

**COMMITMENT IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN RELATIONSHIPS**

by

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**Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the  
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
MASTER OF SCIENCE  
in  
Family and Child Development**

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**May 6, 1998  
Blacksburg, VA**

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## (ABSTRACT)

This study investigated commitment in the romantic relationships of 16 African-American men and women, eight men and eight women, aged 20-23. Ten participants were currently in a committed relationship and six participants were not currently in a committed relationship at the time of the study. Interdependence theory guided this qualitative study to examine how participants defined commitment, what they expected from their partners, sources that were instrumental in their development of expectations of how a partner should behave in a committed relationship, and the meanings they attached to relational alternatives, investments, rewards, costs, and barriers. Results indicated that eight relational themes defined commitment: exclusivity, honesty, being supportive, spending time, communicating, getting respect, trust, and love. In addition, two types of commitment were identified, short-term and long-term. From this sample, there was a connection between the definition of commitment and the meanings attached to relational alternatives, investments, rewards, costs, and barriers. The sources of how a partner should behave served as the context for the definition of commitment and meanings attached to alternatives, investments, rewards, costs, and barriers. Suggestions for future research on close relationships among African-Americans are discussed.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To God -- I thank you for guiding my steps.

To Mom -- I did it again. I know that you are proud. I love you!!!!

To my family -- I appreciate your love, support, and guidance. I love you!!!

To Chiquita Hudson, Marguerite Harper Scott, Freddi Hairston, Jackie Butler

Blackwell, Linda Edmonds Turner, and Linda Adams -- Thank you for being the first Black women at Virginia Tech. You paved the way for me.

To Gloria, my research partner and advisor -- I could not have done it without you. I look forward to working with you on future projects.

To Althea --Thanks for your guidance, support, and friendship. You are a God-send.

To Mark--Thanks for being supportive of me and my research.

To Betty --Thanks for sharing your knowledge of NUD\*IST with me.

To Butch --Thanks for the use of your electronic equipment.

To Laurie and Penny --Thanks for transcribing my tapes. Your job made my job easier.

To Elaine, Holly, Sharonda, Chandra, Zaneta, and Korey --Thanks for keeping me grounded. I cherish our friendship.

To the Women's Center--Thanks for the use of the conference rooms for my interviews.

To my participants --Thanks for sharing your lives with me. I am forever grateful.

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