. However, their lack of standing to publicly object to their colleagues' overbilling could prevent them from voicing their objections. Interpreting the lack of objections as tacit approval, other employees

could continue overbilling. Thus, an unethical norm would continue unchecked even though multiple people privately object to it (cf. Prentice & Miller, 1996).

The results also suggest how leaders might recover from perceived acts of hypocrisy. The perceived hypocrisy of leaders can undermine followers' satisfaction, trust, and willingness to follow (Davis & Rothstein, 2006; Simons, Friedman, Liu, & McLean Parks, 2007; Simons, Leroy, Collewaert, & Masschelein, 2014). When such hypocrisy involves preaching against what you have previously practiced, however, emphasizing how you suffered for practicing could reduce ascriptions of hypocrisy and restore the ability to lead effectively.

People may sometimes fail to learn from others' advice not because they doubt its wisdom, but because they question whether the advisors have a right to offer it, or because a perceived lack of legitimacy inhibits would-be advisors from offering it in the first place. An implication of our results is that emphasizing the price an advisor has paid for a misdeed may allow her good advice to spread more widely, both through formal advice-giving chains (e.g., from managers to employees) and informal advice-giving networks (e.g., within an organization or among groups of friends).

## **Conclusion**

Suffering for misdeeds may be unpleasant, but it can benefit people by helping them learn from their mistakes. The present research demonstrates another, underappreciated benefit: Suffering can give you the standing to advise others to learn from your mistakes.

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Table

Table 1

*Stepwise logistic regression analysis of whether participant chose to present a negative experience with procrastination in Study 6*

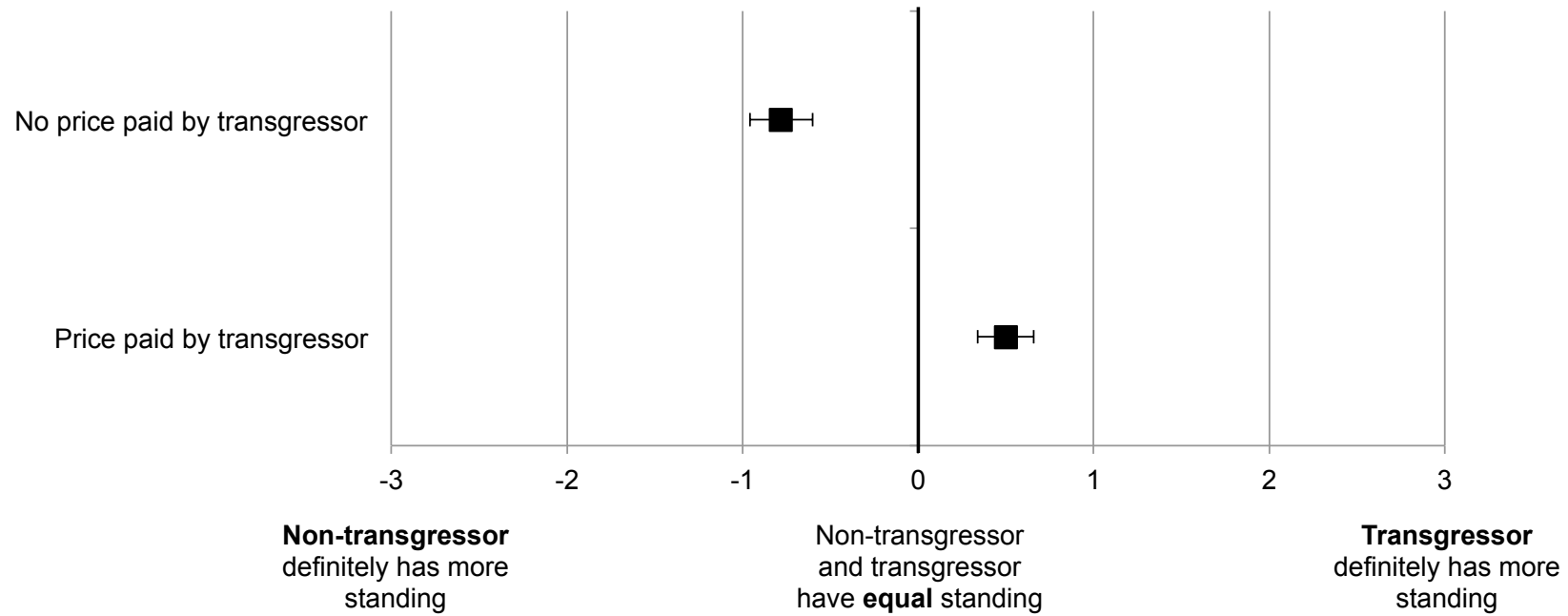
Predictor	Model 1				Model 2			
	OR	<i>b</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	OR	<i>b</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>
Condition	1.29	0.25	0.60	0.548	1.45	0.37	0.85	0.393
Self-Monitoring	0.89	-0.12	-0.42	0.674	0.76	-0.27	-0.88	0.381
Condition x Self-Monitoring	2.37	0.86	1.93	0.054 †	2.41	0.88	1.89	0.059 †
Baseline Negativity	--	--	--	--	1.57	0.45	1.84	0.066 †
Baseline Positivity	--	--	--	--	1.08	0.07	0.32	0.747
(constant)	0.95	-0.05	-0.17	0.862	0.89	-0.12	-0.41	0.681
<b>Effect of Condition (Simple Slopes)</b>								
Low self-monitors ( <i>M</i> - <i>SD</i> )		-0.15	1.02	0.310		-0.12	0.80	0.421
High self-monitors ( <i>M</i> + <i>SD</i> )		0.26	1.91	0.056 †		0.30	2.08	0.038 *

*Note.* Model 2 adds covariates (baseline negativity and positivity). The standing-needed and control conditions were coded 1 and 0, respectively. Self-monitoring and the two baseline measures were standardized. †  $p < .10$  \*  $p < .05$ .

Figures

Figure 1

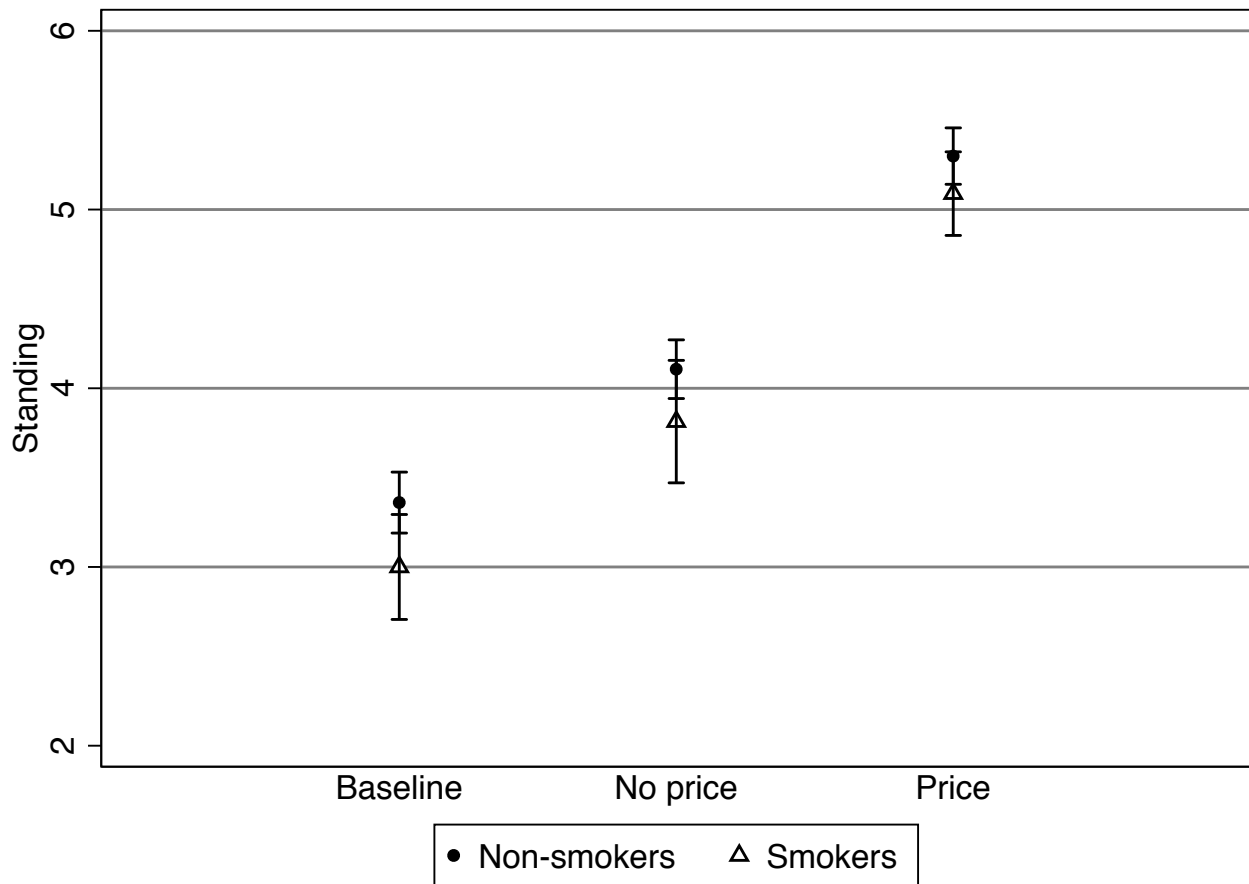
Relative standing of transgressor and non-transgressor, by whether transgressor paid a price, in Study 1



Note: Boxes indicate means; error bars are  $\pm 1 SE$ .

Figure 2

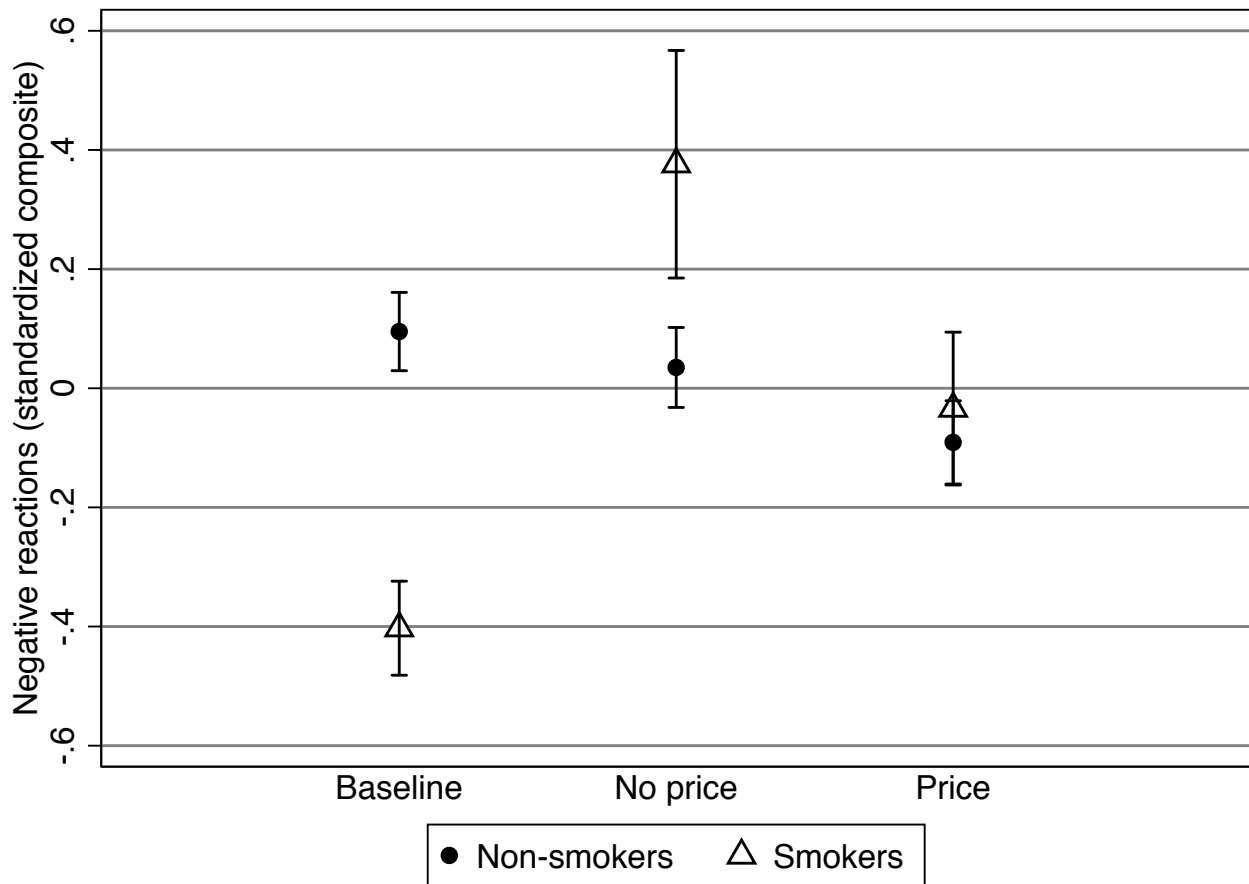
Mean standing ( $\pm$  SE), by condition and participant smoking status, in Study 2



Note. Scores on the standing measure could range from 1-7.

Figure 3

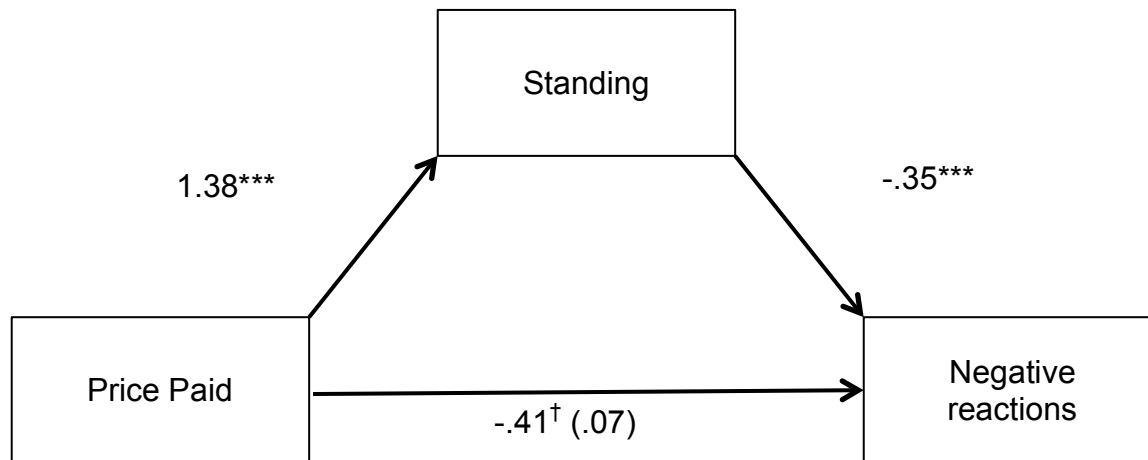
*Negative reactions to target person (M ± SE), by condition and participant smoking status, in Study 2*



*Note.* Full observed range of negative-reaction scores was -1.46 to 2.51.

Figure 4

*Perceptions of standing mediated the effect of paying a price on smokers' negative reactions to the target person in Study 2*



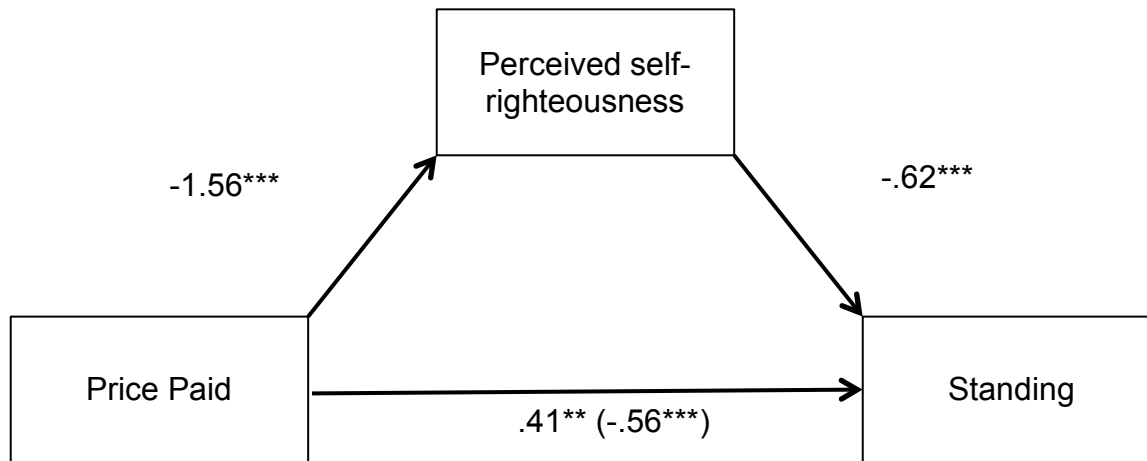
*Indirect effect:  $b = -.48^{**}$*

*Note.* Paths are unstandardized coefficients. Standing was mean-centered. Path in parentheses is the direct effect of paying a price on negative reactions after accounting for the indirect effect through standing. The price and no-price conditions were coded, respectively, 1 and 0. †  $p < .10$ , \*\*  $p < .005$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$



Figure 5

*Perceived self-righteousness mediated the effect of paying a price on standing in Study 3*



*Indirect effect:  $b = .97^{***}$*

*Note.* Paths are unstandardized coefficients. Self-righteousness was mean-centered. The price and no-price conditions were coded, respectively, 1 and 0. Path in parentheses is the direct effect of paying a price on standing after accounting for the indirect effect through self-righteousness.

\*\*  $p < .005$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Figure 6

*Scatterplot with lines of best fit in each condition of Study 5. Agreement with anti-procrastination message correlates positively with comfort delivering anti-procrastination speech only in the price condition*

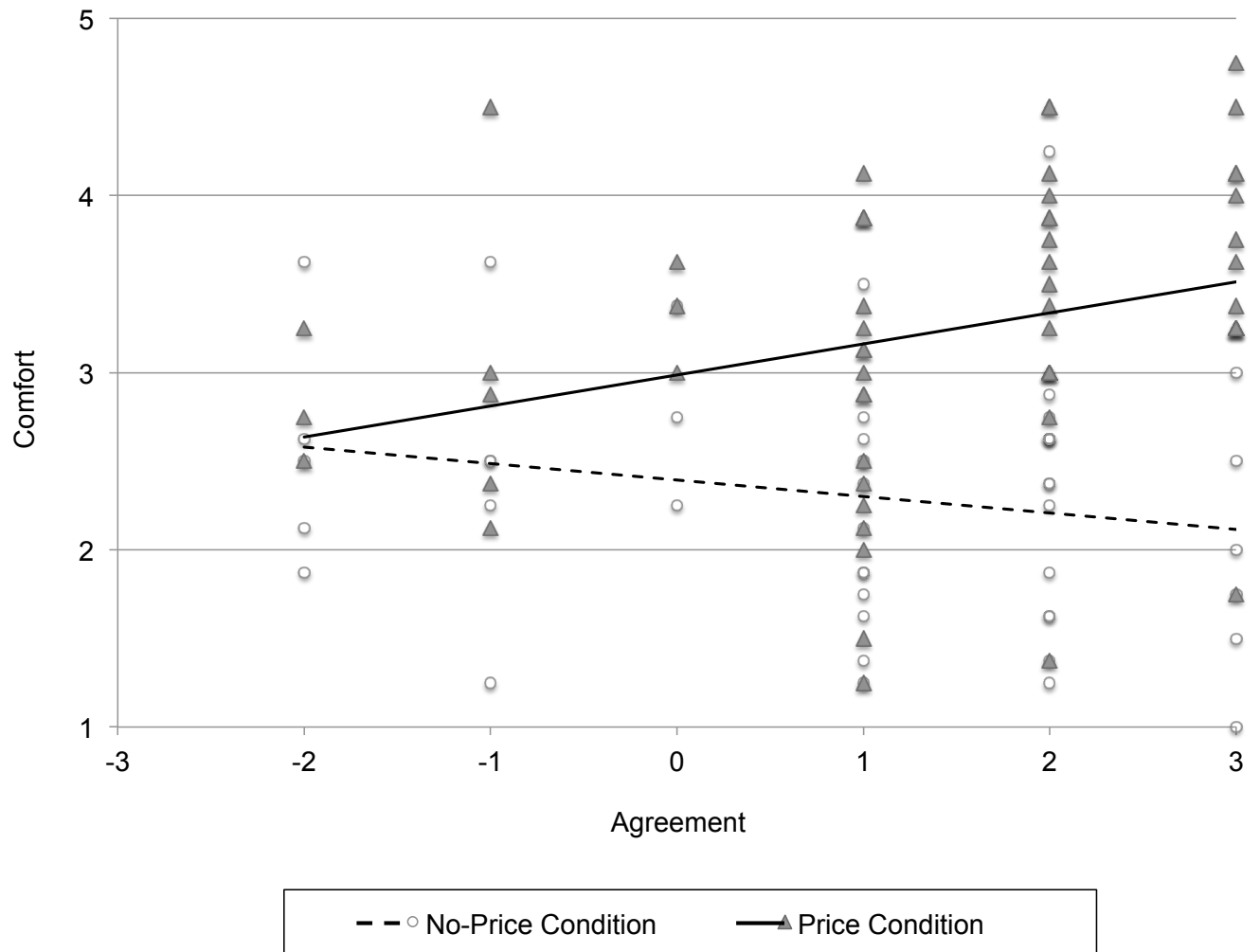
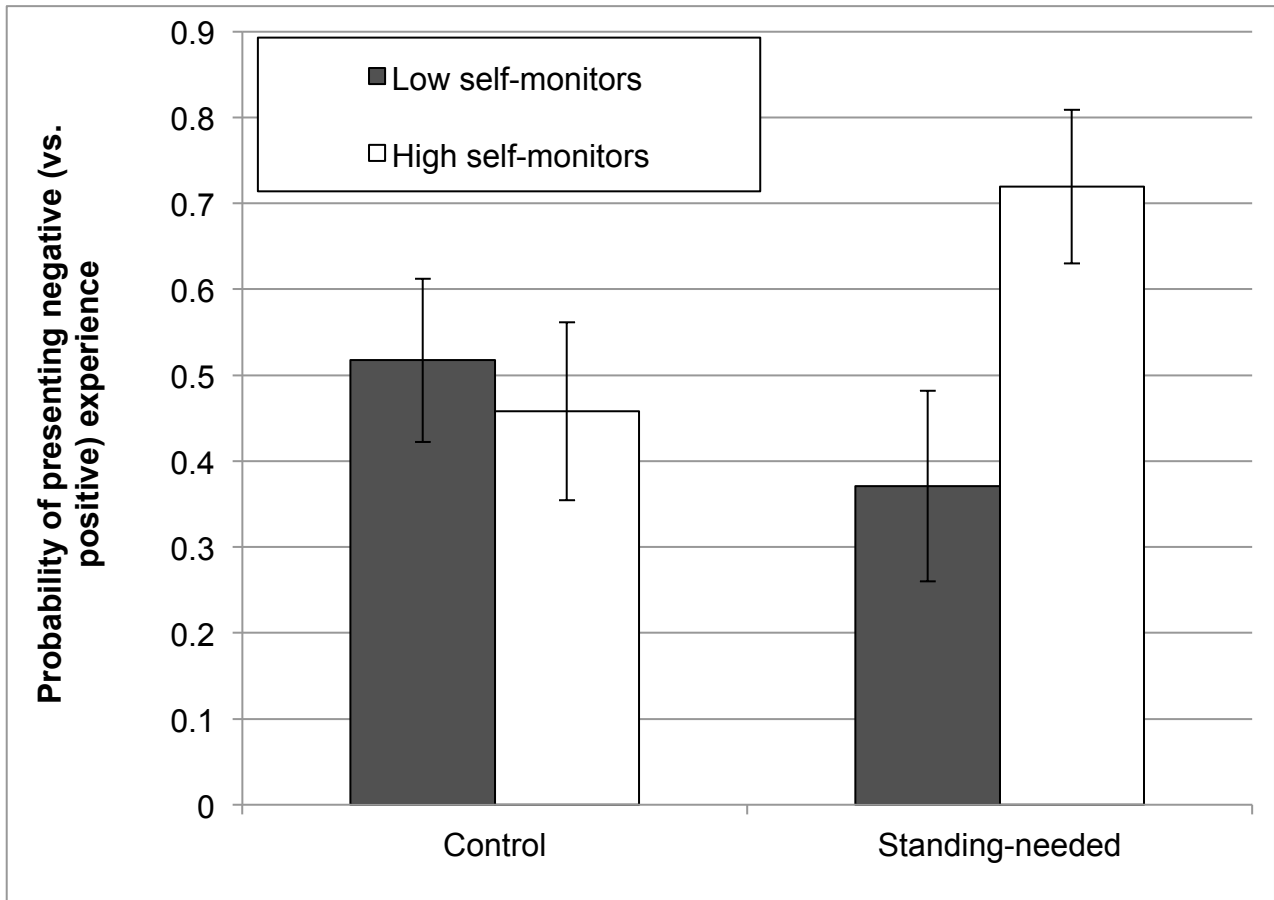


Figure 7

*Probability of choosing to present essay describing the price paid for procrastination, by condition and participants' self-monitoring score, in Study 6*



*Note.* Numbers greater than 0.5 indicate a preference for presenting the negative experience over the positive experience. Error bars are  $\pm$  SE.