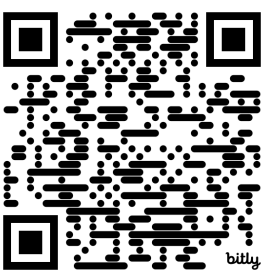# An emotion regulation framework for interpersonal moral disagreement

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Intro

When two individuals disagree on a moral issue, they can respond in many ways, for example:

Avoid interaction
Try to persuade
Agree to disagree
……

How do these responses <u>relate to one another</u>?
How does an individual <u>choose</u> which strategy to use?

We propose that **responses to interpersonal moral disagreements can be understood as an <u>emotion regulation process</u>**
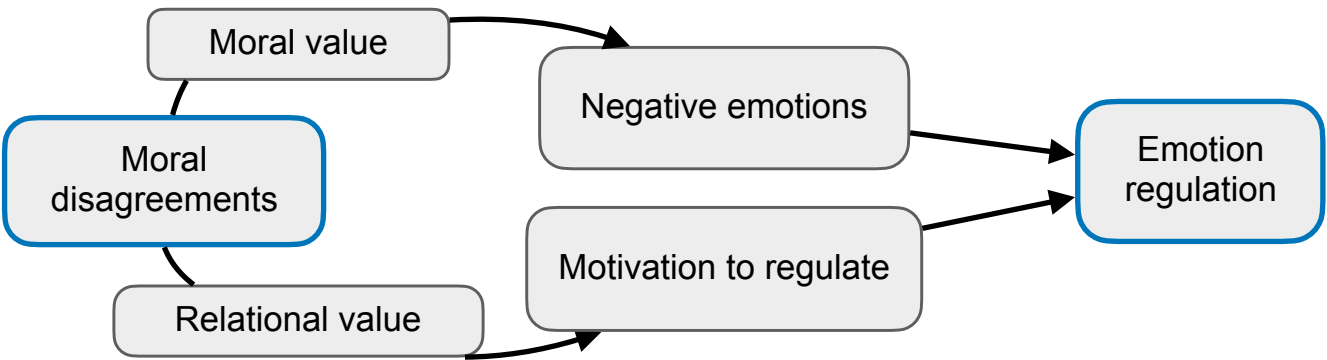

Method

Participants (*N* = 298) imagined disagreeing with another person and reported likelihood of responding in 11 ways.

Nomination
A close friend
A colleague
A stranger

Responses
For each person, participants imagined disagreeing on a specific moral issue (e.g.vaccination)

Perceived costs
Participants reported perceived costs of disagreement

Individual differences
Participants reported tendency to use different ER strategies

Results

Responses to moral disagreements cluster in ways that resemble common emotion regulation strategies

Three clusters of responses resemble the ER strategies of suppression, situation modification, and cognitive change, respectively.
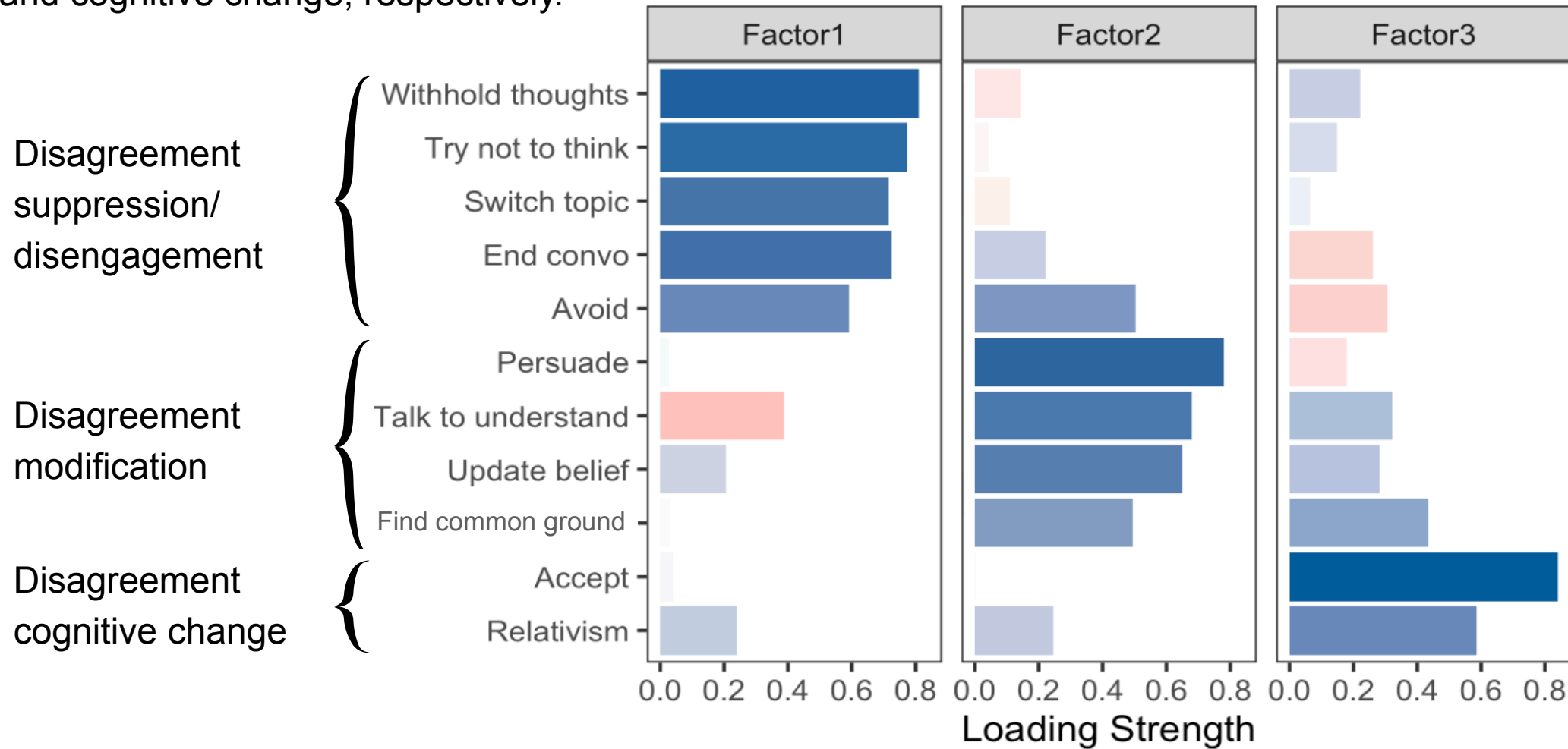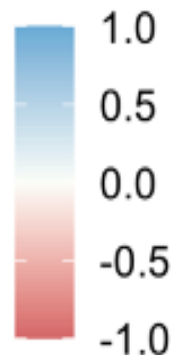

Responses to moral disagreements depend on <u>individual differences</u> in emotion regulation

$$Response\ strategies \sim Mindfulness + Suppression + Reappraisal + Avoidance + (1|PID) + (1|partner)$$

*Only significant coefficients are displayed

Regression Coefficient

	Factor 1 Disengagement	Factor 2 Disagreement modification	Factor 3 Cognitive change
Mindfulness (FFMQ)	-0.33*	-0.6***	
Suppression (ERQ)	0.53***		0.23***
Reappraisal (ERQ)		0.63***	0.48***
Avoidance (CBAS)	1.09***	0.33*	

Results

Responses to moral disagreements depend on <u>situation-level</u> cost-benefit analyses

$$Response\ strategies \sim Moral\ cost + Relational\ cost + Social\ cost + (1|PID) + (1|partner)$$

- **Moral cost** ("*How important is the moral issue?*")
- **Relational cost** ("*How important is it to get along with the other person?*")
- **Social cost** (e.g. "*How would the rest of your social circle respond if you change your mind?*")

	Factor 1 Disengagement	Factor 2 Disagreement modification	Factor 3 Cognitive change
Moral cost			-0.4***
Relational cost	-0.24*	0.25***	0.25***
Social cost of stop interact	-0.93***		0.1*
Social cost of continue to interact		-0.27***	-0.22***
Social cost of changing mind		-0.58***	-0.26***

Discussion

Theoretical contributions:
- Bridges the moral psychology and ER literatures.
- Informs the design of depolarization interventions (e.g. by changing individuals' cost-benefit perceptions).

Future directions:
- Identify a more comprehensive list of response strategies.
- Study moral disagreements in more naturalistic contexts.

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