



Family Relations: Interdisciplinary Journal of Applied Family Studies

“Together, We’re Strong: A Qualitative Study of Happy, Enduring African-American Marriages,” by Marks et al.

Religion, Other Factors Contribute to Successful African-American Marriages *Spousal Commitment, Faith, and Communication Key to Enduring Relationships*

Baton Rouge, La. – April XX, 2008 – A new study in the journal *Family Relations* reveals that unity, religion, and communication are vital to the success of African-American marriages.

Researchers led by Loren D. Marks, PhD, of Louisiana State University, conducted 30 in depth interviews with happily married urban African American couples, who had been together an average of 26 years. . Such couples tended to be rare in their economically stressed communities. As opposed to offering opinions and thoughts, participants were asked to respond to questions by telling stories about their lived experiences. Interviews were digitally recorded and then analyzed line-by-line, identifying prominent, recurring themes and concepts in the interview data.

The reported challenges to marriage were much like those experienced by families more generally in the U.S., including making time for family, balancing the demands of work and family-related stress, and providing needed support to extended family. These challenges were often overcome by relying heavily on a committed spouse. Participants mentioned their spouses as a primary source of strength during difficult times. Most couples spoke of turning to God as well, often through prayer or faith. Communication, unity, and trust were other important strategies used by couples to resolve conflict—displaying “effective management” of differences.

“We need to know more about why things go right to ground intervention and educational efforts, in contrast to a ‘deficit perspective’ that emphasizes problems,” the authors state. “In addition to the potential of strengths-based research to inform family life education, our findings confirm that policy makers and non-profit agents cannot assume a ‘one size fits all’ approach to programs that promote marriage formation.”

A premier, applied journal of family studies, *Family Relations* is mandatory reading for family scholars and all professionals who work with families, including: family practitioners, educators, marriage and family therapists, researchers, and social policy specialists. The journal's content emphasizes family research with implications for intervention, education, and public policy, always publishing original, innovative and interdisciplinary works with specific recommendations for practice. *Family Relations* is published on behalf of the National Council on Family Relations, www.ncfr.org. For more information, please visit www.blackwell-synergy.com/loi/fare.