ABSTRACT

AN ANALYSIS OF COMMITMENT IN AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES USING THE INVESTMENT MODEL

by Tiffany Lynne McDowell

This project seeks to address how SES, length of relationship, age, and relationship status are associated with satisfaction level, quality of alternatives, and investment size in explaining African American (AA) men’s level of commitment to their relationships. The goal was to assess factors that are influential in affecting the strength of commitment of AA males in intimate relationships. The Investment Model of Commitment was used for this study. The model asserts that an individual’s commitment to a partner is positively related to satisfaction and investment level, but negatively related to quality of alternatives. Results suggest satisfaction level was the only variable significant in explaining commitment. A second set of regressions was performed to explore the differences between married and cohabiting men. Limitations and implications for further research and practice are discussed.
AN ANALYSIS OF COMMITMENT IN AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES USING THE INVESTMENT MODEL

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Introduction

Although marriage rates have decreased for the majority of Americans, African Americans have the least likelihood of being married. According to 2002 US Census data, only 33% of African Americans were married, compared with 56.3% of Whites (US Census Bureau, 2002). What has caused such a disparity in marriage rates for African Americans? Fingers have been pointed at the large gender imbalance of African American males to females. High rates of incarceration, drug addiction, and unemployment for African American males have contributed to the prevalence of female-headed households in this community (Davis, Williams, Emerson, & Hourd-Bryant, 2000). A culture with such a gender discrepancy fosters its women to become more self-supportive and less reliant on marriage as a viable option. The African American culture has developed into one characterized by single-parent families, out-of-wedlock births, and higher divorce rates (Dickson, 1993).

The imbalance of African American males to females implies much more than lower rates of marriage or single parents. African American men are able to control the relationship in this circumstance; because they are in such high demand they may hold the emotional power in their relationships (Dickson, 1993). With the numbers balanced in their favor, it would seem that African American men would have an unfair advantage over African American women, leading to suspicion and insecurity in their relationships (Rusbult & Arriaga, 1997). However in such instances, those with greater power usually make relationship decisions based on social norms rather than abusing this power (Rusbult & Arriaga, 1997). The partner with less power may also prevent her own exploitation by promoting her own positives and influencing the man to want to contribute to the maintenance of the relationship (Rusbult & Arriaga, 1997).
Little research has been done in understanding marital well-being of successful and stable African American couples (Broman, 1993). While the percentage of married African Americans is lower than the national average, the percentage of divorced African Americans was only 10.4% in 2002, compared with 10% of whites (US Census Bureau, 2002). This suggests that African Americans are no more likely to get divorced than their white counterparts, yet most of the literature on African American couples focuses on marital instability. A 1993 study by South examined the differences in the desire to marry between African Americans and Whites. The African American males surveyed in the study had a more negative view of marriage than their White counterparts, and were also less desiring of marriage than African American women (South, 1993). The question then becomes, what factors are important to maintain stable African American marriages? And if African American males possess the power to terminate the relationship, why do they choose to stay married?

This project seeks to address the following issues regarding African American relationships: How are socioeconomic status, length of relationship, age, and relationship status associated with satisfaction level, quality of alternatives, and investment size in explaining African American men’s level of commitment to their current relationship?

**Conceptual Framework**

*Interdependence Theory*

Interdependence theory explains interpersonal situations as being shaped by specific needs, thoughts, and motives of each partner in relation to each other (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003). Borrowing concepts from exchange theory, interdependence theory focuses on the processes used to determine commitment to relationships, specifically the degree to which attracting powers overwhelm repelling forces (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959).
A relationship can thrive if the outcomes are beneficial and satisfying to the individuals involved. Eventually, dependence on the relationship can occur (Le & Agnew, 2003). Dependence is defined as the extent to which the individual begins to rely on the relationship for fulfillment of important needs (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003).

**Investment Model of Commitment**

The investment model, as proposed by Rusbult (1980, 1983), is theoretically grounded in interdependence theory in that it examines the processes by which individuals sustain their interpersonal relationships. The primary goal of the investment model is to predict the degree of commitment to and satisfaction in interpersonal relationships. It is based on the assumption that individuals are generally motivated to maximize rewards and minimize costs (Rusbult, 1980), as stated earlier. Rewards are weighed against costs to determine the outcome gained from a relationship. Satisfaction level, quality of alternatives, and investment size are theorized to be the three factors that influence commitment level (Rusbult, 1980).

*Satiation level.* Outcomes are compared to a personal standard for what are considered to be appropriate outcomes for a relationship. This concept is defined as “comparison level” (White & Klein, 2002). Satisfaction level is a function of the comparison level and current outcomes. If an individual considers the current outcomes to outweigh the comparison level outcomes, that individual will be satisfied in the relationship (Le & Agnew, 2003). Depending on the personal experiences of the individual, satisfaction in a relationship is a completely objective assessment. It is proposed that as satisfaction level increases, level of commitment will increase.

*Quality of alternatives.* The availability of attractive alternatives is significant to understanding commitment. The perception that other alternatives to the current
relationship are more appealing, including not being in a relationship, may influence an individual to choose to leave the current relationship (Le & Agnew, 2003). Even if there are many known alternatives, the individual may not see them as attractive as the current relationship, so the individual will choose to stay (Rusbult, 1980). It is proposed that as quality of alternatives increases, level of commitment will decrease.

Investment size. According to the investment model, commitment increases as the number and value of investments made in the relationship increase (Rusbult, 1980). Investments are those resources attached to the relationship that would be lost if the relationship ended (Le & Agnew, 2003). Extrinsic investments can include material possessions, social networks, or social status acquired as a result of the relationship. Intrinsic investments are those that are directly put into the relationship, such as time, money, emotional attachment, and personal disclosures (Rusbult, 1980). Neither type of investment can be transported from relationship to relationship and would be lost if the relationship was lost. It is proposed that as investment size increases, level of commitment will increase.

Expansion of Investment Model

Socioeconomic status. There are many studies that point to the issue of economic viability in African American marriages. African American men who have higher educational attainment, employment status, and future earning potential are seen as more suitable and desirable husbands (Bulcroft & Bulcroft, 1993). The likelihood of being married increases as full-time employment and education level increase for all adult men (Sassler & Schoen, 1999). Overall, married men with higher incomes are less likely to separate or divorce (Nakosteen & Zimmer, 1997); similarly, relatively prosperous African American men are less likely to get divorced (Glick, 1997; James, 1998).
In Broman’s 1993 study of race as a predictor of marital well-being, those couples with higher spousal support and financial security had higher feelings of marital well-being. African Americans were found to have an overall lower marital well-being, but greater spousal support and financial security increased levels of marital well-being (Broman, 1993). This is important because it implies that if each person feels comfortable with the amount of support from his or her spouse and the couple’s financial situation, that person will be more satisfied in their relationship. This idea has been reflected in other research as well.

Lawson and Thompson (1995) conducted a qualitative study to explore the reasons African Americans experience marital dissatisfaction from the perspective of the African American male. They conducted interviews with divorced African American males and were able to identify an important theme: financial strain in the marriage. This is similar to Broman’s (1993) findings because the men tended to feel that loss of employment and their wives’ lack of support during these periods put undue strain on their marriages, causing them to feel less satisfied (Lawson & Thompson, 1995). When examining the literature on the investment model, however, there is little information on how socioeconomic status is related to commitment level. Because economic viability is key to sustaining African American marriages (Glick, 1997), this research expands the original model by also determining the relationship between socioeconomic status and commitment. It is proposed then that those men with higher socioeconomic status will have a higher level of commitment.

Length of relationship. Marriages are most susceptible to divorce in the early years of marriage. After 5 years, approximately 10% of marriages are expected to end in divorce; another 10% (or 20% cumulatively) are divorced by about the tenth year after
marriage (Krieder & Fields, 2001). One could imagine that because African Americans have slightly higher divorce rates than the national average, these percentages would be higher.

Rusbult, Johnson, and Morrow (1986) found that those in longer relationships tended to have higher levels of rewards and investments, and overall stronger commitment. This is largely due to the effect of time invested in a relationship, even as costs increase (Rusbult, 1983). One may experience more costs in a relationship but may feel compelled to remain due to the perceived commitment to the relationship. It is proposed that as length of relationship increases, level of commitment will increase.

Age. Those testing the investment model have not addressed age in association to commitment; however this should be an important factor for African American men. In a study exploring commitment and intimacy for couples at midlife, Carolan and Allen (1999) interviewed couples of various relationship types and lengths. They found that even those who had recently married felt better about their relationships because they felt better about themselves. All of the couples mentioned that since they had entered midlife, they felt more successful and comfortable as individuals, thus strengthening their marriages. As individuals get older, they may start to depend on their spouse for more than emotional support. This is especially true for men. Tucker, Taylor, and Mitchell-Kernan (1993) conducted a study of aged African Americans and found that “older husbands receive more support than they provide, and this support increases with age” (p. S128). This shift may increase a man’s commitment to his marriage because he sees himself as gaining instrumental support. It is proposed that as age increases, commitment will increase.
Relationship status. Another aspect that has not been explored fully is the comparison of relationship commitment for married and cohabiting African Americans. Rusbult, Johnson, and Morrow (1986) conducted a study with married and single people in a serious relationship to determine if the investment model could be generalized according to relationship status. The researchers found that married persons reported poorer quality of alternatives and stronger overall level of commitment than did those persons in dating relationships. The sample used was 95% Caucasian, however, so it is relevant to correlate these findings to an African American sample. It is proposed that African American males who are married will have a greater level of commitment than those who are cohabiting.

Based on the theoretical conceptualization and the literature reviewed, the hypothesis for the proposed study is as follows: (a) African American men with higher satisfaction levels will have higher levels of commitment; (b) African American men with higher quality of alternatives will have lower levels of commitment; (c) African American men with larger investment size will have higher levels of commitment; (d) African American men of higher socioeconomic levels will have higher levels of commitment; (e) African American men who have longer lasting relationships will have higher levels of commitment; (f) African American men who are older will have higher levels of commitment; and (g) African American married men will have higher levels of commitment than those who are cohabiting (See Figure 1).
Figure 1: Concept Model
Method

Participants

The sample for this study included 150 African American men sampled using a convenience sampling technique from various churches with high African American participation. The churches chosen represented different Christian denominations, i.e., Catholic, African Methodist Episcopal, Baptist, and Non-denominational. Males from four churches in the Midwest were invited to participate in the study. The sample was taken from churches because historically the church has been at the center of community involvement for African Americans (Pattillo-McCoy, 1999). The participants were approached during their churches’ bible study or men’s group meeting and were asked to anonymously complete a questionnaire as a part of an effort to study African American relationships. The questionnaire was completed at the beginning of the meeting time. Only those men who described themselves as currently in a married or cohabiting relationship were included in this study. The total sample for this analysis was 132 men.

The participants were evenly distributed between the high school graduate, some college, and college graduate levels (30%, 30%, and 31%, respectively), with 5% having some high school experience and 3% having graduate degrees. The age range was 21 to 62, with an average age of 36.9 years. The majority were married (108), with the average length of total relationship of the total sample being 11.3 years.

Measures

Each participant was instructed to complete a six-page questionnaire containing questions about the participant and aspects of his relationship (see Appendix for questionnaire and consent form). There was a brief demographic section in which
participants were asked about marital status and length of relationship. Participants listed present age on this section as well. Socioeconomic status (SES) was measured by education level. Those with higher levels of education were listed as having higher SES.

The questionnaire included measures of all investment model variables—reward value, cost value, quality of alternatives, satisfaction, and commitment—according to the model developed by Rusbult (1980). Items were rated on a nine-point Likert scale. The responses were averaged to determine the overall value for each variable. The range of possible scores for each variable was 1-9, with higher scores representing higher values for each variable.

Investment size. Investment size was derived using the values for reward value and cost value. There were eight specific items assessing reward value, questionnaire items 1-8. Examples included satisfaction with the partner’s physical attractiveness, intelligence level, sense of humor, activities, and attitudes. Two general items (9 and 10) also assessed rewards of the relationship: “How rewarding do you feel your relationship is for you?” and “Compared to your ideal relationship, how rewarding is your current relationship?” All ten items were averaged to obtain the total reward value. Higher scores indicated higher reward value. Nine specific items assessed costs value associated with the current relationship, questionnaire items 11-19. These included, for example, monetary costs and time constraints related to maintaining the relationship and behavior, attitude, and unattractive qualities of the partner. Two general items (20 and 21) were “How large are the costs to maintain a relationship with your partner?” and “Compared with the costs you feel are normally associated with being in a relationship, how large do you feel the costs are to maintain your current relationship?” Scores for each item were reversed so that higher scores indicated higher costs. All nine items were then averaged.
to determine cost value. Investment size was determined by deriving the difference between reward value and cost value. Higher scores indicated higher investment size.

Quality of alternatives. The five specific items assessing value of alternatives (questionnaire items 22-26) included attractiveness of dating another person or many people other than the current partner and importance of maintaining an exclusive intimate relationship. Two general items (27 and 28) assessing alternative value were “If you were to leave your current relationship and choose to begin a relationship with one person, date many people, or spend time alone, how satisfied would you be with your decision?” and “If you were to leave your current relationship and choose to begin a relationship with one person, date many people, or spend time alone, how satisfied would you be with your decision when compared with your current relationship?” All seven items were averaged to determine quality of alternatives. Higher scores indicated higher quality of alternatives.

Satisfaction level. Satisfaction level was assessed by two specific items (questionnaire items 29 and 30) concerning attraction to current relationship and feelings toward partner. Two general items (31 and 32) assessing satisfaction were “Overall, how satisfied are you with your current relationship?” and “Overall, how close is your current relationship to your ideal relationship?” All four items were averaged to determine satisfaction level. Higher scores indicated higher satisfaction level.

Commitment. Five specific items (questionnaire items 33-37) assessed commitment to the current relationship. These included, for example, likelihood of ending the relationship and attachment to the relationship. One general item (38) was “Overall, how committed are you to your current relationship?” All six items were averaged to determine commitment. Higher scores indicated higher commitment.
Data Analysis

First, a preliminary set of intercorrelations were performed to examine the trends between the variables. STATVIEW statistical software was used to perform a stepwise regression analysis to develop a model of which variables were better predictors of commitment. The assumption behind using this method is that some input variables in a multiple regression do not have an important explanatory effect on the model. If this assumption is true, then it is convenient to keep only the statistically significant variables in the model. There were seven independent variables and one dependent variable. The three original components of the investment model—satisfaction level, quality of alternatives, and investment size—were entered first. The last four independent variables were entered to determine the effect of each on the model.

Results

Mean scores and standard deviations for satisfaction level, quality of alternatives, investment size, and commitment are presented in Table 1. The scores for all participants are presented, along with the scores for married men and cohabiting men.
### Table 1
**Means and Standard Deviation of Regression Variables for African American Males**
(N=132)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Total (N = 132)</th>
<th>Married (n = 108)</th>
<th>Cohabiting (n = 4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment (dependent variable)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction level</td>
<td>7.74</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>7.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of alternatives</td>
<td>7.55</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>7.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment size</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>3.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>2.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of relationship</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>3.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>11.27</td>
<td>9.41</td>
<td>13.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship status</td>
<td>36.98</td>
<td>11.51</td>
<td>39.49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Predictors of Commitment**

Before multivariate results were considered, the intercorrelations among the predictors were examined (Table 2). The pattern indicates that the three original model variables—satisfaction level, quality of alternatives, and investment size—are associated strongly with commitment ($p < .001$).
When exploring commitment among all participants, the seven independent measures accounted for 38% of the adjusted variance in commitment \([F(1, 105) = 67.14, p < .001]\) (Table 3). Satisfaction level was the only variable that was significant in explaining commitment in the model. Quality of alternatives, investment size, SES, length of relationship, age, and relationship status did not uniquely contribute to this model of commitment.

A second set of regressions was performed to explore the differences between married and cohabiting men. When applied only to married men, the six remaining independent variables accounted for 38% of the total adjusted variance in commitment \([F(1, 81) = 51.95, p < .001]\). As in the previous analysis, satisfaction level was the only variable that was included in the model.

### Table 2
Zero-Order Intercorrelation Coefficients of Regression Variables for African American Males \((N = 132)\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Commitment (dependent variable)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.63**</td>
<td>-.37**</td>
<td>.44**</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Satisfaction level</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>-.37**</td>
<td>.66**</td>
<td>-.17*</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.18*</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Quality of alternatives</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>-.67**</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Investment size</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.18*</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. SES</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Length of relationship</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.64**</td>
<td>.41**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Age</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.48**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Relationship status</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05, **p < .001*
When applied to cohabiting men, the six independent variables accounted for 62% of the total adjusted variance \(F(2, 21) = 17.15, p < .001\). Two of the variables were included in the model: satisfaction level, which explained 51% of the adjusted variance \(F(2, 21) = 28.18, p < .001\) and quality of alternatives, which explained 8% of the adjusted variance \(F(2, 21) = 4.56, p < .001\).

### Table 3

**Stepwise Regression Beta Weights, Standard Errors, F Scores, R, Adjusted \(R^2\), and Semipartial Correlations: Predictor Variables on Commitment for African American Males (\(N = 132\))**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Total ((N = 132))</th>
<th>Married ((n = 108))</th>
<th>Cohabiting ((n = 24))</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(\beta)</td>
<td>(SE)</td>
<td>(sr^2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction level</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.63*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Alternatives</td>
<td>-.39</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>-.29*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(R^2 = .39\)  
Adjusted \(R^2 = .63\)  
\(R = .63\)  
\(F(1, 105) = 67.14^*\)

\(R^2 = .39\)  
Adjusted \(R^2 = .38\)  
\(R = .63\)  
\(F(1, 81) = 51.95^*\)

\(R^2 = .62\)  
Adjusted \(R^2 = .58\)  
\(R = .79\)  
\(F(2,21) = 17.15^*\)

\(^*p < .001\)

### Discussion

As the number of divorces increases, family professionals need to continue to focus on strengthening and maintaining intact African American families. Both researchers and practitioners who are interested in promoting family or “family-like” units would benefit from a better understanding of factors that enhance commitment. The identification of information that encourages long-term intimacy is needed, given the fact that African Americans desire to be in intimate and committed relationships (Davis et al., 2000).
The goal of the current study was to assess the factors that are influential in affecting the strength of commitment of African American males in intimate relationships. The Investment Model of Commitment was used because it seemed to be conceptually well suited to the goal of the study. The model asserts that an individual’s commitment to his partner is positively related to satisfaction and investment level, but negatively related to quality of alternatives. Previously, researchers using the Investment Model have not used African American males as the primary group of focus. Additionally, the factors of SES, age, marital status, and length of relationship were included to expand the original investment model and to assess the effect of these factors on commitment.

Overall, neither the original investment model nor the demographic variables were found to significantly predict commitment for this sample. Satisfaction was the only variable that was proven to significantly predict commitment (Figure 2), which corresponds with previous research (Rusbult, Johnson, & Morrow, 1986). A review of the intercorrelation coefficients showed that the original Investment Model variables—satisfaction level, quality of alternatives, and investment size—were significantly related to commitment, confirming previous research. SES, length of relationship, age, and marital status were not found to be significantly correlated to commitment, nor did they add to the explanatory value of the model.

In previous studies based on the investment model, satisfaction has been found to be a significantly better predictor of commitment (Le & Agnew, 2003). Quality of alternatives and investment level are factors that are external to the relationship, while satisfaction is an internal component based on the fulfillment of the individual’s own relationship ideals. Satisfaction alone, however, provides an incomplete explanation of
relationship commitment. This is an important finding, though, because research has found that those who remain married report significantly higher satisfaction than those who eventually divorce (Broman, 2002).

**Figure 2: Empirical Model**

An interesting effect was discovered in the data concerned the regression model for cohabiting African American men. Though the regression model for married men mirrored the initial model (see Figure 3), both satisfaction level and quality of alternatives were found to be significant in the regression model for commitment among cohabiting men (Figure 4). This suggests that those who are cohabiting feel more committed to the relationship if they perceive fewer alternatives. This may be due to individuals in this type of relationship not feeling as completely committed as their married counterparts, so they may be more aware of possible alternative partners. It may also be difficult to accurately measure investment model concepts for married individuals because investment and satisfaction may be at the maximum level (and alternatives at the minimum), providing a biased view of marital commitment (Le & Agnew, 2003).

According to Treas and Giesen (2000), cohabiters are more likely than their married counterparts to engage in infidelity due to less investment to the relationship. However, committed and satisfied individuals not only think less about alternatives, they devalue the attractiveness of those alternatives over time (Stanley, Markman, & Whitton,
2002). Stafford, Kline, and Rankin (2004) found that there is a decrease in commitment over time for cohabiting individuals, so it is reasonable to assume that attractiveness of alternatives will play a large role in their overall relationship commitment. Much of the research on cohabitation based on the investment model focused on undergraduate participants whose average relationship length was not very long (Le & Agnew, 2003). Further exploration of this model using long-term cohabiting relationships is necessary to completely explain the dynamics of this growing relationship style.

**Limitations**

There are a number of limitations for this study. First, the sample design was one of convenience. The sample was selected from churches, which may have had an effect on the responses to the questionnaire. The men were participants of men’s Bible study
groups, so they may be more likely to have higher levels of commitment to their relationship based on spiritual or religious beliefs. According to Larson and Goltz (1989), church attendance is directly related to marital and family commitment. The men sampled in the current study may not represent the general population of African American men in intimate relationships. Future research could adjust the sample when replicating this study. Additionally, the sample size for the cohabiting men was perhaps too small for the statistical analysis employed. A larger sample of men in cohabiting relationships could confirm the findings of this study.

Another limitation could be the questionnaire itself. Some of the participants had questions about the meaning of a few of the items, which may have caused them to not answer the item accurately. The high intercorrelation among the variables in the investment model could also be problematic, indicating a high degree of multicollinearity. The input variables may be as correlated with each other as they are with the dependent variable. If this is the case, the presence of one variable in the model may mask the effect of another variable.

Implications for Future Research and Practice

Demographics alone do not tell the entire story of African American familial and romantic relationships. Interpersonal behaviors are also important in building an understanding of healthy relationships. The attempt here was to avoid addressing African American familial relationships in a negative way, but rather to assess positive aspects by exploring what factors are essential to maintaining these relationships. It is known that African Americans are less likely to be married (US Census Bureau, 2002), but they are also more disapproving of divorce than their White counterparts (Broman, 2002). More
research needs to be conducted on African Americans’ marital satisfaction and other factors that relate to remaining committed to marriage.

This project seeks to address the following issues regarding African American relationships: How are socioeconomic status, length of relationship, age, and relationship status associated with satisfaction level, quality of alternatives, and investment size in explaining African American men’s level of commitment to their current relationship?
References


Appendix

July 8, 2004

Dear Participant:

You are invited to participate in a study of African American relationships. I will ask you to complete a questionnaire that was designed to investigate how African American men view their relationships. The questionnaire should take about 15-30 minutes to complete. The first section asks some brief questions for demographic purposes. In the second section, you are asked to answer the questions based on your current relationship. You are to circle the X on the line that best describes your answer. The questionnaires are completely anonymous. Please do not write your name on the questionnaire in order to assure anonymity and confidentiality. Your identity will remain unknown by me and all data collected will be kept confidential and only reported as data found as a result of this study.

Completion of the attached questionnaire implies your consent to participate in this study. Please remember, your participation is voluntary and you may at any time choose not to participate or refuse to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. You will not be asked to perform any task that exposes you to risks beyond those of everyday life. The scientific benefit of this study is to further research that promotes healthy African American family relationships. Information from this study will contribute to the understanding of how African Americans relate as couples, which may be useful to other family professionals to develop programs or other means of helping or strengthening African American families.

If you have any questions regarding the study, please feel free to contact me at (513) 529-2151 or by email at mcdowel@muohio.edu. You may also contact my Faculty Advisor, Dr. Charles Hennon at (513) 529-4908 or hennoncb@muohio.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Office for the Advancement of Research and Scholarship at 513-529-3734 or humansubjects@muohio.edu.

I am currently a graduate student at Miami University. Thank you for your participation in this thesis project, which is a requirement to complete my Master of Science Degree in Family & Child Studies.

Sincerely,

Tiffany L. McDowell
Graduate Student

Section I: Please place an X in the appropriate box.
1. Gender
   - Male
   - Female

2. Marital Status
   - Single
   - Married
   - Divorced
   - Cohabiting
   - Widowed

   **If married, please continue to question 3. If cohabiting, please continue to question 4. If not, please stop and return survey.**

3. How long have you been married? __________________________
   3a. First marriage?
      - Yes
      - No
   3b. If no, please list reason of termination of first marriage:

4. How long have you been in this relationship? ______________

5. Number of children born from this relationship ____________________

6. Ethnicity
   - African American
   - Latino
   - Bi-Racial
   - Other, please specify___________
   - Asian or Asian American
   - White
   - Native American

7. Ethnicity of partner
   - African American
   - Latino
   - Bi-Racial
   - Other, please specify___________
   - Asian or Asian American
   - White
   - Native American

8. Age _____________

9. Education level
   - Graduate degree
   - 2 yr. Degree/Some college
   - Some high school
   - College: 4 years or more
   - High school diploma/GED
   - Less than high school

10. Annual individual income
    - $50,000 or more
    - $35,000 to 49,999
    - $25,000 to 34,999
    - $20,000 to 24,999
    - $15,000 to 19,999
    - $10,000 to 14,999
    - $5,000 to 9,999
    - Under $5,000

11. Please list your occupation: _________________________________
Section II: Please answer the following questions based on your current relationship. For each question, there is a range of answers from not at all to extremely. Please circle the X that best indicates your answer.

1. How satisfied are you with the physical attractiveness of your partner? X----X—--X—--X--—X--—X--—X--—X--—X
   Not satisfied at all                  Extremely satisfied

2. How satisfied are you with the intelligence level of your partner? X—--X—--X—--X--—X--—X--—X--—X--—X
   Not satisfied at all                  Extremely satisfied

3. How satisfied are you with the sense of humor of your partner? X—--X—--X—--X--—X--—X--—X--—X--—X
   Not satisfied at all                  Extremely satisfied

4. How satisfied are you with your ability to coordinate activities with your partner? X—--X—--X—--X--—X--—X--—X--—X--—X
   Not satisfied at all                  Extremely satisfied

5. How satisfied are you with your sexual relationship with your partner? X—--X—--X—--X--—X--—X--—X--—X--—X
   Not satisfied at all                  Extremely satisfied

6. How similar are the needs of your partner to your own needs? X—--X—--X—--X--—X--—X--—X--—X--—X
   Not similar at all                   Extremely similar

7. How similar are the attitude and background of your partner to your own attitude and background? X—--X—--X—--X--—X--—X--—X--—X--—X
   Not similar at all                   Extremely similar

8. How pleasant is the personality of your partner? X—--X—--X—--X--—X--—X--—X--—X--—X
   Not pleasant at all                  Extremely pleasant
9. How rewarding do you feel your relationship is for you?  
X—--X—--X—--X--—X--—X--—X--—X--—X  
   X  
   Not rewarding at all   Extremely rewarding

10. Compared to your ideal relationship, how rewarding is your current relationship for you?  
X—--X—--X—--X--—X--—X--—X--—X--—X  
   X  
   Not rewarding at all   Extremely rewarding

11. As a result of your current relationship, how many enjoyable activities have you had to give up?  
X—--X—--X—--X--—X--—X--—X--—X--—X  
   X  
   None   A few   Many

12. As a result of your current relationship, how many monetary costs have you experienced?  
X—--X—--X—--X--—X--—X--—X--—X--—X  
   X  
   None   A few   Many

13. As a result of your current relationship, how many time constraints have been placed on you?  
X—--X—--X—--X--—X--—X--—X--—X--—X  
   X  
   None   A few   Many

14. How many behaviors does your partner display that you find embarrassing?  
X—--X—--X—--X--—X--—X--—X--—X--—X  
   X  
   None   A few   Many

15. How many attitudes does your partner display that you find unattractive?  
X—--X—--X—--X--—X--—X--—X--—X--—X  
   X  
   None   A few   Many

16. How many personal qualities does your partner display that you find unattractive?  
X—--X—--X—--X--—X--—X--—X--—X--—X  
   X  
   None   A few   Many

17. How many agreements does your partner fail to live up to?  
X—--X—--X—--X--—X--—X--—X--—X--—X  
   X  
   None   A few   Many
18. How many times have you experienced conflict with your partner?

None                          A few
Many

19. How many times has your partner showed a lack of faithfulness?

None                          A few
Many

20. How large are the costs to maintain a relationship with your partner?

Not large at all
Extremely large

21. Compared with the costs you feel are normally associated with being in a relationship, how large do you feel the costs are to maintain your current relationship?

Not large at all
Extremely large

22. How attractive is the prospect of dating another person other than your partner?

Not attractive at all
Extremely attractive

23. How attractive is the prospect of dating many different people other than your partner?

Not attractive at all
Extremely attractive

24. How difficult would it be for you to replace your current partner?

Not difficult at all
Extremely difficult

25. How important is maintaining an exclusive intimate relationship?

Not important at all
Extremely important

26. What was your level of happiness before your involvement with your current partner?

Not happy at all
Extremely happy
27. If you were to leave your current relationship and choose to begin a relationship with one person, date many different people, or spend time alone, how satisfied would you expect to be with your decision?

X—--X—--X—--X--—X--—X--—X--—X--—

Not satisfied at all                   Extremely satisfied

28. If you were to leave your current relationship and choose to begin a relationship with one person, date many different people, or spend time alone, how satisfied would you expect to be with your decision when compared with your current relationship?

X—--X—--X—--X--—X--—X--—X--—X--—

Not satisfied at all                   Extremely satisfied

29. How attracted are you to your current relationship?

X—--X—--X—--X--—X--—X--—X--—X--—

Not attracted at all                   Extremely attracted

30. How positive are your feelings toward your partner?

X—--X—--X—--X--—X--—X--—X--—X--—

Not positive at all                   Extremely positive

31. Overall, how satisfied are you with your current partner?

X—--X—--X—--X--—X--—X--—X--—X--—

Not satisfied at all                   Extremely satisfied

32. Overall, how close is your current relationship to your ideal relationship?

X—--X—--X—--X--—X--—X--—X--—X--—

Not close at all                   Extremely close

33. How likely is it that you will end your current relationship in the near future?

X—--X—--X—--X--—X--—X--—X--—X--—

Not likely at all                   Extremely likely

34. How long do you expect your current relationship to last?

X—--X—--X—--X--—X--—X--—X--—X--—

Not long at all                   Extremely long
35. How long do you want your current relationship to last? X—--X—--X—--X--—X--—X--—X--—X--— X
Not long at all Extremely long

36. How attached are you to your current relationship? X—--X—--X—--X--—X--—X--—X--—X--— X
Not attached at all Extremely attached

37. How attractive would any alternatives have to be for you to consider ending your current relationship? X—--X—--X—--X--—X--—X--—X--—X--— X
Not attractive at all Extremely attractive

38. Overall, how committed are you to your current relationship? X—--X—--X—--X--—X--—X--—X--—X--— X
Not committed at all Extremely committed

Thank you for your time in completing this survey!