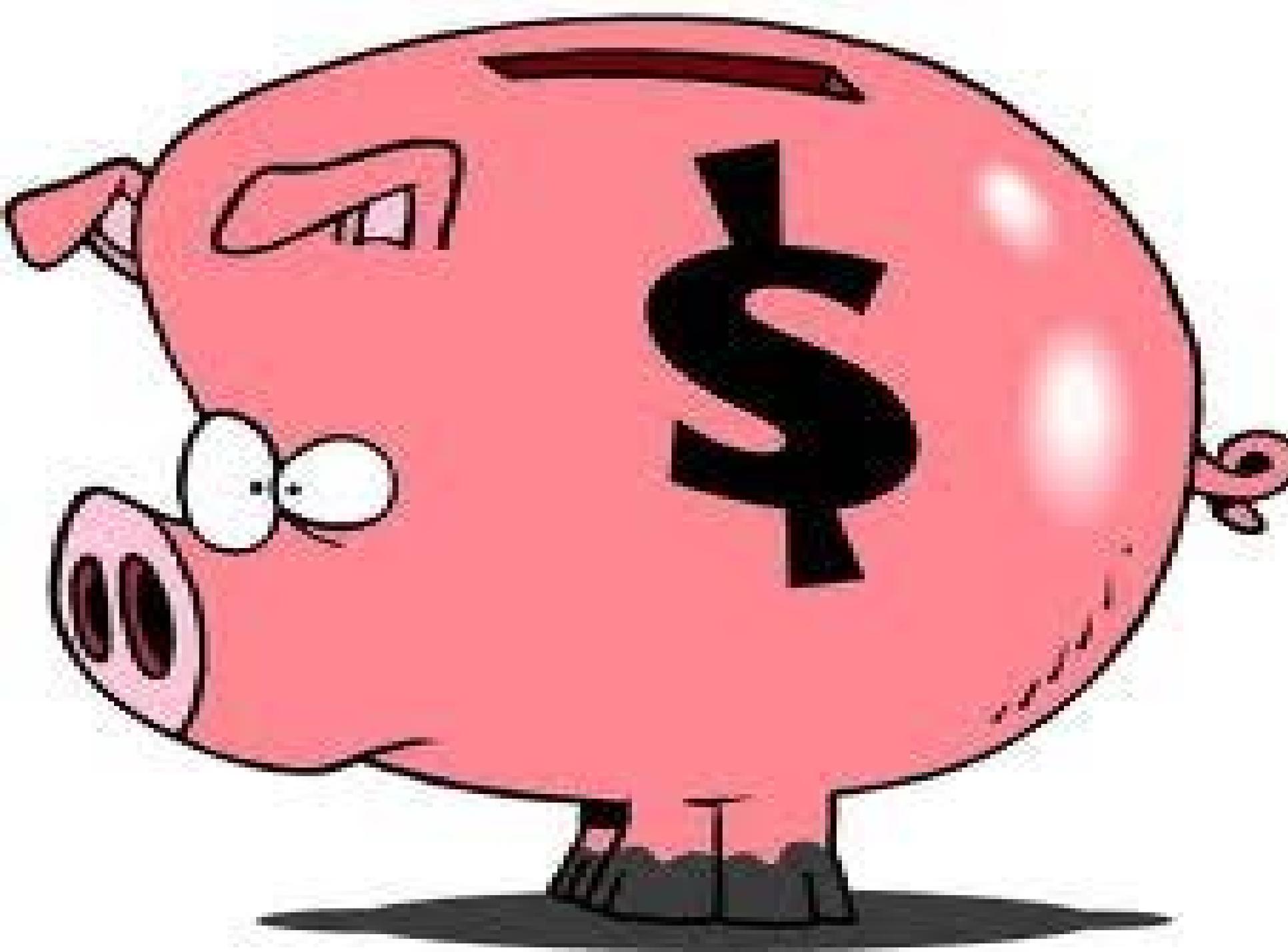


Sanctification & Gratitude:  
Keys to  
Successful Intentional  
Relationships

Nate Lambert, PhD

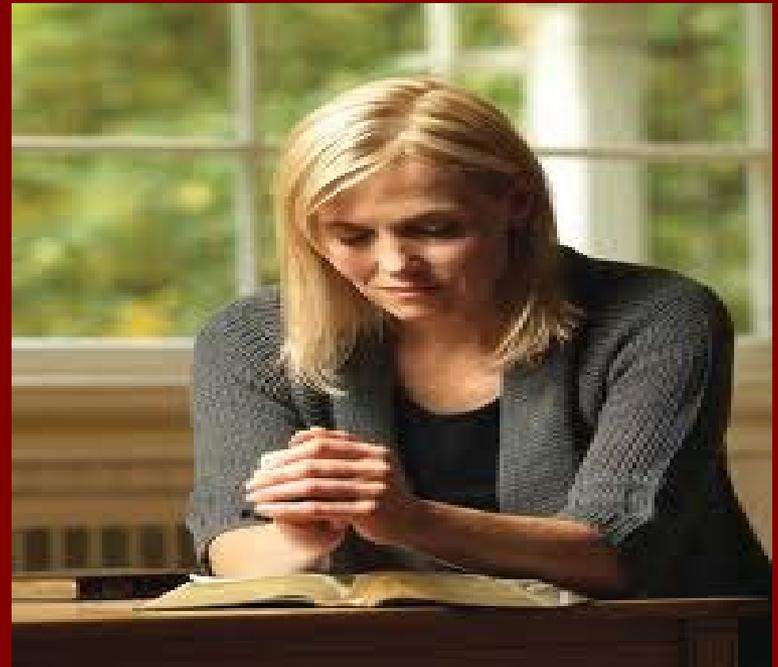


# Five to One

Research shows that for relationships to thrive, we need a ratio of 5 positive deposits to 1 negative withdrawal.

# Getting out of Emotional Debt:

## Unleashing the Transformative Power of Prayer to Heal and Strengthen Relationships



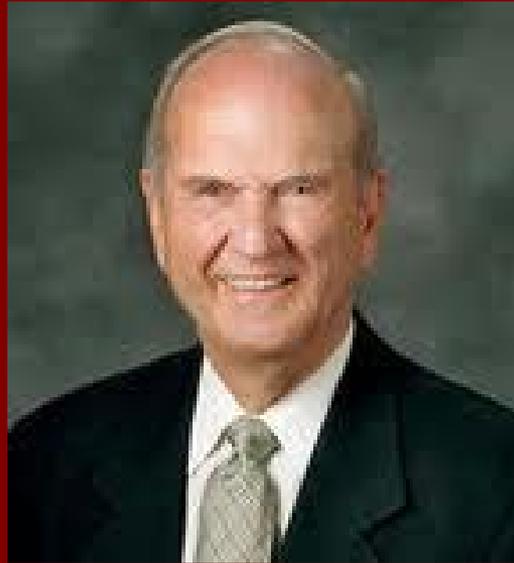


- “May I offer you newlyweds a formula which will ensure that any disagreement you may have will last no longer than one day? Every night kneel by the side of your bed. One night, Brother Monson, you offer the prayer, aloud, on bended knee. The next night you, Sister Monson, offer the prayer, aloud, on bended knee. I can then assure you that any misunderstanding that develops during the day will vanish as you pray. You simply can’t pray together and retain any but the best of feelings toward one another” (Monson, 2001, p. 3).

Think to yourself, for a  
moment...

Have you ever been in an argument  
with a family member and you  
took a moment to pray for  
him/her or with him/her?

Following the prayer, did you  
interact differently towards this  
person?



“Good communication is also enhanced by prayer. To pray with specific mention of a spouse’s good deed (or need) nurtures a marriage”

**Any thoughts on why this  
should have such a strong  
effect**



# Transformative Power of Prayer

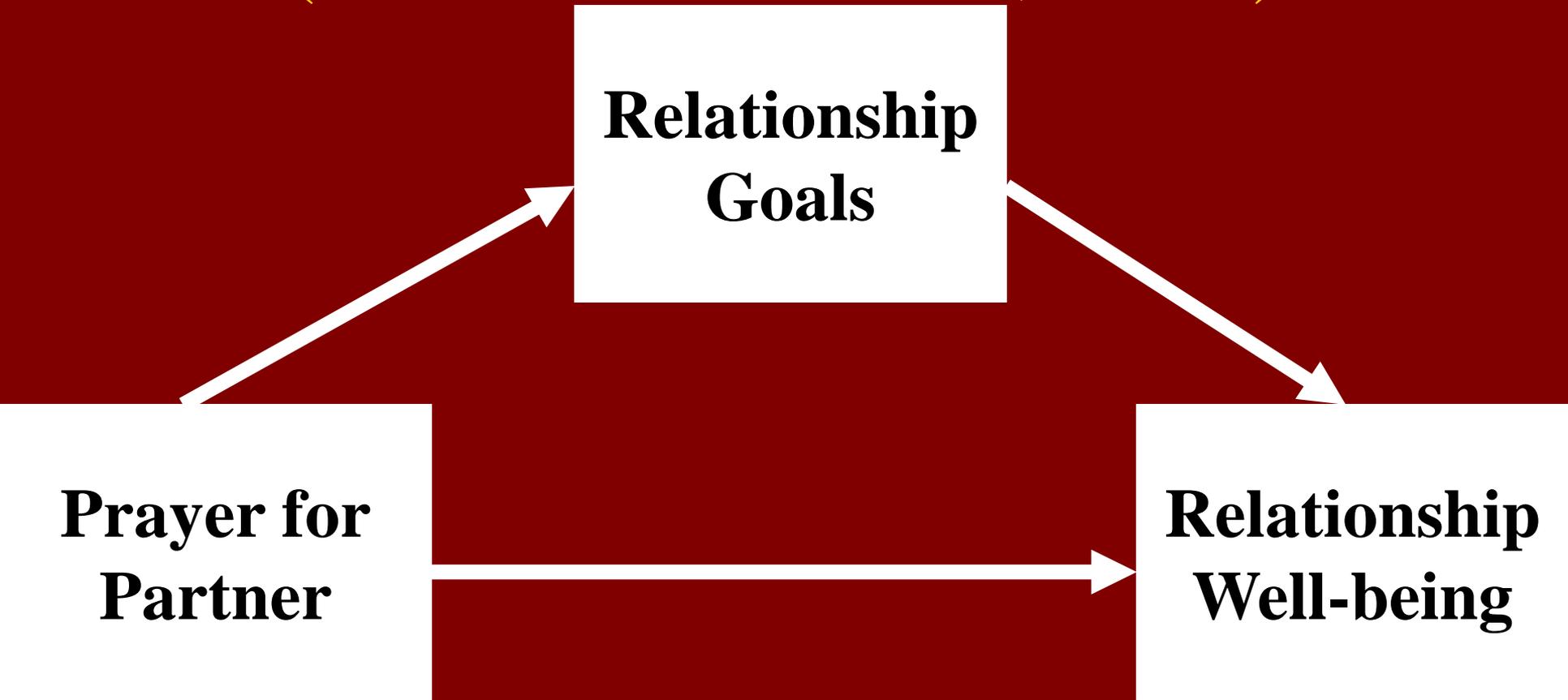
1. Transformation of  
Motivation
2. Transformation of  
Perception

# Transformation of Motivation

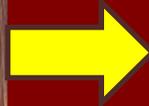
# Satan's Goal

- “Stir up the hearts of men to contend with anger one with another” (3 Nephi 11:29).
- To make us “miserable like unto himself” (2 Nephi 2:27).

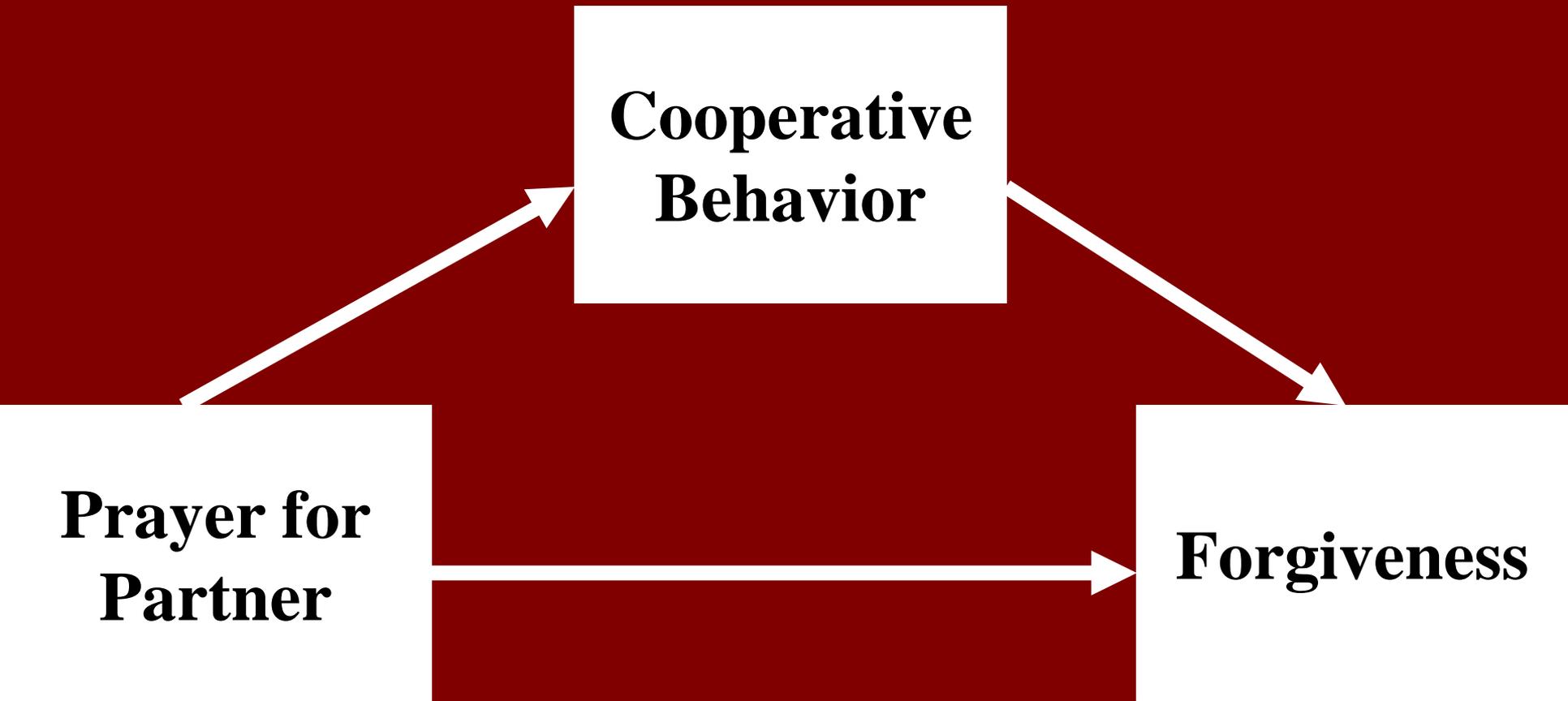
# Prayer & Goal Theory (Fincham & Beach, 1999)



# Transformative Process of Praying for a Partner



## Model 2



**Prayer for  
Partner**

**Cooperative  
Behavior**

**Forgiveness**

# Research Study

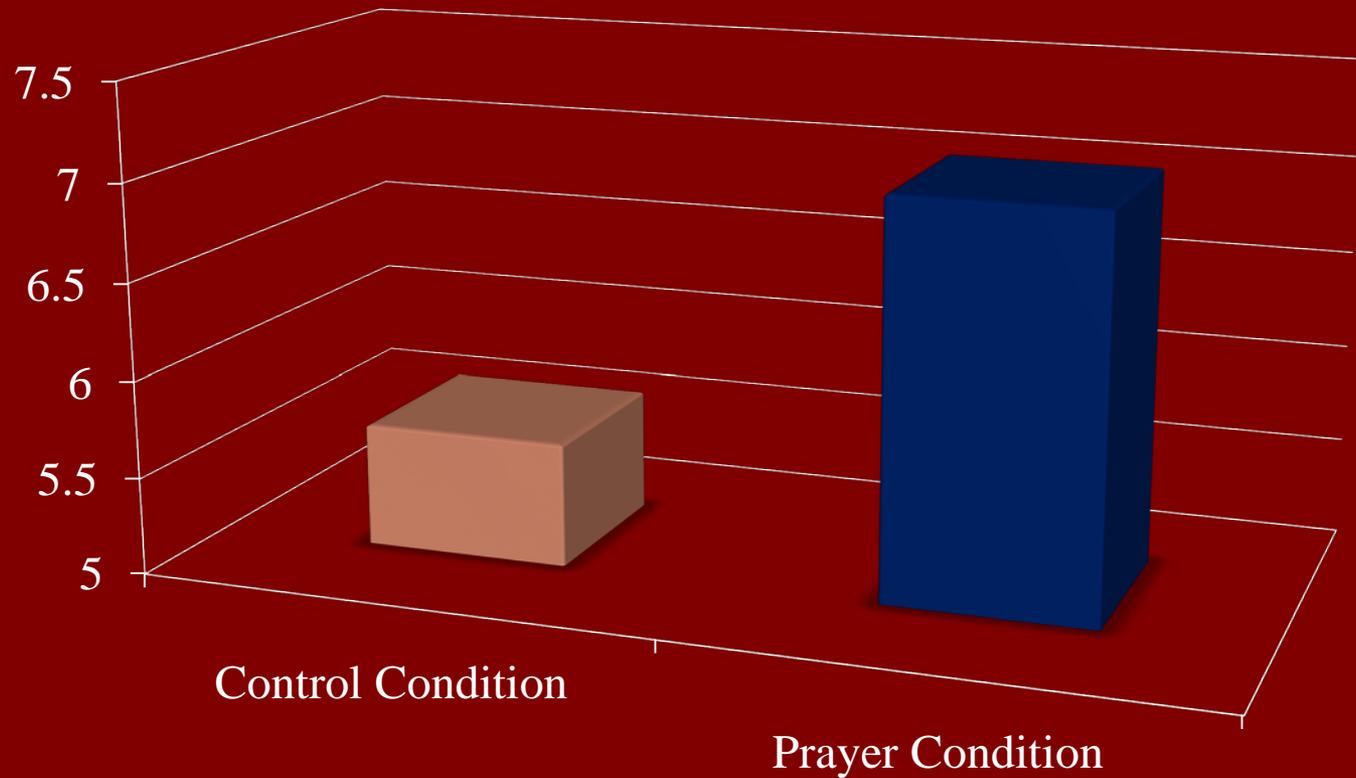
- Participants (n= 48)
- 1) received hurtful feedback,
- 2) randomly assigned to
  - a) pray for partner or
  - b) answer philosophical question
- 3) played the Prisoners' Dilemma game.

Prisoners' Dilemma

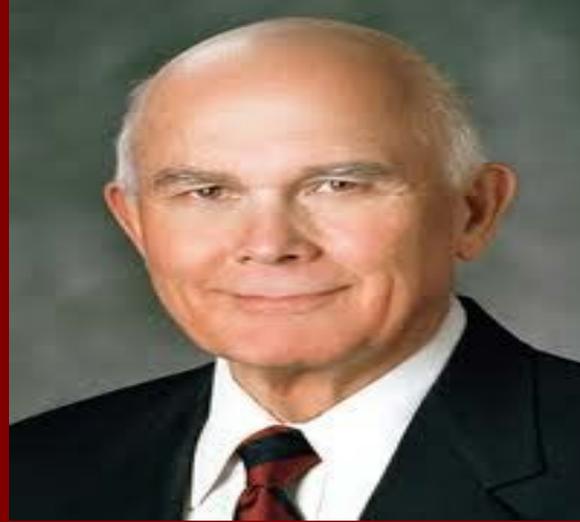
		Prisoner A	
		Cooperation	Defect
Prisoner B	Coop	win win	<b>WIN</b> <b>LOSE</b>
	Defect	<b>LOSE</b> <b>WIN</b>	lose lose

# Results

## Cooperation Following Transgression



Source: Lambert, Fincham, DeWall, Beach, & Pond (Under Review).



“If you are already descending into the low state of marriage-in-name-only, please join hands, kneel together, and prayerfully plead for help and the healing power of the Atonement. Your humble and united pleadings will bring you closer to the Lord and to each other and will help you in the hard climb back to marital harmony.”

Has anyone had an experience they can share in which they felt harmony restored to a relationship after praying?

So how else can  
prayer strengthen a  
relationship?

# Transformation of Perception

# Threefold Cord



# Ecclesiastes 4:12

“a threefold cord  
is not quickly  
broken.”

# Sanctification

- Workers who defined their work as a “calling” reported missing fewer days than those who defined it as a “job” or a “career” (Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz, 1997).
- Also, Mahoney et al., (2005) reported that those who viewed their bodies as sacred placed a higher priority on daily physical exercise.

# Sanctification

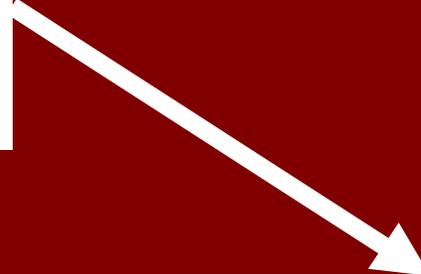
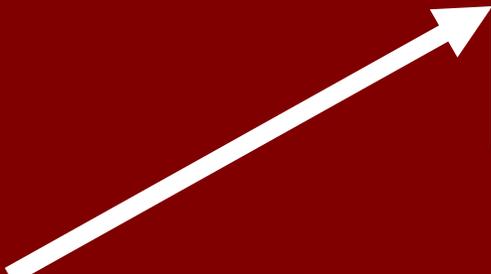
- A “sanctified” relationship ought to be a happy relationship as people go to great lengths to protect and preserve that which they perceive to be sacred (Pargament & Mahoney, 2005).
- Couples described God as a “crucial family member” (Griffith, 1986, p. 609).

# Model

**Sanctified  
Relationship**

**Prayer for  
Partner**

**Infidelity**



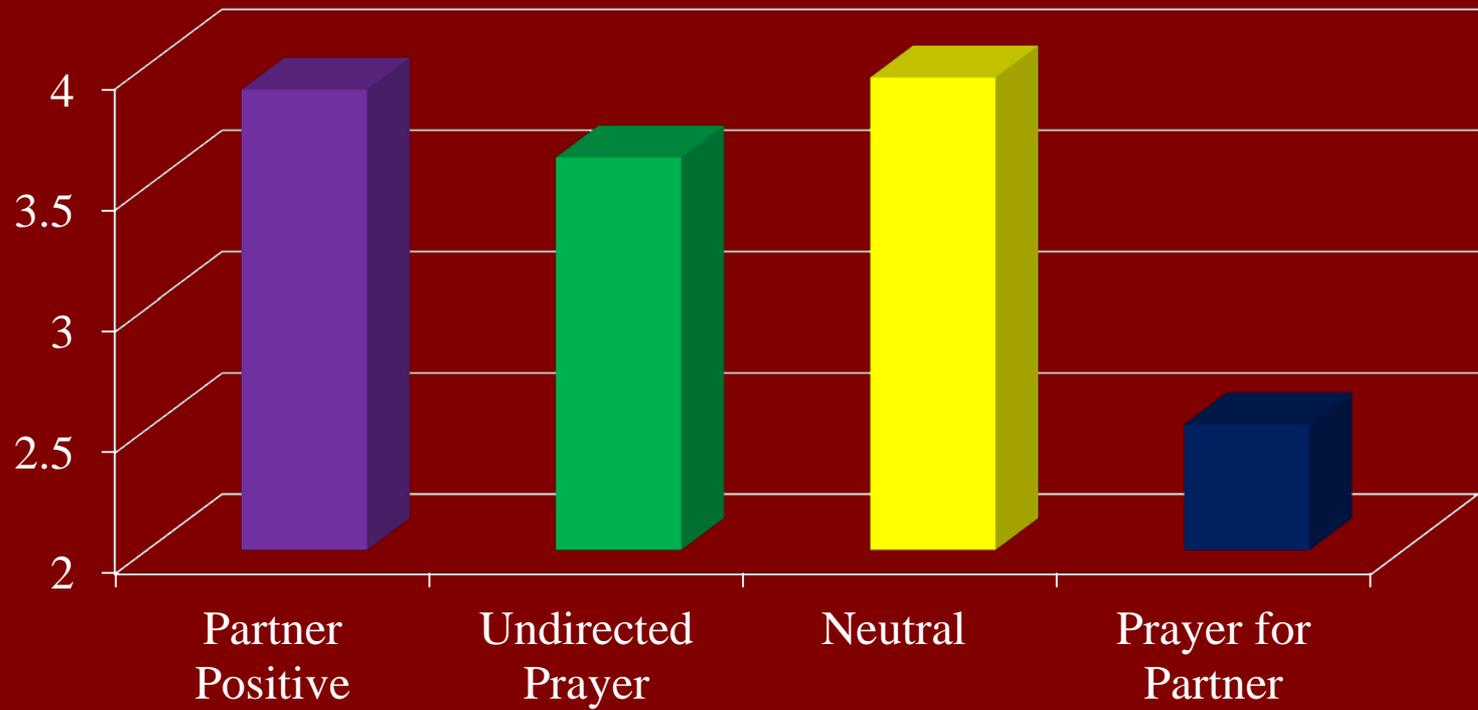
# Research Study Method

- Participants (n=83)
- 1) Reported partner-focused prayer,
- infidelity (Drigotas et. al., 1999, “How physically intimate were you with this person?”),
- and sanctification (“My relationship with my partner is holy and sacred”).

# Research Study Method (continued)

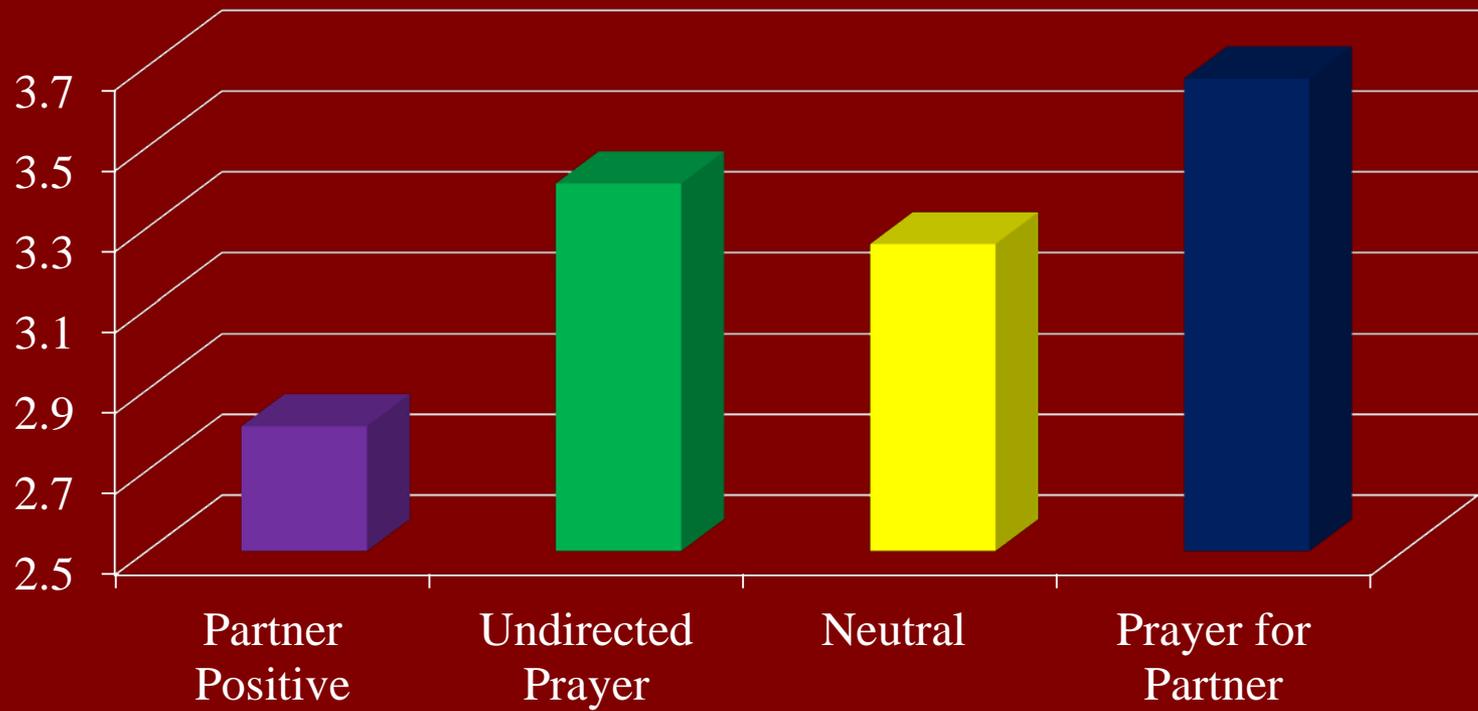
- 2) Randomly assigned to
  - a) pray for partner
  - b) write about daily activities (Neutral)
  - c) pray about any topic
  - d) think positive thoughts about partner
- 3) Completed follow-up measures

## Infidelity



Source: Fincham, Lambert, & Beach (2010). *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*.

## Sanctification



Source: Fincham, Lambert, & Beach (2010). *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*.

# Model Confirmed



# Threefold Cord



# Transformative Power of Prayer

1. Transformation of  
Motivation
2. Transformation of  
Perception

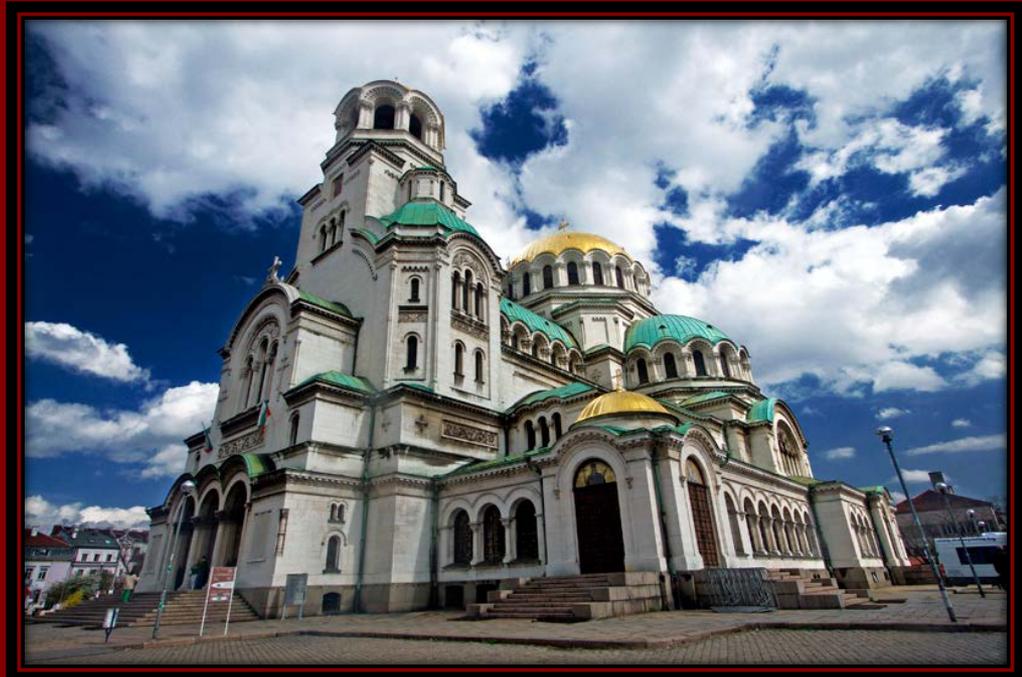


# Reception of Gratitude

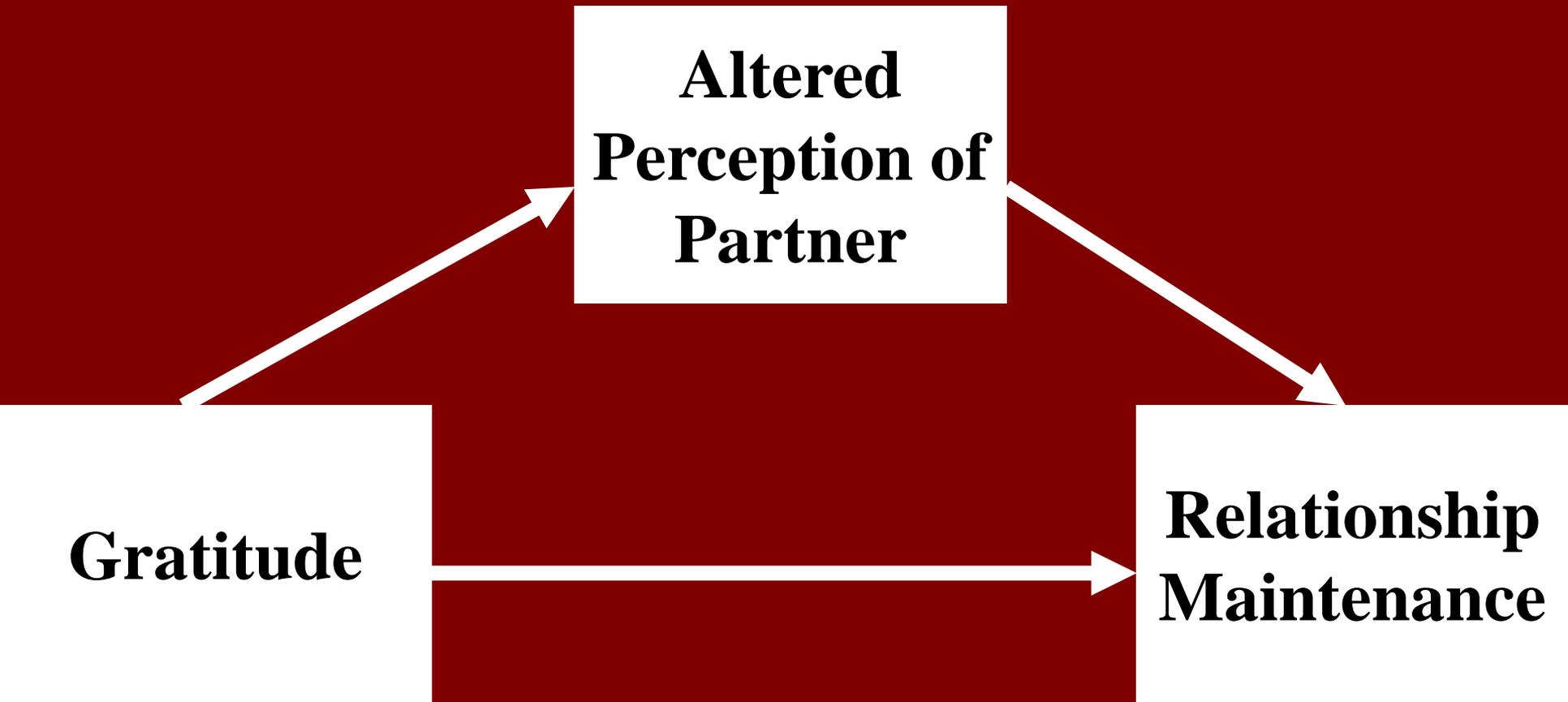
- Perceived fairness in division of labor (Hawkins, Marshall, & Allen, 1998; Hawkins, Marshall, & Meiners, 1995).
- Relationship satisfaction (Berger & Janoff-Bulman, 2006) .

# Self-Perception Theory (Bem, 1967, 1972)

- Self-perception theory: An individual “observes” his or her own behavior and makes attributions about the motivations after the fact.
- Example:



# Theoretical Model



# Model 1

**Gratitude  
Expression**

???

**Relationship  
Maintenance**



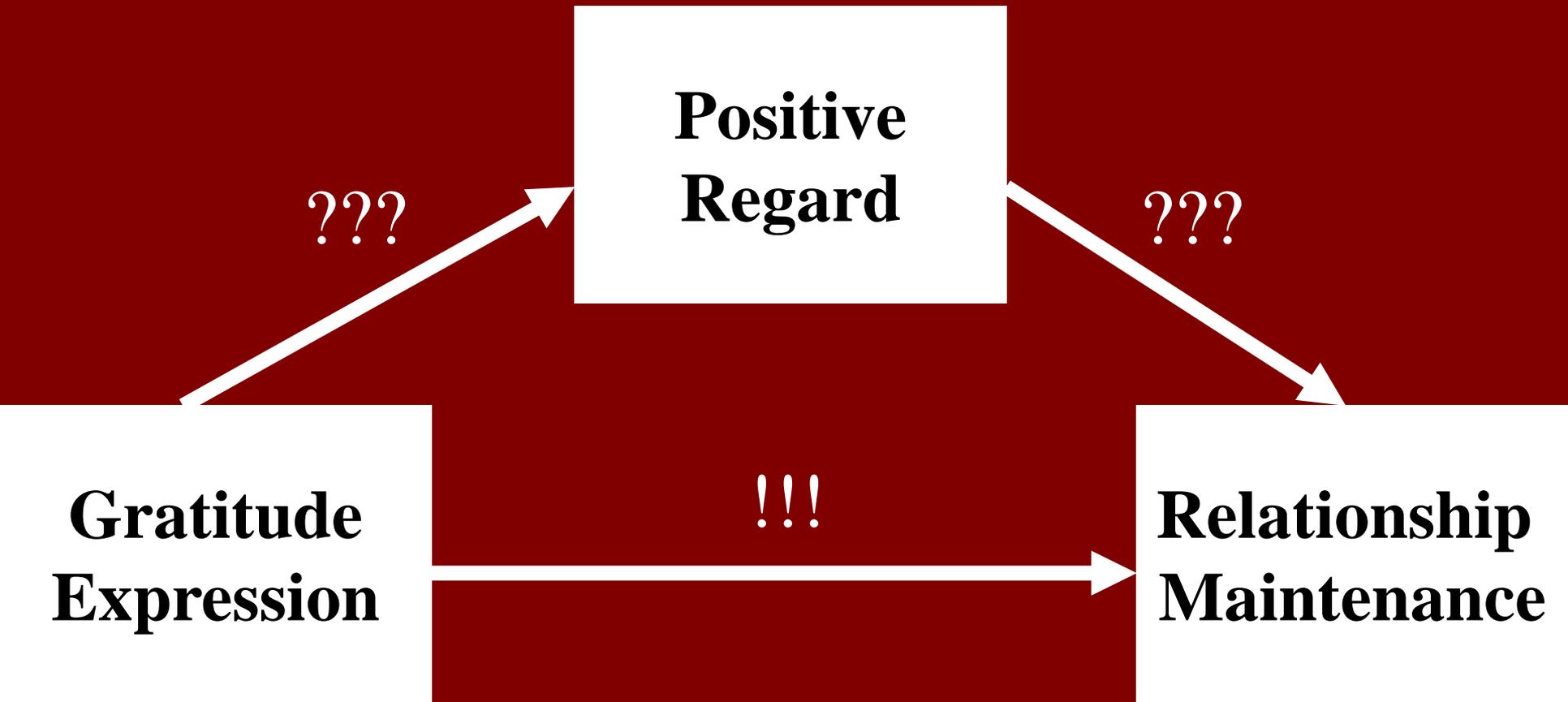
# Gratitude-Relationship Maintenance Link

Study 1- Self-report, cross sectional

Study 2- Self-report, longitudinal

Study 3- Experimental, cross-sectional

# Model 1



# Study 4 Method

Participants (n=74)

1) Completed:

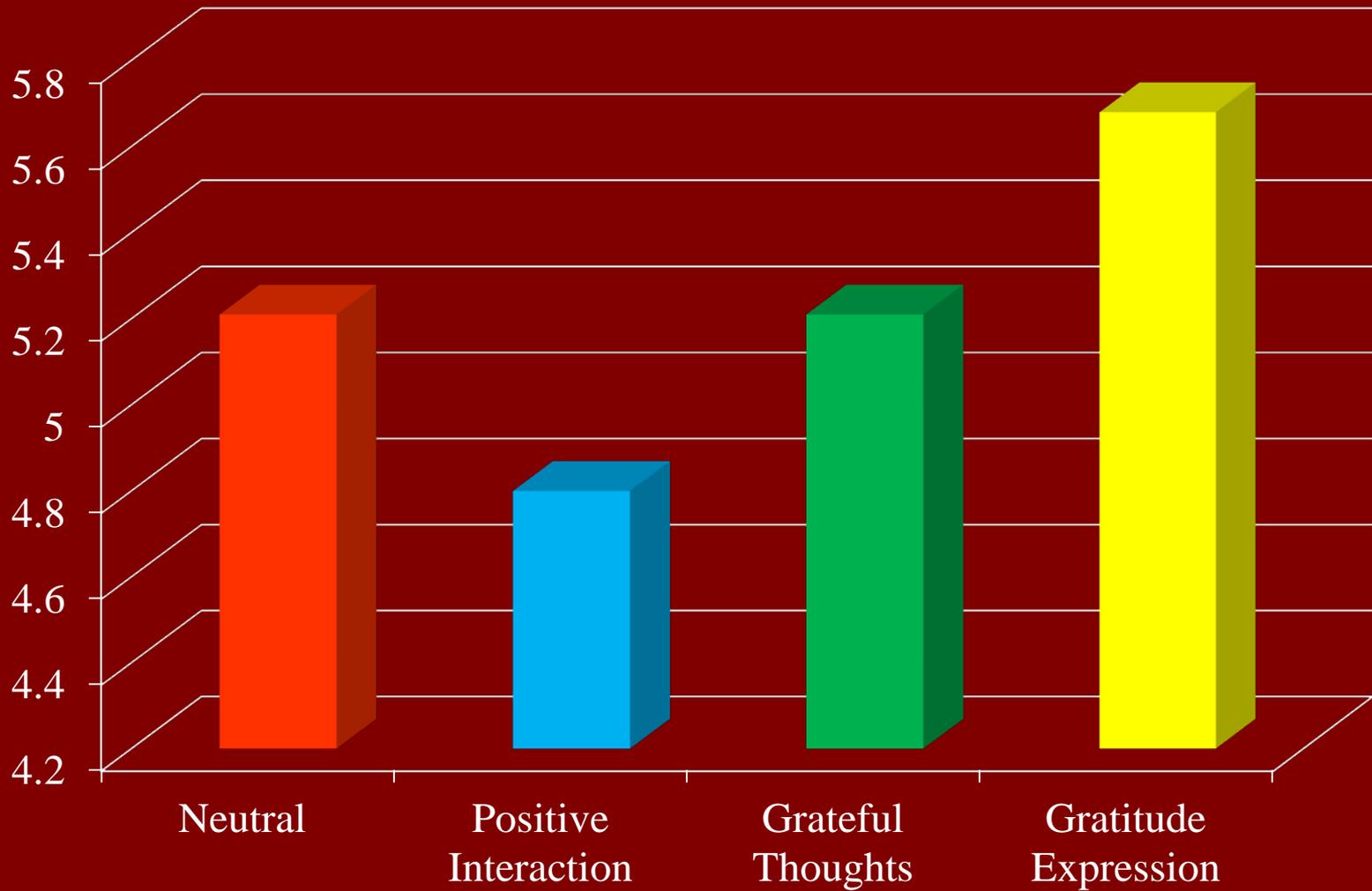
- Positive regard for partner
- Relationship maintenance

2) Randomly assigned to

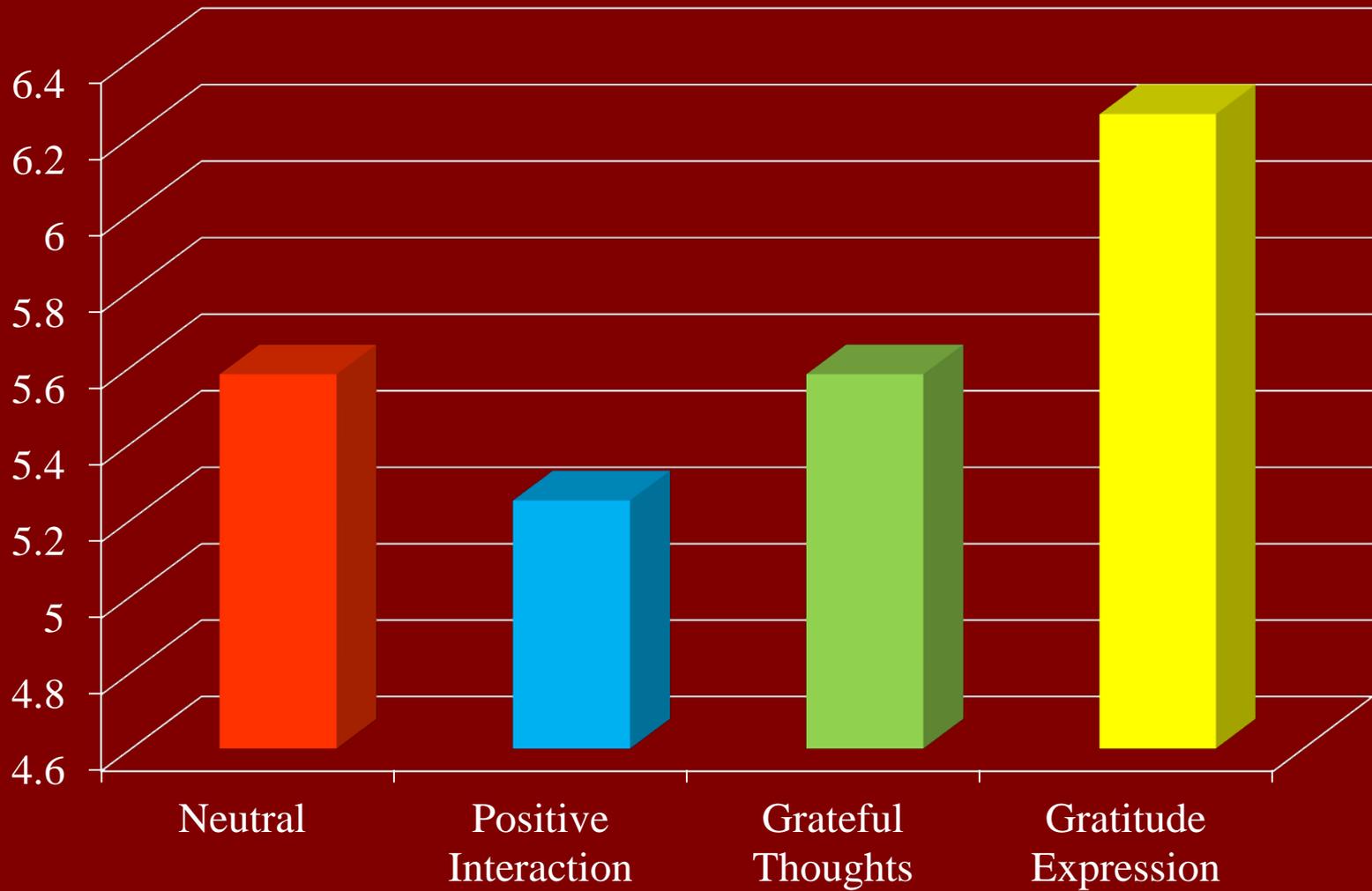
- a) Express gratitude
- b) Write grateful thoughts
- c) Express positive memory
- d) Write about daily activities (Neutral)

3) Completed posttest measures.

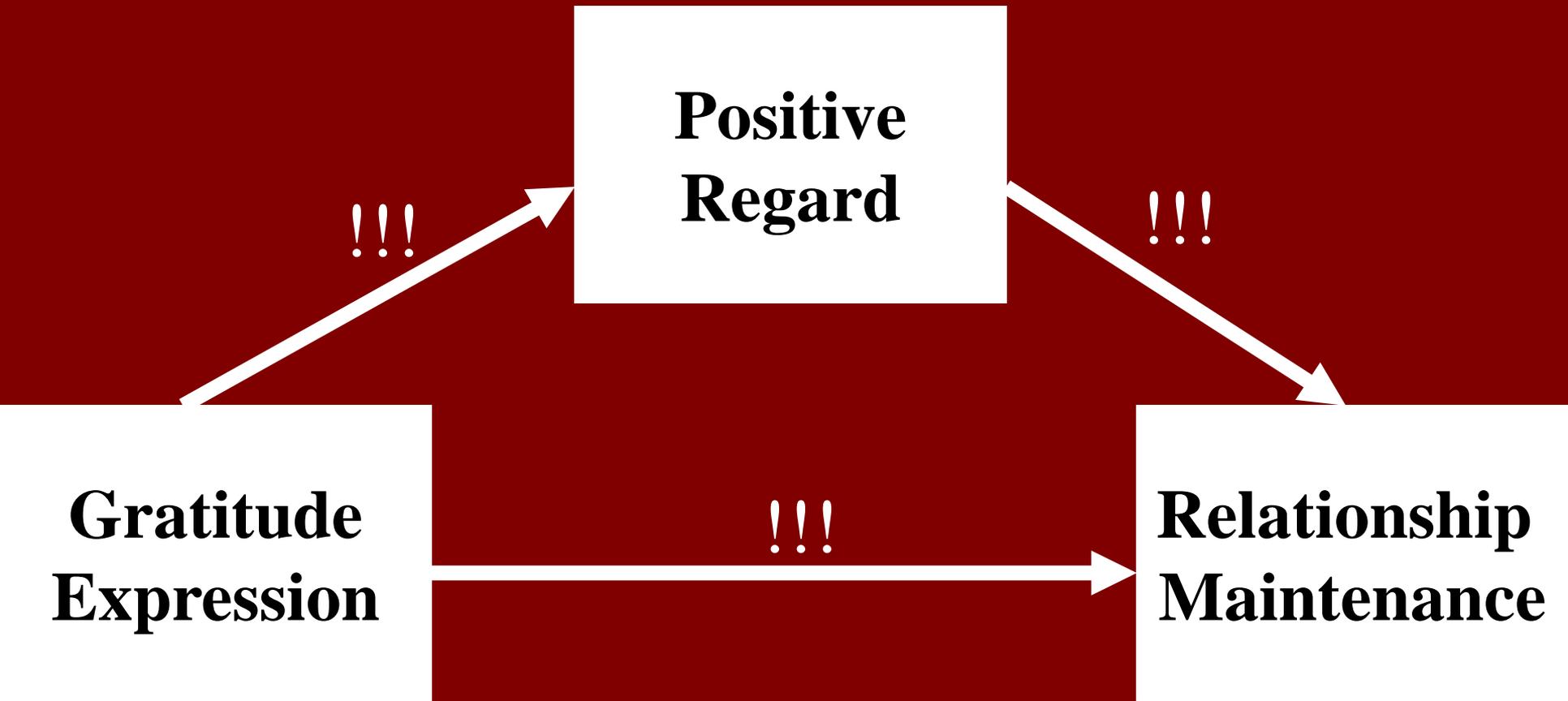
# Positive Regard for Partner



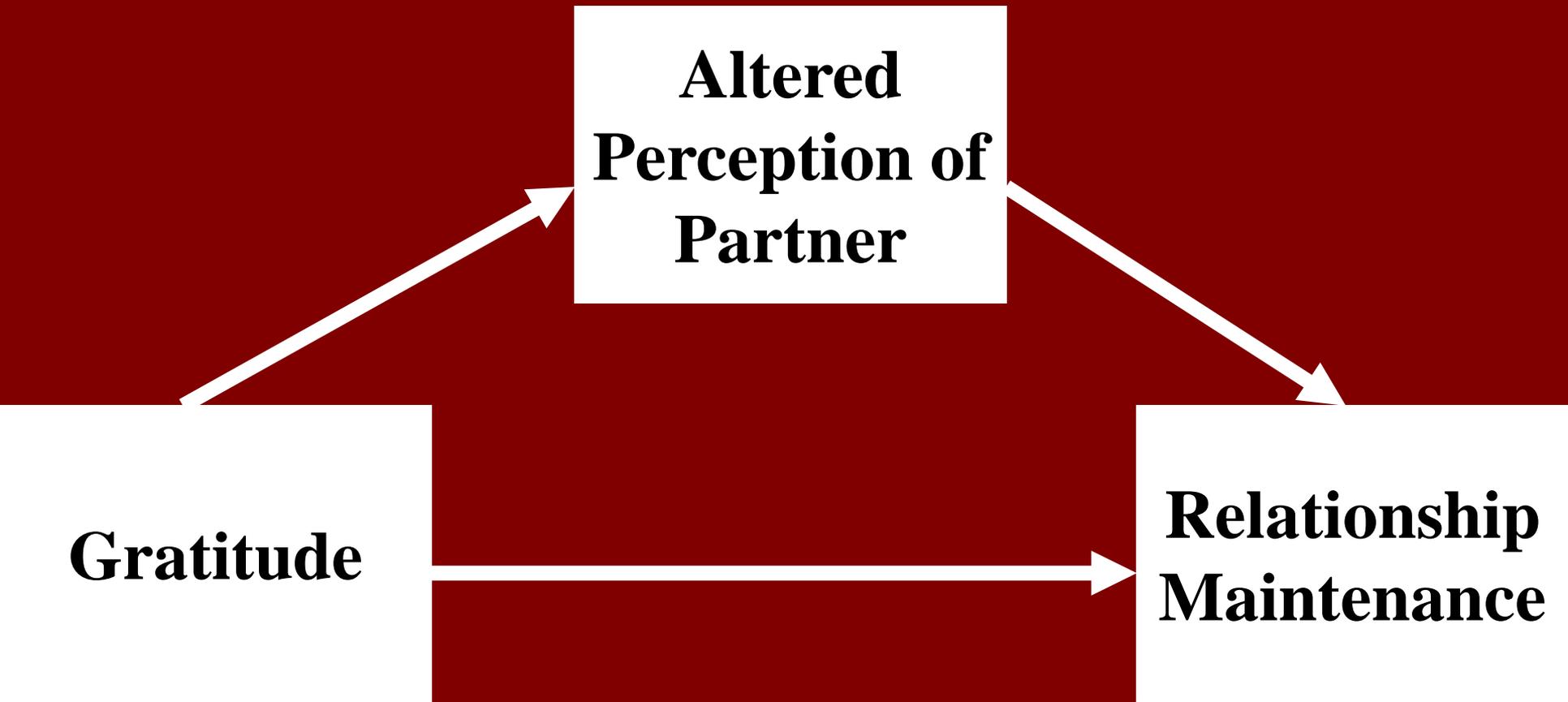
# Relationship Maintenance



# Model 1 Confirmed



# Theoretical Model



# A Most Costly, Free Drug

By Dr. Nathaniel M. Lambert

## Pornography:

### A Most Costly, **Free** Drug

- In addition, the number of individuals with Internet access increased 134 percent between 2000 and 2009 (Internet World Statistics, 2009).
- “Sex is the number 1 topic searched on the Internet” (NCPCE Online, “Current Statistics,” Internet).
- 28,000 individuals search pornography on the Internet per second and that in excess of 244 million pornography pages are operated within the United States.
- Only 20% of consumers pay to view Internet pornography (Doran, 2009).

## Pornography:

# A Most Costly, **Free** Drug

- Advanced technology is proliferating the “Triple-A Engine” (accessibility, anonymity, and affordability) of pornography (Cooper, 1998).
- Pornography has become a \$57 billion industry worldwide. Twelve billion of this is derived in the United States, more than the “combined revenues of all professional football, baseball and basketball franchises or the combined revenues of ABC, CBS, and NBC” (“Internet Pornography Statistics: 2003)

## Pornography:

# A Most Costly, Free Drug

- Story of Bishop
- There is a neurochemical “high” of pornography that can lead to compulsivity or addiction (Young, 1997a, 1998a, 1998b).
- Elder Oaks- “Pornography is also addictive. It impairs decision-making capacities and it “hooks” its users, drawing them back obsessively for more and more.”
- “In my eyes cocaine doesn’t hold a candle to this. I have done both. ... Quitting even the hardest drugs was nothing compared to trying to quit pornography”

## Pornography:

# A Most Costly, Free Drug

- Dr. Cline- “In order to get their highs, their buzz, their kicks, the erotic excitement, they develop the need for even more aberrant materials, something more gross, more stimulating, more deviant. Like with a drug, it takes more and more to achieve the same excitement they had in the past with lesser materials.”
- “And each time they go through the cycle of exposure, arousal then sexual release it further strengthens the hold the addiction has on them.”

Pornography:

## A Most Costly, Free **Drug**

- Elder Scott- “All who are caught in its seductive, tantalizing web and remain so will become addicted to its immoral, destructive influence. For many, that addiction cannot be overcome without help. The tragic pattern is so familiar. It begins with curiosity that is fueled by its stimulation and is justified by the false premise that when done privately, it does no harm to anyone else. For those lulled by this lie, the experimentation goes deeper, with more powerful stimulations, until the trap closes and a terribly immoral, addictive habit exercises its vicious control.”

# A Most Costly (Practical), Free Drug

- 20% of men admit accessing pornography at work. 13% of women [do so]. ... 10% of adults admit having internet sexual addiction (“Internet Pornography Statistics: 2003”).
- Hinckley- “Their energies and their interests are consumed in their dead-end pursuit of this raw and sleazy fare.”
- Hinckley- “It leads to fantasies that are destructive of self-respect. It leads to illicit relationships, often to disease, and to abusive criminal activity.”

# A Most Costly (Relationship), Free Drug

- Hinckley- Pornography “has the effect of damaging hearts and souls to their very depths, strangling the life out of relationships.”
- Elder Oaks- “Pornography impairs one’s ability to enjoy a normal emotional, romantic, and spiritual relationship with a person of the opposite sex. It erodes the moral barriers that stand against inappropriate, abnormal, or illegal behavior. As conscience is desensitized, patrons of pornography are led to act out what they have witnessed, regardless of its effects on their life and the lives of others.”

# A Most Costly (Relationship), Free Drug

- Brad Wilcox- “There is no love in pornography. There is only lust. There is no concern for another, there is only concern for self.”
- Elder Scott- “Participation in pornography in any of its lurid forms is a manifestation of unbridled selfishness. How can a man, particularly a priesthood bearer, not think of the emotional and spiritual damage caused to women, especially his wife, by such abhorrent activity?”

Pornography:

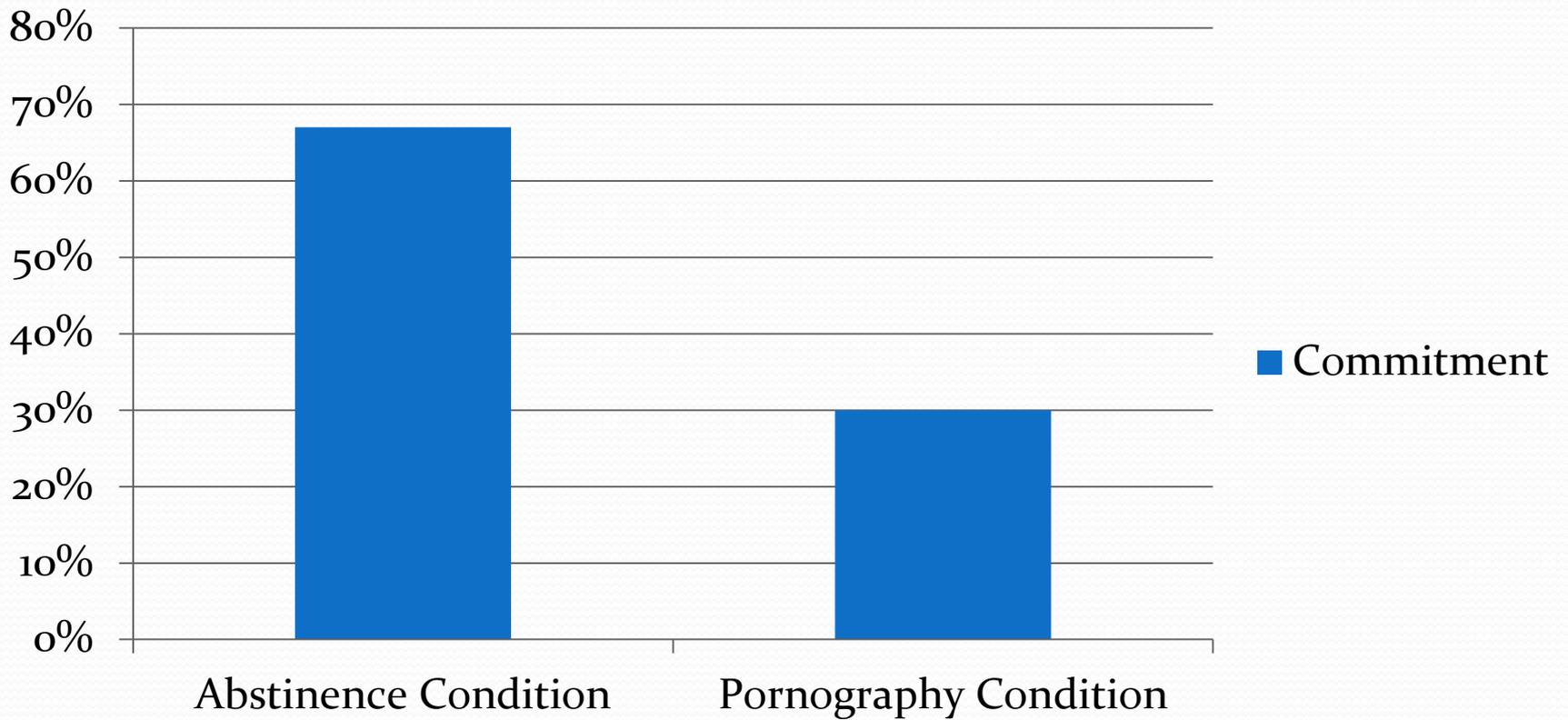
# A Most Costly (Relationship), Free Drug

- Brad Wilcox- “There is no relationship to be strengthened, only nameless bodies, dehumanized sexual objects...most pornography presents highly inaccurate, unscientific, and distorted information about human sexuality. It is in a sense sex mis-education, sex mis-education marketed for financial gain.”

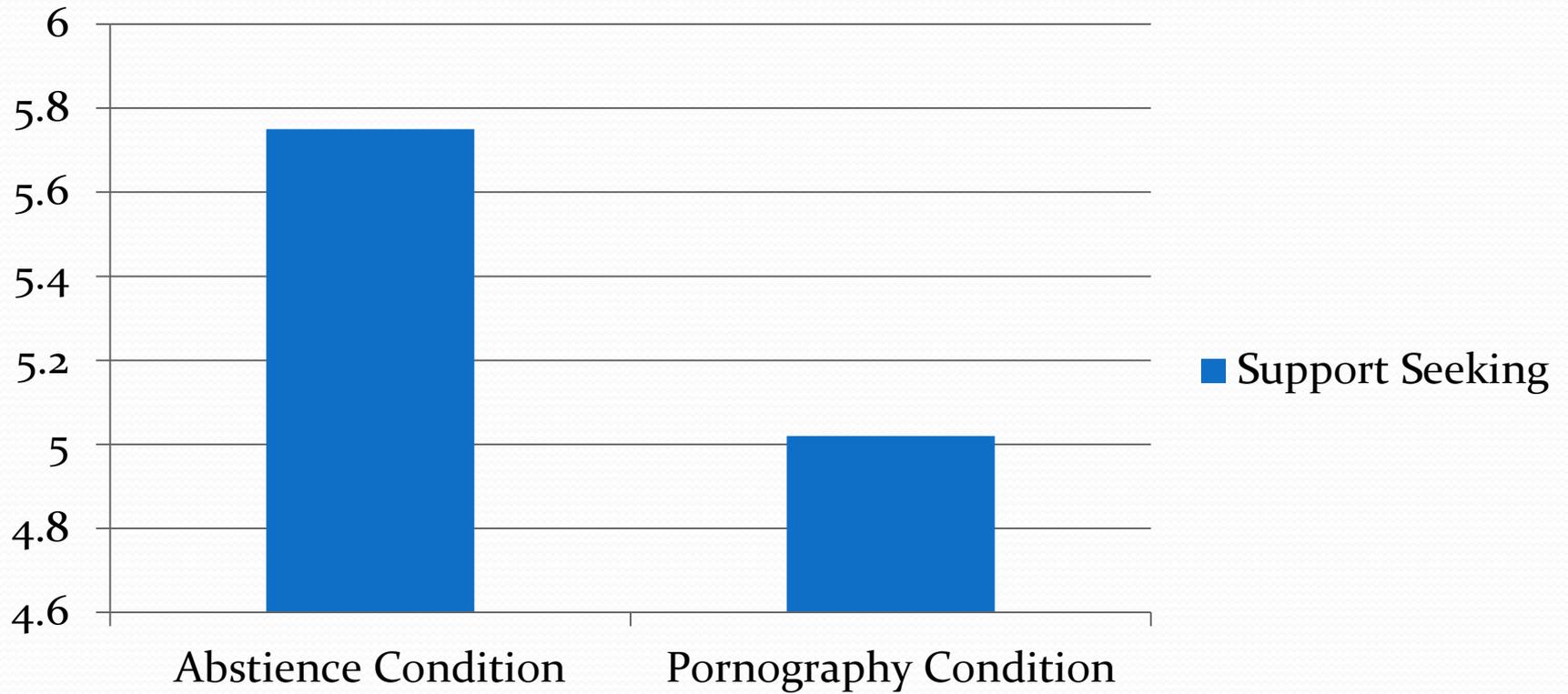
# Pornography Intervention

- Objective: To determine how abstaining from pornography for three weeks would affect a variety of outcomes.
- Method: Randomly assigned half of a group of pornography users to abstain from pornography for three weeks. The other group did not abstain but continued in their regular viewing habits.

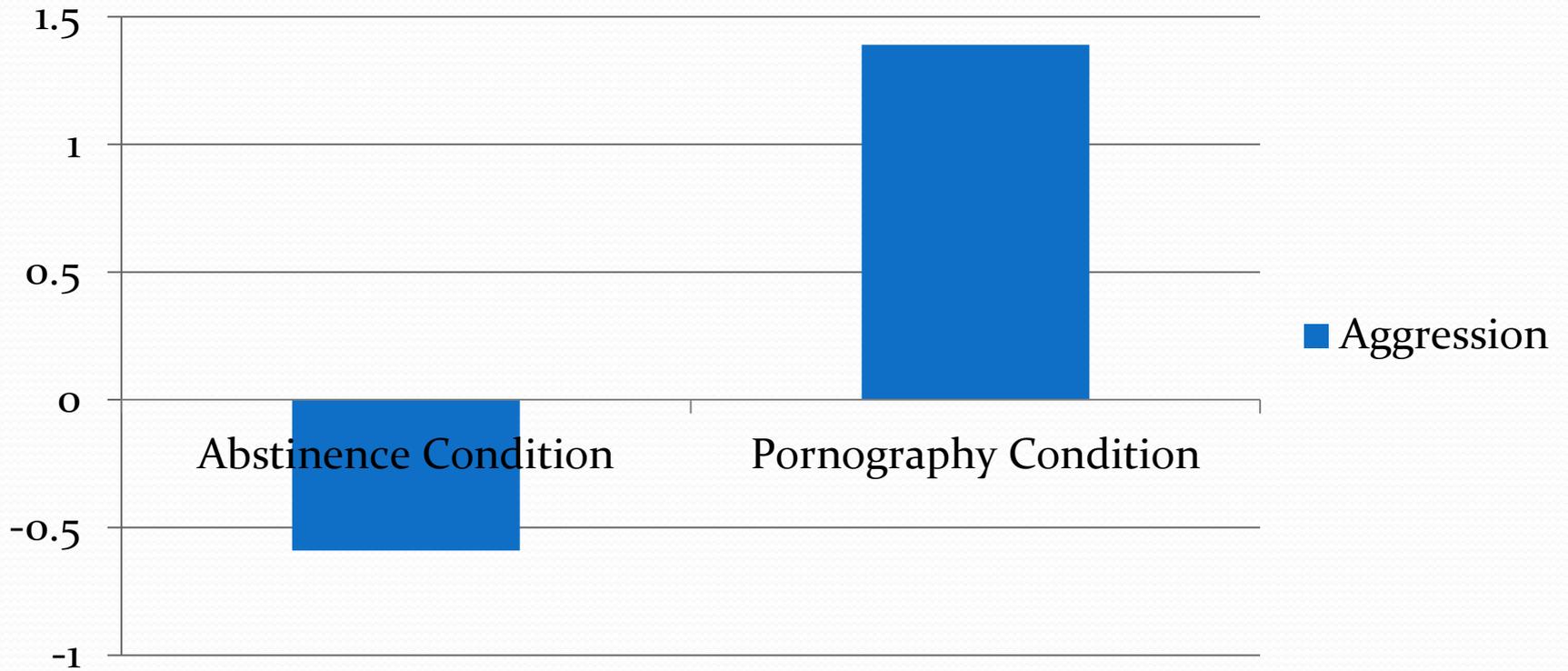
## Commitment



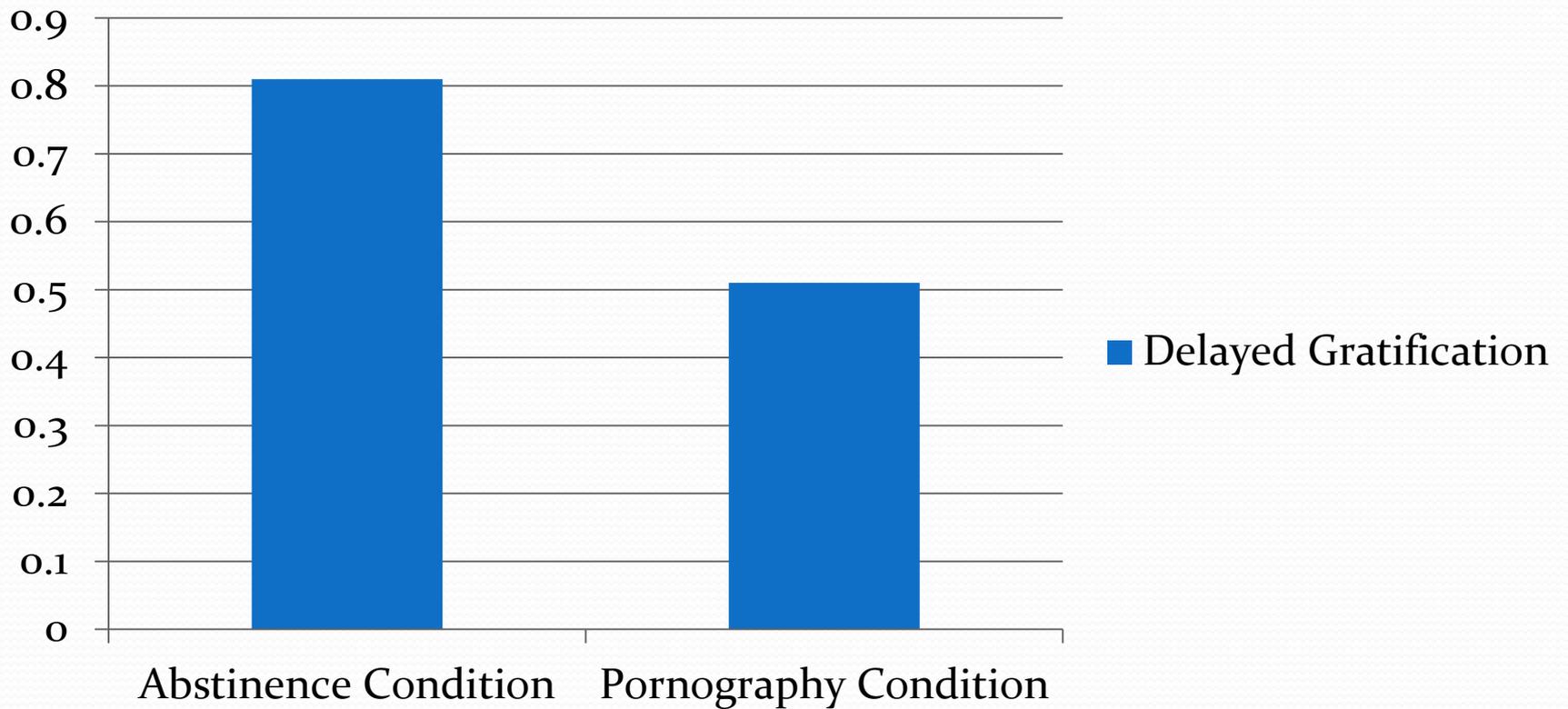
## Support Seeking



# Aggression



## Delayed Gratification



# Other Findings from Our Research

Higher reported viewing of pornography was related to...

- Lower relationship satisfaction
- Lower relationship trust
- Lower maintenance of the relationship
- Poorer coping
- Greater loneliness
- More alcohol use
- Lower satisfaction with life

# What Can We Do—Treatment?

- Dr. Rick Moody- “The first way in which we can support those who struggle is to help **reduce shame**. Shame is the fuel that keeps the pornography struggle going. Pornography is like a drug that provides a momentary “high” that takes a person away from their pain. True, when “the high” is over the person comes crashing down, feels powerless and experiences more shame and eventually re-engages in the cycle again.”
- “The second point to consider is that for most individuals who struggle, **pornography isn’t the only issue**. **Investigating the context that triggers the impulse to indulge in pornography** can present other problem areas that may be very much related to the pornography problem.”

# What Can We Do—Treatment?

- “Engaging in avoidant behavior is like being in a tug-of-war with a monster. It is big, ugly, and very strong. In between you and the monster is a pit, and so far as you can tell it is bottomless. If you lose this tug-of-war, you will fall into this pit and will be destroyed. So you pull and pull, but the harder you pull, the harder the monster pulls, and you edge closer and closer to the pit. The hardest thing to see is that our job here is not to win the tug-of-war...Our job is to drop the rope.” (Hayes, et al, 1999, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, New York : The Guilford Press).
- Get ecclesiastical and perhaps professional help

# Pornography:

## A Most Costly, Free Drug

- Pornography is largely FREE (affordable), its accessible, and its anonymous—recipe for disaster.
- Pornography is a highly addictive DRUG.
- Pornography is MOST COSTLY in that it carries:
  - Practical consequences
  - Relationship consequences
  - Spiritual consequences

# Research on Infidelity

- The majority of research on infidelity has focused on risk and protective factors.
- Religion has been shown to be one of those protective factors.
- However, previous studies do not provide detailed explanation for how and why specific risk or protective factors may be related to infidelity.
- This study explores specifically how and why religion may function as a protective factor against infidelity.

# Prevalence of Infidelity

- In general, Americans disapprove of sexual infidelity in marriage.
- More than 90 percent of the general public agreed that it is “always” or “almost always” wrong.
- Yet 25 percent of men and 15 percent of women report having had sex with someone other than their spouse.

# Consequences of Infidelity

- Infidelity is the number one cause of divorce
- It is often the cause of domestic abuse
- It is the most frequent cause of wife battery and wife killing.
- The discovery of extramarital sex often results in interpersonal reactions resembling the post-traumatic stress symptoms.

Given these and other severe consequences of infidelity, attempts should be made to explore the mechanisms by which proven protective factors, such as religion, can reduce the prevalence of infidelity.

# Purpose of the Current Study

- The current study provides qualitative descriptions of several dimensions of religiosity and demonstrates how these dimensions contribute to couples' attitudes toward fidelity in marriage.
- Specifically, our study explores if and how religious couples describe their beliefs and practices as encouraging fidelity and fortifying their marriage against infidelity.

# Participants

- Participants were interviewed by the first author in New England (2002) and in Northern California (2004).
- Consistent with Pauline Boss' proposition that much can be learned by using a sample at the extreme of the variable of interest, the interviewer sought for a purposive sample of highly religious families.

# Description of the Sample

- 57 married couples from the three major monotheistic or “Abrahamic” faiths (Christianity, Judaism, Islam).
- Husbands and wives mean ages were 48 and 45 respectively.
- Of the 57 couples interviewed, 48 were Caucasian and nine (16 percent) were ethnic minorities.
- Mean level of education was 17 for husbands and 16 for wives.
- Couples had been married for an average of 21 years.
- Participants attended religious services about once a week and contributed about 7 percent of their income to their faith communities and other religious causes.

# Couples were from the following faith communities:

- **6 Catholic**
- **3 Orthodox Christian** (2 Greek Orthodox, 1 Orthodox Church in America)
- **12 Jewish** (2 Ultra-Orthodox, 4 Orthodox, 4 Conservative, 2 Reform)
- **4 Muslim** (all Sunni)
- **12 Mainline Protestant** (Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, Lutheran, Methodist)
- **12 New Christian Traditions** (Christian Science, Jehovah's Witness, Latter-day Saint, Seventh-day Adventist, Friends)
- **8 Evangelical Protestant** (Baptist, Charismatic Episcopal, Orthodox Presbyterian, Missionary Alliance, Pentecostal).

# Method

- The study uses grounded theory methods to create themes and a model describing the ways that religious couples draw on their beliefs and practices to stay faithful to their marital vows.
- After initial concepts and themes had been identified, attempts were made to “falsify emergent findings” to determine if they held up under scrutiny (Gilgun, 2005).

# Results

- Several patterns emerged on how couples perceived the connection between their religion and fidelity in their marriage.
- Given research findings linking marital quality and fidelity, we also explored the couples' commentary about how their religious beliefs and practices strengthened their marriage, even if they did not make direct mention of fidelity.

# Results

- *Analysis indicated that that religion affected couples' level of faithfulness in four important ways:*
  - 1) religion sanctified marriage;
  - 2) religion fortified marital commitment;
  - 3) religion strengthened moral values;
  - 4) religion improved one's relationship with God.

# Sanctified Marriage

- Like Mahoney and her colleagues, we use the term *sanctified* to reflect the reported view of their marriage as something sacred.
- Although our construct *sanctified marriage* shares some of the same qualities found in studies of marital quality, it also implies distinct characteristics that are most likely to be attained through a religious or dedicated spiritual lifestyle.

# Elements of Sanctified Marriage

- The construct of sanctified marriage includes five elements, and each is indirectly related to marital fidelity.
- The following were most commonly mentioned:  
Religion helped couples
  - 1) set aside sacred time to spend together,
  - 2) share a sense of holy vision and purpose,
  - 3) enhance interpersonal virtues,
  - 4) find spiritual help in conflict resolution, and
  - 5) increase divine relational assistance in the marriage.

# Relational Commitment

- Religion strengthened marital commitment in the couples and commitment was often mentioned in relation to fidelity.
- Jake, a Congregationalist reporter summed it up by saying,
  - *“You know, no matter how pretty I may think all these young college girls walking around are, this is the woman I’m committed to. And that has a faith aspect to my life.”*

# Relational Commitment (cont.)

- Mitch, a Methodist chemistry professor described his experience with vow making:
  - *“I mean fidelity to a vow. And making a vow in front of God and the family. That’s pretty serious living up to that. And that’s in our vows, that promise was indeed caring for each other through all of life’s surprises . . . . And speaking those vows in front of her ten brothers . . . raised fidelity on the list.”*

# Moral Values

- One reason these couples determined to remain faithful was because their religions condemned extramarital sex.
- Brent, a Jehovah's Witness optician, explained:
  - *“Well we mentioned before about [marriage] being a permanent bond, that Jehovah God hates divorcing . . . because that breaks the marriage bond. And Jesus also said that adultery would be something that would, could break the marriage bond.”*

# Moral Values (cont.)

- Besides directly teaching about sexual fidelity, many couples stated that their faith tradition discouraged or disallowed behavior that might lead to unfaithfulness.
- Jala, an Indian Muslim homemaker, explained
  - *“Yes, we just follow Hadith and . . . what the Prophet Muhammad said, like not to drink alcohol, not to go to bars, not dance, nor dance with any other men or women, dating always properly.”*

# Relationship with God

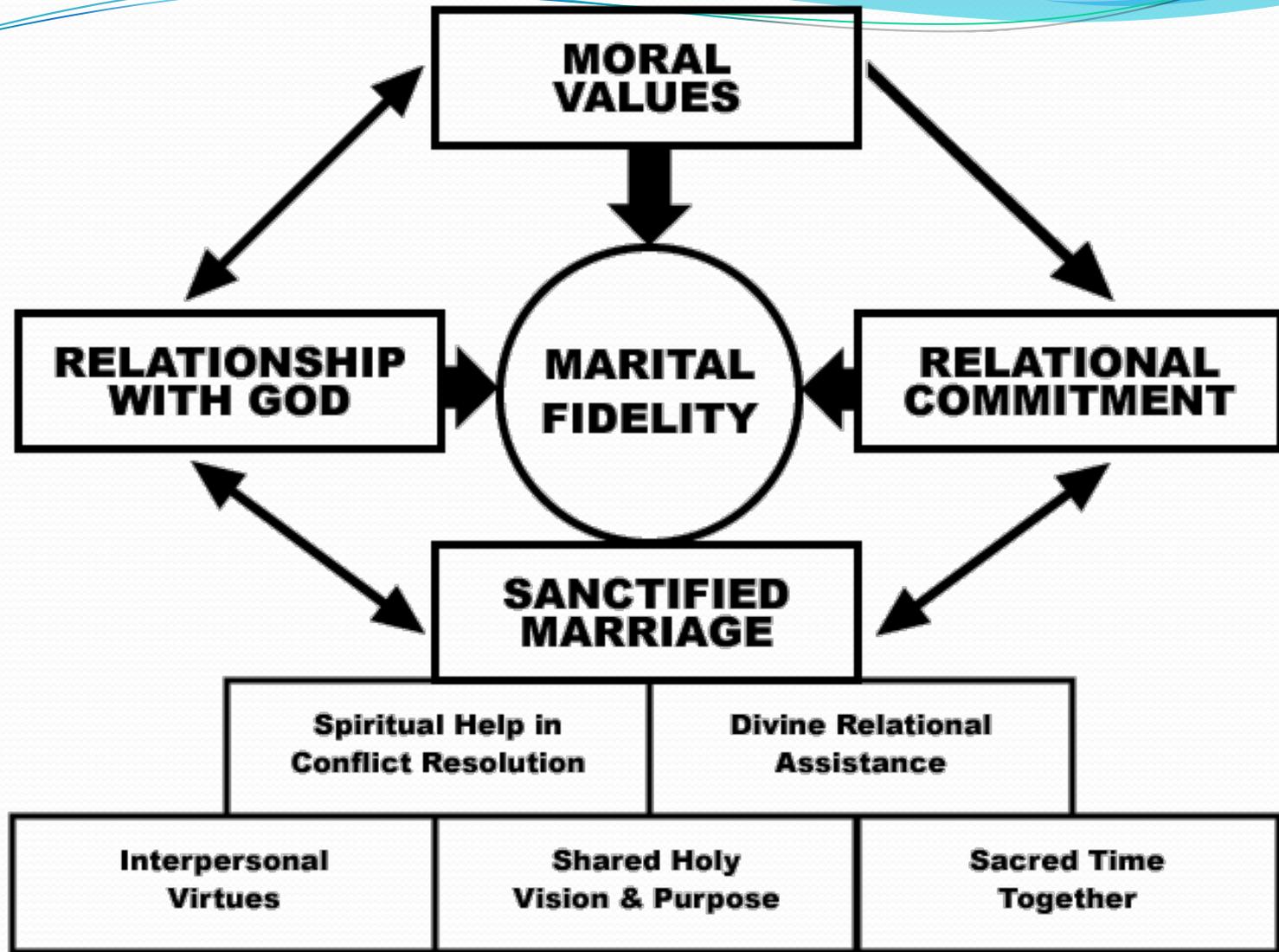
- Many couples reported that their relationship with God also helped them remain faithful.
- Debby, a Baptist social worker, explained that fidelity was related to her relationship with God,
  - *“In addition to unconditional love, maybe the idea, in our culture, of fidelity, I see as being tied, for me, primarily, to my beliefs and to my relationship with God.”*

# Relationship with God (cont.)

- A strong relationship with God seemed to lead to a sense of accountability to obey his commandments regarding issues relating to marriage.
- Mark, a Jehovah's Witness retired college professor said,
  - *"We feel we're answerable to God about our marriage. We're answerable to him about our personal faith, we're also answerable to him about how we conduct ourselves in the marriage, because that's his arrangement."*

# Summary & Conceptual Model

- We have identified four major concepts that connect to marital fidelity:
  - a sanctified marriage,
  - relational commitment,
  - moral values, and
  - relationship with God.
- Based on the prevalence of the statements made, we consider a “sanctified marriage” to be the foundation of marital fidelity.



# Conclusions

- It appears that religious belief, practice, and community can provide a significant protective factor against marital infidelity.
- Religious involvement can help couples improve marital quality and help them remain true to their marital vow to “forsake all others” and thus avoid the many personal, relational, and societal problems that result from infidelity.