

UNDERSTANDING HOW YOUNG HIGH FUNCTIONING AFRICAN AMERICAN
WOMEN PERCEIVE MARRIAGE AND THEIR THOUGHTS ABOUT REMAINING
SINGLE

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(ABSTRACT)

The number of African American women who have never married has increased significantly. This is an ethnographic study of eight Young High Functioning (YHF) African American women from the Washington, D.C. and New York City metropolitan areas. Six of the women participated in focus groups and two were individually interviewed to understand how they perceive marriage and their thoughts about being single. YHF is defined as women who are 25-35 years old, have at least a bachelor's degree and make at least \$35,000. All of the eight women had never married. The six major themes that emerged in the course of the study were: perceptions of marriage, expectations for balancing work and family, criteria for a perfect mate, dating experiences, the African American family and spirituality. While much of the literature on the decline in marriage among African Americans focuses on the sex ratio of males to females, these YHF African American women were much more concerned about the eligibility of the men in the dating pool than the ratio of males to females. They are looking for mates who share their core values of spirituality, goal oriented, family oriented and they are looking for supportive partners.

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