

Rx for marital success: Worship together

February 17, 2006

Posted: 2/17/06

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Religion News Service

ANN ARBOR, Mich. (RNS)—Husbands and wives who attend religious services together are less likely to divorce, new research from the University of Michigan shows.

The study, conducted by researchers connected to the Institute for Social Research, examined how religion affected the risk of divorce for both black and white couples in the first seven years of marriage. Data came from 373 couples initially interviewed in 1986, their first year of marriage, as part of the Early Years of Marriage project at the university.

“The findings suggest that the most effective intervention strategies for dealing with marital instability and divorce are those that consider gender and race,” said Edna Brown, the paper’s lead author.

Black couples are at higher risk of divorce than whites, the study found. But it also found education a protective factor against divorce for wives, and income a protective factor for husbands.

Regardless of race, however, couples who attended religious services

together were less likely to divorce.

Other aspects of faith, such as frequency of attendance or importance of faith, didn't influence the risk of divorce.

“Faithfulness and integrity have been on the agenda of many faith communities, and that's value added to marriage,” said George Lambrides, an American Baptist chaplain at the University of Michigan Hospitals. Exposure to faith communities is a form of continuing education, Lambrides added.

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