COUPLES THAT PRAY TOGETHER . . . ARE BETTER PARENTS?

Exploring Mindfulness as a Mediator between Couple Prayer and Parenting

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PARENTING BEHAVIORS

LAX & OVERREACTIVE PARENTING

- 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)

CHILD OUTCOMES

- 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, 1998)
- Also associated with conduct and academic problems (Leung, Lau, & Lam, 1998)
PRAYER

- Important resource for religious individuals (Ossin 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 (Knabb, 2012; Luhrmann-Vorgain, 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 is a technique for individuals to focus on the present in a non-judgmental 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 (n = 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>U.S. (n=258; 129 couples)</th>
<th>Canada (n=218; 109 couples)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married (%)</td>
<td>88.8</td>
<td>81.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female (%)</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>53.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White (%)</td>
<td>62.4</td>
<td>86.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No High School</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Diploma</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate or Trade degree</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's Degree</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>34.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate or Professional Degree</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Income in USD (SD)</td>
<td>$78,080 (70,656)</td>
<td>$62,112 (59,971)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (SD)</td>
<td>36.5 (9.7)</td>
<td>37.7 (11.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Duration (SD)</td>
<td>11.0 (8.0)</td>
<td>12.1 (8.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent in Same-Sex Relationship</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>19.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Children &lt;18 in home</td>
<td>1.98 (1.56)</td>
<td>1.77 (.97)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of Children in the Home; M (SD)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oldest Child</td>
<td>9.52 (5.67)</td>
<td>10.40 (5.71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youngest Child</td>
<td>6.48 (5.29)</td>
<td>7.11 (5.71)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 $\alpha$ ranged from .92 to .95

Parenting Quality
- Parenting Scale (Arnold et al., 1993)
- Overreactivity & Laxness Subscales
- Cronbach's $\alpha$ 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 $\alpha$ ranged from .92 to .94)
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)
Notes N=476. Child difficulty, income, and gender were included as a control variables in the model. Model fit: $\chi^2 (5) = 2.284$, $n.s$ TLI = 1.060; RMSEA = .000; SRMR = .009
Individual and couple prayer are qualitatively different
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Individual and couple prayer are qualitatively different. Couple prayer likely has a more salient influence on parenting (through mindfulness) than individual prayer (see Luhrmann & Morgaț 2012).
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- Stress reduction/management
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- Stress reduction/management

DISCUSSION

- Individual and couple prayer are qualitatively different
- Couple prayer likely has a more salient influence on parenting than individual prayer (see Luhrmann & Morgain, 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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- Data are not longitudinal
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- Positive parenting practices
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- Positive parenting practices
- Single item prayer indicators
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.


Brown


Special thanks to SlidesCarnival for the slides template.