

A Recipe for Redemption

Perceptions and Behaviors



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Overview

Redemption is prominent in the American imagination, but there has been very little research conducted on its perceptions.

Related literatures and issues

- Redemption narratives – first-person viewpoint and not third-person perceptions
- Moral transgressions and updating – momentary focus, rather than moral arc
- Apologies – usually about relationship repair, and only a piece of redemption

Research questions

We take a bottom-up, data-driven approach to explore perceptions of redemption, and ask two questions:

- What is the process of redemption?
- How does redemption impact moral and social perception?

Study 5: Coders rated the presence of these themes in 100 redemption movies

RQ1

What is the process of redemption?

RQ1 Methods

Study 1a, 1b (N's = 98; 292): Coding open-ended responses for common themes

Study 2 (N = 225): Participants rate importance of these themes to redemption with general transgression

Study 3 (N = 402): Participants rate importance of these themes to redemption with specific transgressions that vary in severity

Study 4 (N = 397): Participants use point allocation to rate importance of these themes to redemption

Study 5: Coders rated the presence of these themes in 100 redemption movies

RQ1 Results

Engages in Reparative Behavior

- Apologizing
- Making amends
- Seeking forgiveness

Shows Understanding & Acceptance

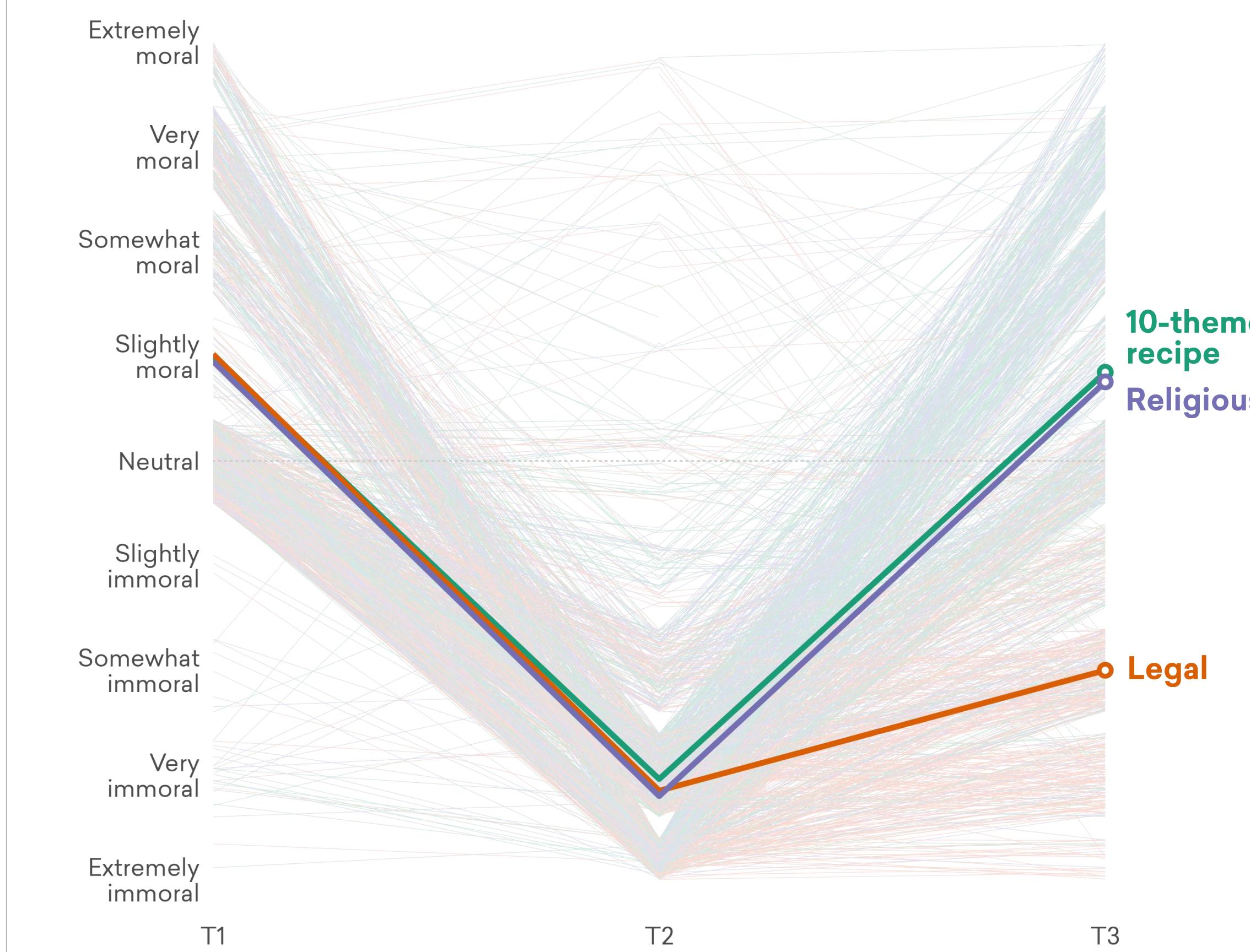
- Shows guilt/remorse
- Accepts responsibility
- Understands what they did was wrong
- Accepts punishment

Demonstrates Deep Change

- Person(ality) change
- No longer acts immorally
- Engages in moral acts

RQ2 Results

Moral Outcomes



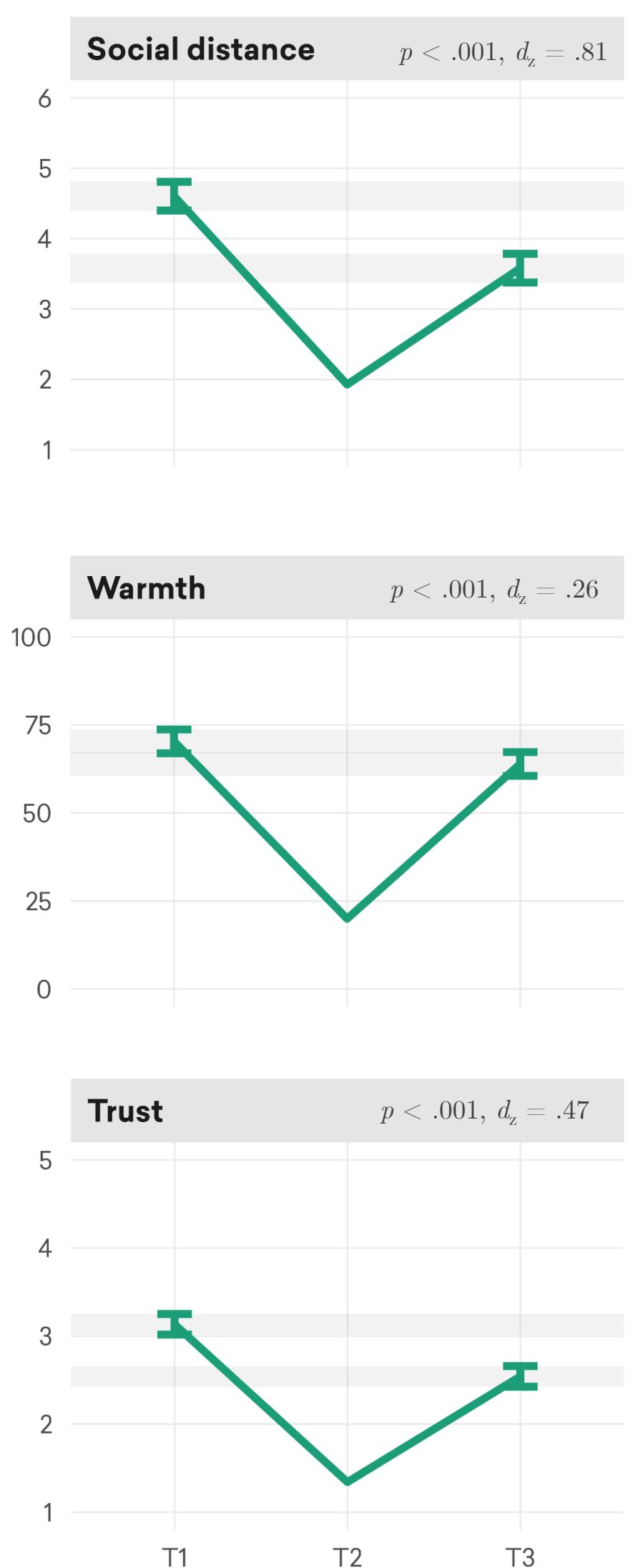
"Is this person redeemed in your eyes?" (T3 only; % Yes)

	All	Christian	Religiously affiliated but not Christian	Atheist, Agnostic, Not religious
Recipe	91%	91%	89%	93%
Religious	79%	85%	50%	56%
Legal	43%	44%	41%	40%

N = 1,659 (100%) N = 1,235 (74%) N = 109 (7%) N = 315 (19%)

Social Outcomes

T1 vs T3 outcomes, 10-theme condition only



Errors bars indicate 95% CIs. Social distance is 1 (Strongly disagree) to 6 (Strongly agree). An example item: "I am willing to have [target] as a teacher of my children. Warmth is 0 (Very cold) to 100 (Very warm). Trust is 1 (Not at all) to 5 (Extremely)."

RQ2

How does redemption impact moral and social perception?

RQ2 Methods

Participants (N = 1,659) read a transgression.

Participants rate target's morality and social variables at 3 timepoints.

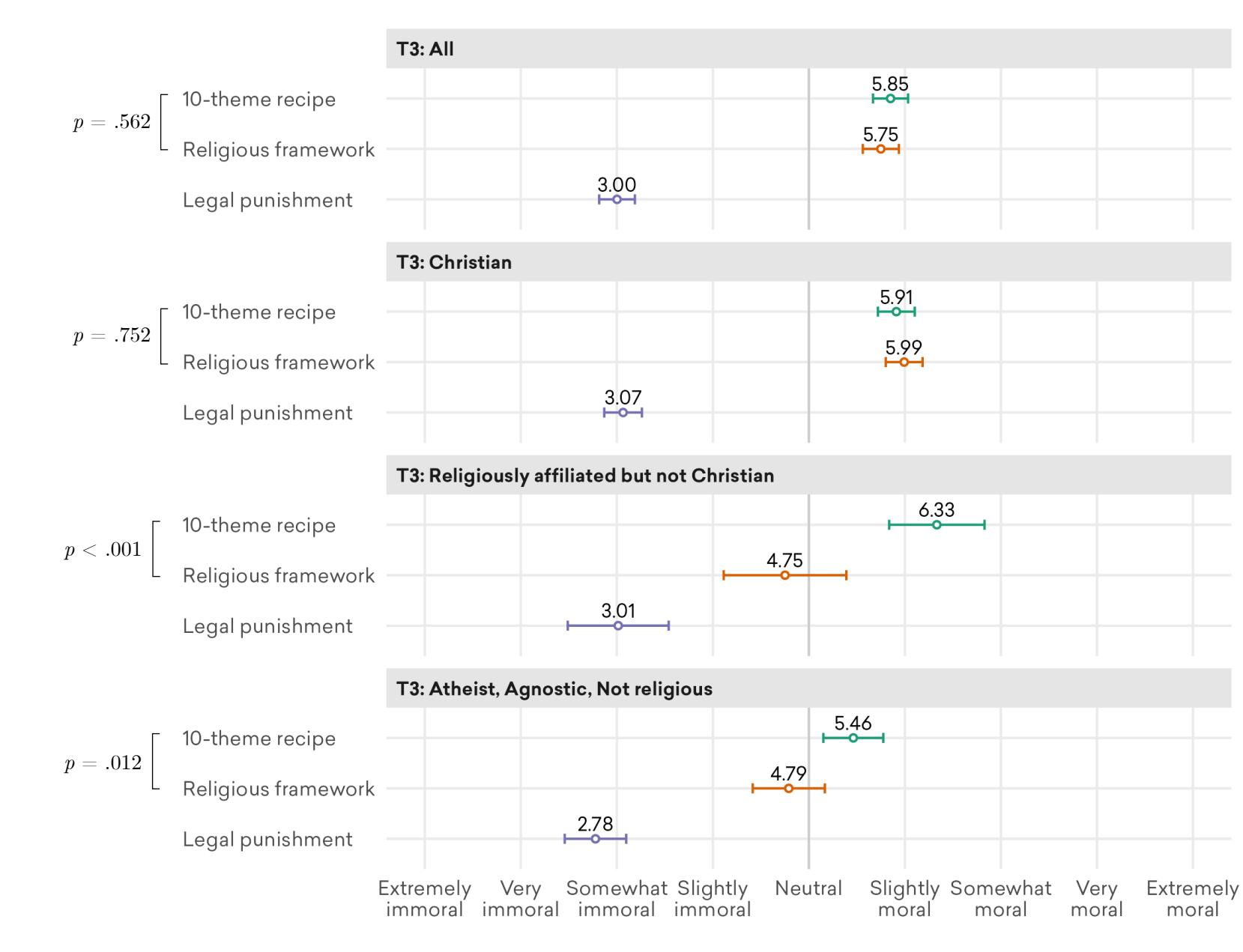
- T1: Neutral information
- T2: Moral transgression
- T3: Transgression aftermath

Participants view 1 of 3 types of transgression aftermath.

- Redemption (10-theme recipe)
- Religious redemption
- Legal consequences

Additional Results

Religious affiliation moderates condition effects.



Redemption is perceived as both American and Christian.



Belief in redemption is high in general but is moderated by severity of transgression.

In general = 90%; Sold illegal drugs = 72%; Cheating = 51%; Dumping polluting chemicals = 38%; Rape = 20%

*Is redemption possible? (% Yes). Meta-analytic estimates across multiple studies

Takeaway

We identified the ingredients to a recipe for redemption.

RQ1

Morality recovers, but there is still a social residue.

RQ2