

COUPLES THAT PRAY TOGETHER . . . ARE BETTER PARENTS?

Exploring
Mindfulness
as a Mediator
between Couples
Prayer and Parenting

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PARENTING BEHAVIORS

LAX & OVERREACTIVE PARENTING CHILD OUTCOMES

- Associated with permissive and authoritarian parenting (Arnold, O'leary-Wolff, & Acker, 1993)
- Many parents also experience stress pile up (Boss, 2014)
- Frequently occurs as a result of parent burnout (Lindström, Åman, & Norberg 2011)
- Negative parenting behaviors are associated with internalizing and externalizing behaviors (e.g., Guajardo et al., 2009)
- Also associated with conduct and academic problems (DeKlyen, Speltz & Greenberg, 1999; Lau, & Lam, 1998)

PRAYER

- Important resource for religious individuals (Cobb et al., 2015)
- Many different forms (individual, couple, supplication, etc.) (Lambert et al., 2012)
- Prayer influences many aspects of life (e.g., Butler, Stout, & Gardner, 2002)
- Stress reduction may occur because of increased attention to greater personal awareness (Cobb, 2012; Luhrmann & Bergin, 2012)

- Different types of prayer may have differing influences on individuals.
- Couple prayer will likely be more influential to parenting outcomes than individual prayer.





MINDFULNESS

- Mindfulness is a technique for individuals to focus on the present in a nonjudgmental way (Brown & Ryan, 2003)
- Benefits include stress reduction (Parent et al., 2015), well-being (Brown & Ryan, 2003) and increased optimism (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010)
- Mindfulness has even been associated with more positive parenting (Bluth & Wahler, 2011)
- Therefore, it is likely a mediator between prayer and parenting



Participants were parents (238 couples) drawn from *The Couple Well-Being Project* (Galovan, Schramm, McDaniel, & Goddard, 2016), a larger study ($N=615$ couples) exploring couple relationship dynamics.

Participants for the larger study were recruited by Qualtrics (see Jensen, Shafer, & Holmes, 2017) from an online panel in the United States and Canada using a national quota sample for each country based on age and race/ethnicity and completed the survey online.

- Participants indicated they were “currently in a romantic relationship.”
- Participants were compensated through points (to use toward various goods or services), gift cards, or cash payments (a value of between \$5 and \$10 US).
- Participants were asked not to discuss the survey with their partner until after they had completed the survey.

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

| | U.S. (<i>n</i> = 258; 129 couples) | Canada (<i>n</i> = 218; 109 couples) |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| Married (%) | 88.8 | 81.7 |
| Female (%) | 52.3 | 53.2 |
| White (%) | 62.4 | 86.3 |
| Education (%) | | |
| No High School | 3.1 | 2.8 |
| High School Diploma | 20.5 | 17.9 |
| Some College | 18.6 | 11.5 |
| Associate or Trade degree | 12.4 | 17.9 |
| Bachelor's Degree | 29.5 | 34.4 |
| Graduate or Professional Degree | 15.9 | 15.6 |
| Annual Income in USD (SD) | \$78,080 (70,656) | \$62,112 (59,971) |
| Age (SD) | 36.5 (9.7) | 37.7 (11.1) |
| Relationship Duration (SD) | 11.0 (8.0) | 12.1 (8.3) |
| Percent in Same-Sex Relationship | 24.8 | 19.3 |
| Number of Children < 18 in home | 1.98 (1.56) | 1.77 (.97) |
| Age of Children in the Home; M (SD) | | |
| Oldest Child | 9.52 (5.67) | 10.40 (5.71) |
| Youngest Child | 6.48 (5.29) | 7.11 (5.71) |



MEASURES

Prayer

- Single item questions assessed frequency of individual and couple prayer during a typical week

Mindfulness

- Cognitive & Affective Mindfulness Scale-Revised (CAMS-R) (Feldmen et al., 2007)
- Cronbach's α ranged from .92 to .95

Parenting Quality

- Parenting Scale (Arnold et al., 1993)
- Overreactivity & Laxness Subscales
- Cronbach's α ranged from .80 to .84

Control variables: income, gender, child difficulty (6 items from the parenting stress index including moodiness and irritability; Abidin, 1995; Cronbach's α ranged from .92 to .94)



DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS

Means (SD):

Personal Prayer (1 to 7) = 3.17 (2.75)

Couple Prayer (1 to 7) = 2.63 (2.40)

Mindfulness (1 to 7) = 5.43 (1.24)

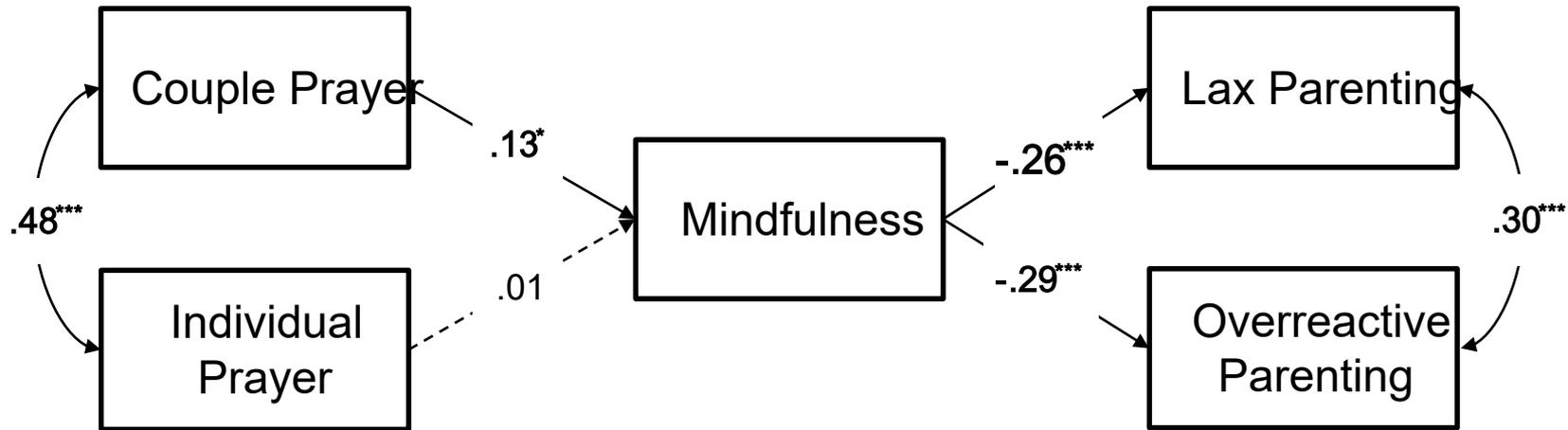
Lax Parenting (1 to 9) = 3.24 (1.59)

Overreactive Parenting (1 to 9) = 3.89 (1.65)

Child Difficulty (1 to 5) = 3.55 (1.69)



PATH MODEL WITH MINDFULNESS AS A MEDIATOR



Notes $N=476$. Child difficulty, income, and gender were included as a control variables in the model. Model fit: $\chi^2(5) = 2.284$, ns ; TLI = 1.060; RMSEA = .000; SRMR = .009

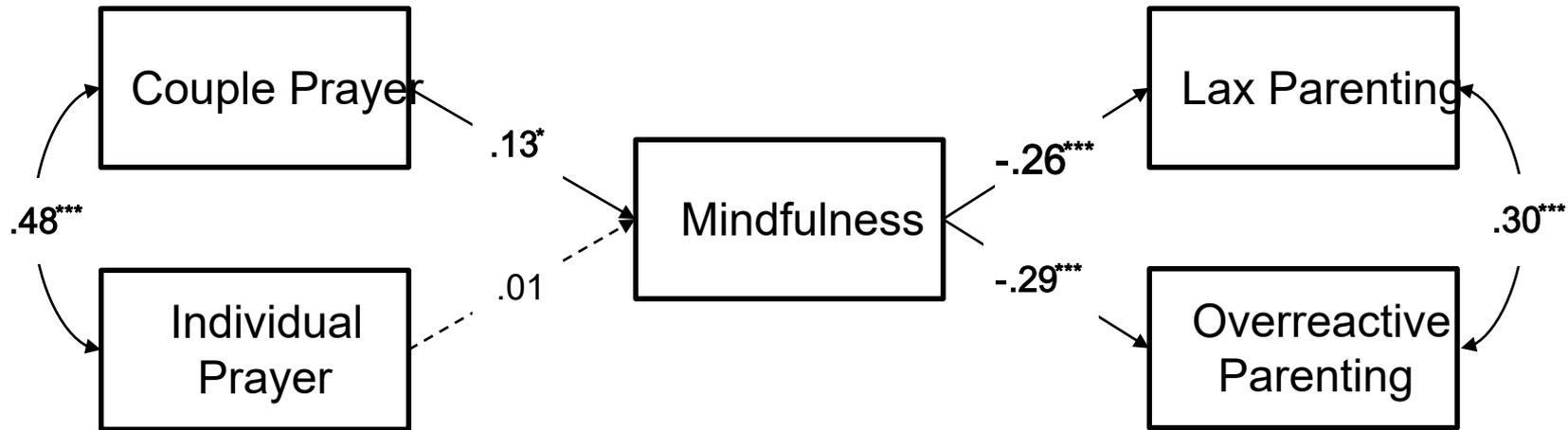


DISCUSSION

- Individual and couple prayer are qualitatively different



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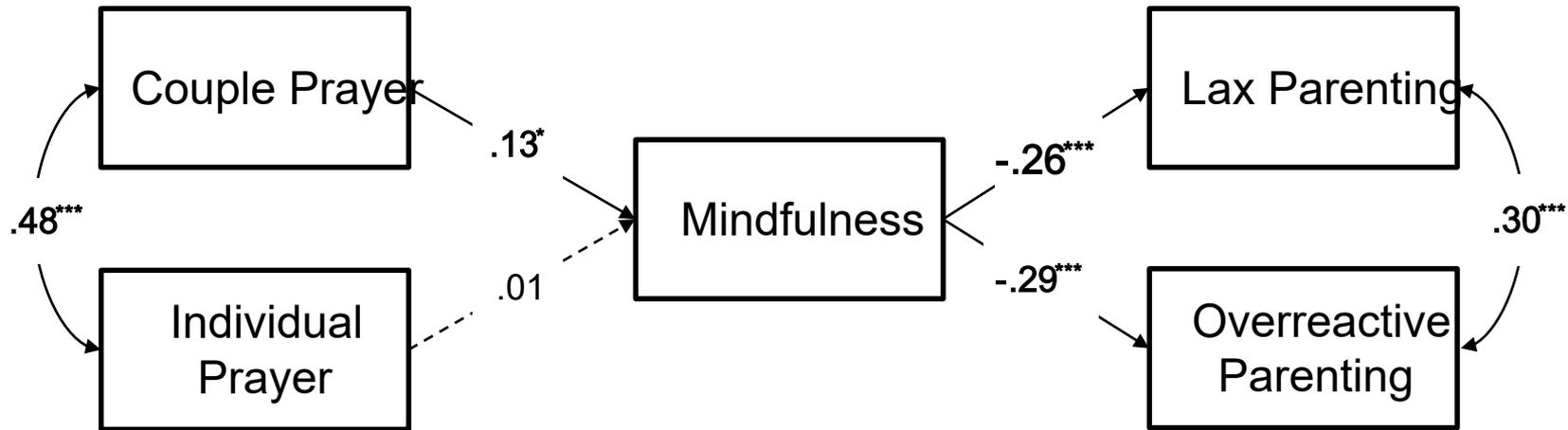


DISCUSSION

- Individual and couple prayer are qualitatively different
- **Couple prayer likely has a more salient influence on parenting (through mindfulness) than individual prayer (see Luhrmann & Morgan, 2012)**



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- **Couples that pray together tend to more successfully avoid negative parenting behaviors, in part, because of increased mindfulness.**



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 - ▷ **Stress reduction/management**



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 - ▷ Stress reduction/management
 - ▷ *I-Thous. I-It* (Galovan & Schramm, 2018)

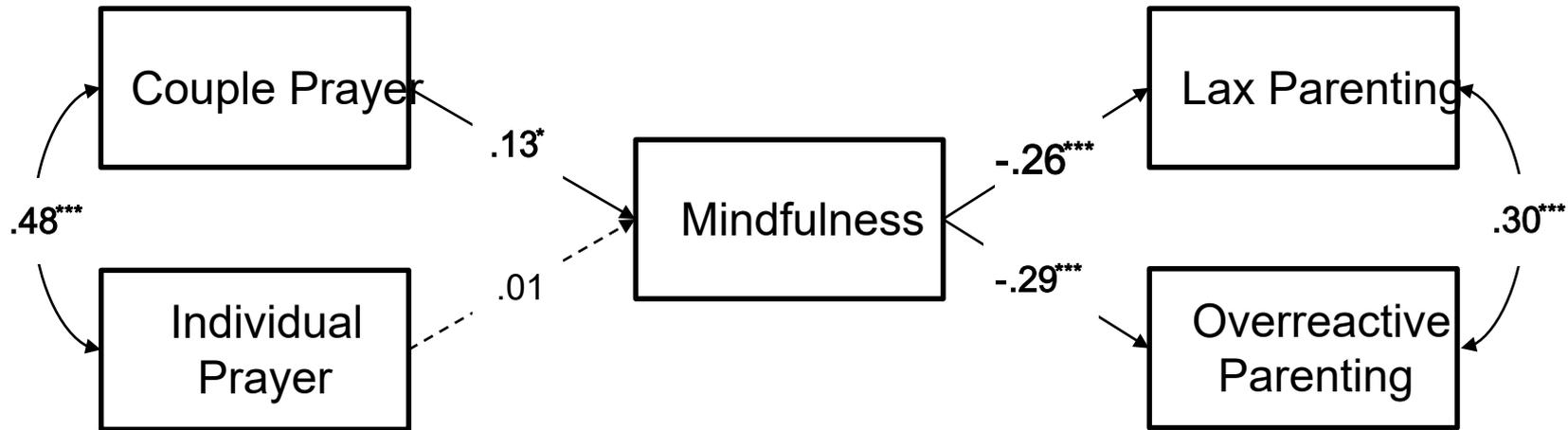


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- Couple prayer likely has a more salient influence on parenting than individual prayer (see Luhrmann & Morgan, 2012)
- Couples that pray together tend to more successfully avoid negative parenting behaviors
- Mindfulness acts as the mediating process that enables couples to become better parents.



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LIMITATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

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- ▶ Positive parenting practices
- ▶ Single item prayer indicators



LIMITATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

- Limitations / Future directions
- Implications: Couples who experience distress in their parenting may consider couple prayer as a way to increase levels of mindfulness and, through mindfulness, parenting quality



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