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# Examination of the African-American Father-Daughter Relationship: Application of the Marschack Interaction Method

Amber N. Thornton  
*Wright State University*

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**EXAMINATION OF THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN FATHER-DAUGHTER  
RELATIONSHIP: APPLICATION OF THE MARSCHACK INTERACTION  
METHOD**

**PROFESSIONAL DISSERTATION**

**SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY**

**OF**

**THE SCHOOL OF PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGY  
WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY**

**BY**

**AMBER NICOLE THORNTON, Psy.M.**

**IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
OF  
DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY**

**Dayton, Ohio**

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**COMMITTEE CHAIR: James E. Dobbins, Ph.D., ABPP**

**Committee Member: Janece Warfield, Psy.D., RPT-S**

**Committee Member: La Pearl Logan Winfrey, Ph.D.**

**WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**SCHOOL OF PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGY**

June 20, 2013

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE DISSERTATION PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY **AMBER NICOLE THORNTON** ENTITLED **EXAMINATION OF THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN FATHER-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIP: APPLICATION OF THE MARSCHACK INTERACTION METHOD** BE ACCEPTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY.

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James E. Dobbins, Ph.D., ABPP  
Dissertation Director

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La Pearl Logan Winfrey, Ph.D.  
Associate Dean

## Abstract

Early research on the Black family implied an enormous lack of African-American father presence and involvement among African-American fathers. However, more current research negates those findings by highlighting the contributions African-American fathers make when parenting their children (Coley, 2003; Cooper, 2009; Mandara, Murray & Joyner, 2005). In spite of facing unique psychological and social challenges, such as disproportionate levels of poverty, and race related social barriers, such as the *invisibility syndrome* (Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 2000), researchers who have studied the African-American father-daughter dyad have discovered that this relationship has many benefits for African-American girls, including cognitive and academic enhancements, reductions in early sexual behaviors, development of gender identity and increased prosocial behaviors with peers (Black, Dubowitz & Starr, 1999; Coley, 2003; Cooper, 2009; Mandara, Murray & Joyner, 2005). The majority of the research that acknowledges African-American fathering typically involves fathers and sons. Critically, the father-daughter dyad is generally overlooked in psychological investigations of parenting and child development literature. Therefore, this dissertation will examine the African-American father-daughter relationship through application of a dyadic parent-child assessment method called the Marschack Interaction Method. Use of this method will determine the impact that African-American fathers have on their daughters' social and emotional development. An exploratory multiple case study design was developed that observed five African-American father-daughter dyads. Their participation required completion of the following instruments: *Multidimensional Parenting Inventory (MDPI)*, an instrument that has been used in family intervention programs to determine parenting

styles. *Achenbach Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL)*, to provide insight into the daughter's behaviors and overall temperament, through the father's perspective.

*Marschack Interaction Method (MIM)*, a structured technique used to assess parent-child relationships. Results from this study provide information regarding the amounts of *structure, challenge, engagement, and nurturance* provided by African-American fathers to their biological or step-daughters, as well as common trends found throughout their interactions. Suggestions for future research studies are also provided.

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## **Dedication**

This work is dedicated to my father, Lewis Thornton, and my brother, Joshua Thornton. Both of you exemplify the strength, love, and beauty found within African-American fatherhood.

Daddy, thank you for being so strong, for your protection, and for always loving me. You are my hero. Thank you for showing Joshua how to be a father to his daughter.

Joshua, you make fatherhood look so easy! I love watching you as a father and I am so proud of you. I look forward to watching your relationship with your daughter continue to blossom. You will be great!

## Chapter 1: Literature Review

### Fathers and Father Involvement

There have been many interpretations of “fathers,” as several scholars have attempted to conceptualize fatherhood (Doherty, Kouneski, & Erickson, 1998; Marsiglio, Day, & Lamb, 2000; Lamb & Tamis-Lemonda, 2004; Goodsell & Meldrum, 2010). The term *responsible fathering* has been coined by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. According to Doherty et al. (1998), the term suggests a set of norms for evaluating fathers and also conveys a moral meaning about what it means to be a responsible versus an irresponsible father. Doherty et al. (1998) has categorized four major domains that reflect responsible fathering: 1) establishment of legal paternity, 2) presence of the nonresidential father, 3) economic support for children from the nonresidential father and 4) an adequate level of involvement from the residential father. In addition, Marsiglio et al. (2000) highlights the conventional versus nonconventional approaches to fatherhood. Conventional approaches, which are more acknowledged within the literature, generally involve the biological father who is married to and living with the mother. The nonconventional approaches to fatherhood are often overlooked, but have been found to be just as impactful (Doherty et al., 1998; Lamb & Tamis-Lemonda, 2004). These include divorced biological fathers, unmarried nonresidential fathers, and adoptive fathers, step fathers, or informal father figures (Marsiglio et al., 2000).

“Father involvement” is another ambiguous term found within the fatherhood literature that has been conceptualized in many ways. Most of the research focuses on three major themes: engagement, accessibility and responsibility (Marsiglio et al., 2000; Lamb & Tamis-Lemonda, 2004; Pleck, & Masciadrelli, 2004). Father engagement refers to direct contact between a father and child, while father accessibility focuses on the father’s potential availability for direct or indirect interaction (Pleck, & Masciadrelli, 2004). Lastly Pleck, & Masciadrelli (2004) defines father responsibility as “...the role father takes in making sure the child is taken care of and arranging for resources to be available for the child.” While these are three distinct components of father involvement, Watson (2003) states that father involvement is best conceptualized as a continuum that integrates each component. The continuum begins with a biological commitment, and ends with a “bio-psycho-social commitment” (p.15), which involves biological, psychological and social development of the child. Watson (2003) explains that father absence is most usually credited to the biological father who is emotionally and financially uninvolved. Furthermore, biological, psychological and social father involvement fluctuates along a continuum. For example, a father may be socially and psychologically involved with a child, but may not be the biological father. Also, a biological may be psychologically involved but unable to provide social commitment due to a nonresidential status.

The level of involvement demonstrated by a father has many determinants. Doherty et al. (1998) says that the two main structural threats to father involvement are nonmarital childbearing and divorce, which significantly alters father engagement and accessibility. Aside from structural threats, Lamb & Tamis-Lemonda (2004)

acknowledges five other determinants of father involvement. First, Lamb & Tamis-Lemonda (2004) states that a father's motivation to parent greatly influences his level of father involvement. Cook, Jones, Dick, & Singh (2005) states that a father's prior expectations of parenting impact his later father involvement. In other words, if the father holds negative expectations of fatherhood or likewise, does not hold any expectations of fatherhood, then he is more likely to become less involved as a father. On the other hand, if the father holds positive expectations of fatherhood, then he is more likely to be involved as a father (Pleck, & Masciadrelli, 2004). Some literature suggests that a father's motivation to parent will be higher if there is a biological relationship to the child (Lamb & Tamis-Lemonda, 2004; Pleck, & Masciadrelli, 2004). In addition, the father's motivation to parent may also be increased if the child is a male (Raley, & Bianchi, 2006; Pleck, & Masciadrelli, 2004). Raley, & Bianchi (2006) have found that fathers often spend more time with their sons than with their daughters, and appear to be more invested in families with sons.

The second determinant of father involvement underlines the importance of skill and self-confidence (Lamb & Tamis-Lemonda, 2004; Pleck, & Masciadrelli, 2004). Many fathers express a concern regarding a lack of parenting skills. This perceived lack of skills and confidence has the potential to decrease father involvement. Therefore, skills and self-confidence are necessary to ensure adequate father involvement. Third, father involvement is enhanced by social support. Cook et al. (2005) found that a mother's expectation for father involvement was a substantial predictor for the level of father involvement. Lamb & Tamis-Lemonda (2004) stresses the importance of support from the mother of the child, as they "...frequently constrain and define the role and

responsibilities of both residential and nonresidential fathers” (Lamb & Tamis-Lemonda, 2004). Social support is also beneficial from extended family members and friends of the father (Marsiglio et al., 2000; Lamb & Tamis-Lemonda, 2004; Pleck, & Masciadrelli, 2004).

The fourth and fifth determinants of fathering, from the work of Lamb and Tamis-Lemonda (2004), emphasize institutional practices and cultural norms. Within Western culture, many fathers subscribe to the role of *breadwinner*. With that, employment is the most common reason given by fathers to explain low parental involvement. Men have been found to be less willing than women to compromise employment in order to increase father-child involvement. Furthermore, cultural expectations and demands greatly shape parental roles and help to determine level of father involvement.

### **A Cultural Perspective: African-American Families and Fathers**

Cultural variables impact all aspects of human behavior and interaction. This is especially so for parenting and familial interactions. Sudarkasa (2007) states that in order to understand African-American family structure, it is essential to understand the value placed upon the extended family. In addition, one must understand that within African-American culture, households that are headed by single parents and couples are embraced. In 2009, 67% of African-American children were living in single-parent homes, with the majority of them being single mothers (“Kids Count Data,” 2009). McAdoo (2007) comments that upward mobility is difficult within families that solely consist of women and children. Additionally, McAdoo (2007) says that single-parent homes are more at risk for special stresses such as unemployment, low education and

professional training and poverty. However, despite the negative stigma often associated with African-American single-parent homes, Sudarkasa (2007) remarks that female-headed households are very diverse in their form and functioning. “Many female-headed households have been, and can be, stable over time” Sudarkasa (2007, p. 173).

While the single-parent home is predominate within the African-American culture, Boyd-Franklin (2001) emphasizes additional multiple family structures. “Families may consist of a single parent and a boyfriend or girlfriend, or they may form a complex extended family that includes members from both inside and outside the household, as well as blood and non-blood relatives” (Boyd-Franklin, 2001, p. 358). Within African-American nuclear and extended families, reciprocity and role flexibility is common, as members of the family adapt to many different roles in order to help raise the children and to maintain adequate family functioning (Boyd-Franklin, 2006). For example, grandparents, aunts or uncles may assume parental roles, a process called informal adoption (Boyd-Franklin, 2001), or the romantic partner of a parent may also assume a parental role. In addition, it is not uncommon for the eldest child within the family to take on a parental role to assist a single parent with maintaining the household (Boyd-Franklin, 2006; Sudarkasa, 2007; Boyd-Franklin, 2001). Reciprocity and role flexibility also extends outside of the biological family unit and includes nonrelatives such as neighbors, ministers, church members and friends (Boyd-Franklin, 2001).

Analysis of the multiple African-American family structures has found that overall, family structure is not related to psychosocial outcomes for African-American youth. Rather, the quality of family functioning and family relational factors are highly

associated with psychosocial well-being (Salem, Zimmerman, & Notaro, 1998; Mandara, & Murray, 2000). More specifically, it was found that non-residential family members are able to have as much of an impact as residential family members. In addition, a complex extended family unit can be beneficial for African-American youth and helps to maintain adequate family functioning.

With regard to fathering within the African-American community, a study completed by Peart, Pungello, Campbell, and Richey (2006) reveals three expectations that African-American young adults have for their biological African-American fathers. First, African-American young adults had an expectation of fathers' presence. This theme was said to be predominate within the study. African-American fathers who achieved a consistent presence were highly admired, while those fathers who demonstrated an inconsistent present were highly criticized. Second, African-American young adults expect for their African-American biological fathers to provide economic support. The provision of economic support demonstrates the ability of the father to model the role of provider for his children (Peart et al., 2006). Lastly, African-American young adults expect for their African-American biological fathers to offer guidance, counsel or control (Peart et al., 2006). Peart et al. (2006) believes this is more accurately interpreted as the father's ability to encourage his child and to help establish boundaries to prevent social problems.

While Peart et al. (2006) study focuses on African-American young adults expectations for biological fathers, many researchers have found that African-American step-fathers and other social father figures have also contributed significantly to the care



and socialization of African-American children (Connor & White, 2006; Fagan, 1998). According to Connor and White (2006), “A more fluent and inclusive term is needed to capture the essence of the fathering role in African-American social and family networks.” Connor and White (2006) utilizes the term *social fatherhood* in order to encompass biological fathers, as well as men who are not biological fathers but who still assist in significantly promoting a child’s well-being. Due to the significant presence of single-parent homes within the African-American community, social fathers are not uncommon and their impact is noticed by many within the community (Connor & White, 2006).

The literature has noted that African-American fathers face unique challenges that have the potential to negatively impact their ability to parent. One such challenge is the *invisibility syndrome*. According to the literature, the invisibility syndrome is capable of negatively impacting the African-American fathers’ psychological well-being and his self-efficacy as a father (Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 2000; Boyd-Franklin, 2006; Connor & White, 2006; Boyd-Franklin, 2001). “Many present Black fathers believe that their parental contributions are truly invisible and underappreciated and they face an uphill climb to offset public beliefs” (Franklin, 2010, p. 124). Furthermore, Franklin (2010) states that despite the positive contributions, an African-American father who continually has to prove his value will eventually experience burnout, leading to a dismissed fulfillment of his role as a father.

Despite these challenges, many African-American fathers still have expectations for fatherhood and they strive to live up to these expectations, in addition to the

expectations of others within the community. According to Franklin (2010), many African-American fathers live by the “brotherhood code” (p. 125) of Black men, which focuses on protecting and providing for the family. Franklin (2010) believes this to be one reason why African-American men continue to uphold their duties as fathers despite the many challenges they face.

Another reason why African-American men strive to be optimal fathers can be linked to the absence or presence of their own fathers and social father figures. “Most African-American men learned the meaning of fatherhood through a circle of kin networks and community affiliations that provided a variety of men to be observed and emulated...” (Connor & White, 2006). Consequently, those men carry on those values and utilize them as they become fathers and social fathers. On the other hand, many African-American men who were not given the opportunity to learn from their fathers or other father figures struggle to “be a different man” (p.127). In essence, these fathers learn how to fulfill their child’s biological, psychological and social needs based off of their own unmet needs (Franklin, 2010).

Through various experiences of fatherhood, African-American men have developed many strategies for successful fathering. From a study by Franklin (2010), six strategies emerged regarding successful fathering of African-American sons. First, these fathers utilized “child-focused love” (p. 129) which includes encouragement and praise. Second, these fathers set strong limits and used firm discipline in order to receive respect. Third, these fathers set high expectations for their sons, emphasizing the importance of “not let[ting] the family down” (p.129). Fourth, these fathers were open and consistent

when communicating with their sons. Fifth, these fathers understood the importance of displaying a positive racial and male identification, in order to help their sons become strong African-American men. Finally, these fathers drew upon community resources such as the church, extended family and community organizations to assist in raising their sons.

### **Outcomes of the Father-Daughter Relationship**

Literature focusing on the interaction of fathers and daughters is scarce, especially in comparison to literature regarding other familial dyads i.e. mother-daughter, father-son and mother-son (Nielsen, 2006). However, researchers who have studied the father-daughter dyad have found that father involvement makes a unique and significant contribution to the development and well-being of a daughter (Amato & Rivera, 1999; Videon, 2005; Radin, 1986; Amato, 1994). In other words, a father's involvement has been found to be significant, and distinct from that of a mother's involvement. Radin (1986) explains that the reason for differential impacts of fathers and mothers may be caused by different interactional styles exhibited by men and women. "Men...tend to be more physical in their interactions with children... [while] women...tend to be more verbal in their interactions with children" (Radin, 1986, p.84).

Despite evidence suggesting that fathers make a unique and significant contribution to the well-being of their daughters, many fathers express uncertainty regarding how to adequately raise their daughters. A study done by Schock and Gavazzi (2005) revealed three overall concerns that fathers have about raising their daughters. First, fathers expressed an unclear understanding of their daughters' experience of being

female. This was said to create distance within the father-daughter relationship. Second, fathers expressed concerns of communication barriers due to a lack of common interests, as well as different communications styles. Fathers stated that they felt the need to be more careful and sensitive in their conversations with their daughters. Lastly, fathers stated that the lack of common interests also translates into limited involvement with their daughters.

In spite of the uncertainty that many fathers feel with regard to fathering daughters, the literature shows that daughters desire various interactions with their fathers (Way & Gillman, 2000; Morgan, Wilcoxon & Satcher, 2003; Perkins, 2001; Morgan & Wilcoxon, 1998). In a study completed by Way and Gillman (2000), it was revealed that girls expected to have “activity-oriented” (p. 316) relationships with their fathers. This involved activities and conversations centered on topics such as school and sports. In addition, girls were said to want “more” (p. 319) from their fathers. This was interpreted as increased closeness between father and daughter and seems to reflect the uncertainty felt by many fathers when raising daughters.

Way and Gillman’s (2000) study also reveals a unique relational pattern in which fathers and daughters tend to protect one another. In the study, daughters perceived their fathers as being overprotective. In addition, there was evidence suggesting that daughters also protect their fathers. This involved daughters standing up for their fathers during times of disagreement with other family members, and daughters shielding their fathers from hurt feelings.

According to Morgan et al. (2003), the father-daughter dyad reveals three major elements of the relationship: emotional responsiveness and communication (i.e. My father provided emotional support for me; I talked to my father when I was upset, etc.), validation and competence (i.e. My father believed I was a capable and competent person; My father had high expectations of me, etc.) and intimacy and conventionality (i.e. My father had very traditional attitudes about appropriate behavior for men and women; My father supervised my dating relationships, etc.).

Furthermore, the literature suggests a variety of father-daughter relationship styles (Perkins, 2001; Videon, 2005; Freeman & Almond, 2010; Morgan & Wilcoxon, 1998). Perkins (2001) has identified six father-daughter relationship styles. First is “a doting father” who is described as one who keeps his daughter close to him through disproportional personal and economic support. Second, “a distant father” is described as being reserved, stoic, and controls the family through his silence. Third is “a demanding/supportive father.” This father has appropriate expectations and demands, and provides adequate support and comfort. Fourth is “a domineering father,” who, like the demanding/supportive father, has expectations and demands; however this father does not provide support or encouragement when it is needed. Fifth, “a seductive father” sexually abuses his daughter and finally “an absent father” does not have a presence within the daughter’s life. Perkins (2001) states that the particular kind of relationship that daughters have with their fathers impacts her self-perception and style of life. Additionally, it has been found that the demanding/supportive father seems to promote the best mental-health benefits for women.

Overall, father involvement seems to have many positive effects on a daughter's biological, psychological and social well-being (Coley, 1998; Amato & Rivera, 1999, Radin, 1986; Brook, Whiteman, Brook & Gordon, 1988; Videon, 2005; Amato, 1991). This is especially so when the father-daughter relationship reflects a demanding but supportive style (Perkins, 2001; Morgan & Wilcoxon, 1998). Coley (1998) emphasizes the importance of a father-daughter relationship, stating that girls are more positively impacted by relationships with their fathers than are boys. Also, Coley (1998) highlights that fathers who provide warmth and control have daughters who exhibit higher academic achievement. Similarly, Radin (1986) says that father involvement seems to be related to competence in mathematics. In addition to cognitive enhancements, the literature shows that father involvement also impacts a daughter's psychological and social well being. It appears that father-daughter involvement is related to a decrease in negative behavioral problems and an increase in prosocial behavior toward peers (Amato & Rivera, 1999; Coley, 1998). Likewise, girls who grew up with limited father involvement were found to be less warm, less mature, more dependent, and to have a lowered self-esteem (Radin, 1986).

Psychological well-being has also been found to be positively impacted by father involvement. Amato (1991) found that any form of father loss, including father absence, is associated with depression in adulthood. This was found to be especially true for African-American women. In addition, Videon (2005) has found that father involvement has a unique and independent impact on the psychological well-being of adolescent females. Adolescents within the study reported an increase in psychological well-being when they were more satisfied with their father relationships (Videon, 2005). More

specifically, father-daughter relationships that involve affection, child centeredness, and time spent together more often result in a decreased presence of depression in college aged women (Brook et al., 1988).

A large bulk of research regarding father-daughter involvement is centered around its impacts on female psychosexual development. Biller (1993) believes that father deprivation can impact female psychosexual development in the following ways: increased obsession with young males, increased seeking of male attention, idealization of absent fathers, and increased risk of pregnancy. Likewise, father-daughter involvement has been found to positively enhance female psychosexual development (Williamson, 2004). Diiorio, Kelley and Hockenberry-Eaton (1999) acknowledges that overall, girls are far more likely to discuss sexual issues with their mothers than their fathers. More specifically, girls were found to discuss topics related to puberty with mothers, topics related to sexual abstinence with fathers, and topics related to sexual intercourse with friends. Despite the perceived lack of communication between fathers and daughters about various sexual issues, the literature still illustrates a strong connection between father-daughter involvement and increased female psychosexual development and well-being. This implies that mere father involvement, without communication about sexual issues, is enough to facilitate appropriate psychosexual development.

Within the literature, father-daughter involvement has been associated with a decrease in female sexual activity (Freeman & Almond, 2010; Regnerus, 2006; Belsky, 1991; Ellis, 2002). Furthermore, results indicated that decreased sexual activity as a

result of the father-daughter relationship seemed to be mediated by variables: actual opportunities for sexual activity and cognitive opportunities for sexual activity. Actual opportunities include dating or time spent with boys. Cognitive opportunities include anticipation of guilt as a result of sexual activity (Regnerus, 2006).

**Outcomes of the African-American father-daughter relationship.** Similar to the research on general father-daughter involvement, African-American fathers and father-figures have been found to make a unique and beneficial contribution to their daughters' biological, psychological and social development (Black, Dubowitz & Starr, 1999; Coley, 2003; Cooper, 2009; Mandara, Murray & Joyner, 2005). Likewise, absence of African-American fathers has been shown to have grave negative effects. According to qualitative data presented by Matthews-Armstead (2010), African-American women who grew up in homes without their biological fathers tend to perceive their biological fathers in the following ways: the shadow father, the powerless father and the idealized father. The shadow father is described as "...a vague image that lurks just beyond clear recognition but a presence just the same" (Matthews-Armstead, 2010, p. 265). African-American women with shadow fathers generally sought information about their fathers from their mothers, or others who knew him. Many of these women described their fathers as missing, and expressed a sense of loss due to his absence. In addition, many of these women struggled with evaluating how their father's absence related to their own sense of self-worth. Despite the lack of reciprocity, these women stated that they feel ashamed for caring for their fathers, but also expressed feelings of resentment and anger.



Similar to the shadow father, the powerless father is also absent or unavailable. However, the powerless father is unique because of the women's perception of their fathers' level of involvement and their perceived connection to him (Matthews-Armstead, 2010). Matthews-Armstead (2010) stated that these women "...view their fathers as being within their sight but just beyond their reach" (p. 269). In other words, these women often believed that their fathers' absence was due to some mediating influence, such as drug or alcohol addiction, criminal justice system or discord with other family members. Matthews-Armstead (2010) believes that the women's perception of their fathers being taken away, instead of leaving on their own accord, protects them from feelings of rejection and abandonment. Nevertheless, these women still express a sense of longing and emptiness due to their fathers' presence. Most of these women viewed their fathers as being misunderstood and felt sorrow for them. As a result, many of the women perceived themselves as having a special relationship with their fathers because they were the "understanding person in his life" (Matthews-Armstead, 2010, p. 272). Matthews-Armstead (2010) believes that this serves a specific purpose in helping the women to feel a sense of significance within their fathers' lives.

Last is the idealized father. Matthews-Armstead (2010) stated that even though this category produces the smallest group of fathers within the qualitative study, it was very distinct from the previous two types of fathers. According to Matthews-Armstead (2010), despite the lack of involvement and availability, the women who idealized their fathers still expressed a sense of stability and confidence in their relationships with them. These women did not view their fathers as being absent or disconnected, and neither did they express feelings of disappointment or rejection. These women seemed to display a

sense of belonging to their fathers. Matthews-Armstead (2010) stated that these women were able to manage their expectations of their relationship with their fathers by not having any expectations at all. As a result, these women were content with the mere biological connection they shared with their fathers, such as physical or personality similarities. Matthews-Armstead (2010) says that these women seem to be more capable and competent than the women who viewed their fathers as shadow or powerless.

Scholars such as A.J. Franklin and Nancy Boyd-Franklin (2000) believe that an excessive amount of attention has been paid to the “plight of African-American males,” especially African-American fathers. Consequently, the literature fails to adequately highlight present African-American fathers and their contributions. Specifically, research regarding the benefits of African-American father-daughter involvement is limited. Fortunately, a study conducted by Coles (2009) provides some insight into African-American single (unmarried) fathers’ and their perceptions of the roles they play within their daughters’ lives.

According to the qualitative data, all of the African-American single fathers who were interviewed believed that their most important role was to be a “provider” for their daughters. Interestingly enough, only one-fourth of the fathers rated this role as high for their sons. Secondly, the African-American single fathers rated their role of “nurturer” as important when raising their daughters (Coles, 2009). Coles (2009) hypothesized that the gender differences on the provider role may reflect the father’s traditional gender roles, in which he may feel as if a man’s responsibility is to provide for a woman. Additionally, Coles (2009) believes the gender difference may reflect the father’s

experience of perceiving their daughters to be more financially demanding than their sons.

African-American single fathers' parenting satisfaction also varied by gender. Coles's (2009) study illustrated that 42% of African-American single fathers who raise daughters rated themselves as being satisfied with their parenting. On the other hand, 100% of African-American single fathers who raise sons rated themselves as satisfied with their parenting. The fathers in this study were also asked to rate emotional closeness they felt toward their child. Results indicated that 58% of African-American single fathers with daughters believed they were "very close" to their daughters, as opposed to 100% of African-American single fathers who believed they were "very close" to their sons.

Further data reveals that African-American single fathers have many concerns and insecurities about raising their daughters. Coles (2009) states that many of the African-American single fathers believed they had "fell short" in raising their daughters. In other words, they did not feel competent that they could provide the best parenting for their daughters, especially in comparison to a mother-figure. The African-American fathers were unsure about their ability to be nurturing and often sought out help from other women to ensure this nurturance was received. Similarly, the fathers also sought other women to help to educate their daughters about puberty, dating, and sex. The fathers' expressed their discomfort regarding the topics related to sexual issues, and many commented that they are unable to understand what their daughters undergo during puberty because they are men. Furthermore, the African-American fathers in Coles's

(2009) study also indicated a lack of interest in their daughters extracurricular and other social activities, which often resulted in lack of shared activities and communication.

Coles (2009) remarks that these concerns and insecurities felt by the African-American single fathers contribute to lowered rates of parental satisfaction and perceived closeness felt with relationships with their daughters. In addition, Coles (2009) found that many African-American single fathers are aware of negative reactions they receive from others about their abilities to parent daughters. The fathers described these reactions as ones of doubt and concern. They indicated that these reactions are generally received from teachers, school administrators, pediatricians, and even friends and family. These reactions are very similar to those elicited by the *invisibility syndrome*, in that both hinder the self-efficacy of an African-American father (Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 2000; Boyd-Franklin, 2006; Connor & White, 2006; Boyd-Franklin, 2001).

Despite the general feelings of discomfort regarding parenting daughters, the literature reveals that African-American fathers impact their daughters' development in many ways. Roopnarine (2004) states that African-American father involvement with their daughters results in higher levels of competence felt by the child, increased social acceptance from peers, decreased behavior problems, and increased cognitive and academic school functioning. Further research confirms that African-American father-daughter involvement is related to academic engagement and enhancement of self-esteem (Cooper, 2009). Additionally, an African-American father's warmth has been found to predict higher prosocial ratings. Also, it was found that increased control and discipline

from an African-American father and father-figures predicts lower rates of behavioral problems within school (Coley, 1998).

The literature on African-American father-daughter involvement shows significant implications for the sexual risk and development of African-American girls. While studies have shown that overall, African-American daughters tend to discuss sexual issues with their mothers more than their fathers (Kapungu, Baptiste, Holmbeck, McBride, Robinson-Brown, Sturdivant, Crown & Paikoff, 2010), the father's general involvement with his daughter still has the power to impact her sexual risk and development (Peterson, 2006). Peterson (2006) has found a father's education level to be a strong predictor of sexual risk in African-American girls. This was in comparison to the mother's education level, which was not found to be significant.

Peterson (2006) believes that two mediating variables are present which link the fathers' education level and daughters' sexual risk. First, increased educational attainment is correlated with increased income. Therefore, it is possible that a father's educational attainment may contribute to a higher family income that is used to invest in resources to help protect girls from sexual risk. Second, African-American men who obtain higher education levels have been found more likely to marry and establish two-parent homes for their children. Therefore, family structure may also mediate the link between father's education and daughter's sexual risk (Peterson, 2006).

Moreover, Peterson (2006) has discovered three distinct sexual communication styles utilized by African-American fathers and daughters who did, in fact, communicate about sexual issues: directive, insightful and absent/avoidant. Directive communication

styles provide clear messages about a father's sexual expectations, as well as information about specific sexual behaviors. Insightful communication styles are unique because they address emotional risks associated with sexual behaviors. This style also includes conversation about romantic relationships and often is focused on the daughter's current romantic relationship. Both directive and insightful communication styles are associated with positive father-daughter relationships and a reduction in sexual risk. Finally, the absent/avoidant communication style referred to few or no communications about sexual issues. These fathers commonly relied on mothers to perform sexual discussions. This communications style has been linked to feelings of rejections and regret. This style is also associated with increased sexual risk (Peterson, 2006).

Relevant to the literature above, research on the father-daughter relationship is sparse in comparison to research that examines other familial dyads, such as mother-child relationships or father-son relationships (Nielsen, 2006). Additionally, literature exploring the African-American father-daughter relationship is even more limited. The current literature exploring African-American father-daughter dyads provides valuable information regarding several outcomes of such a relationship for African-American female development (Black, Dubowitz & Starr, 1999; Coley, 2003; Cooper, 2009; Mandara, Murray & Joyner, 2005). This literature also explores the comfort level and satisfaction felt by African-American fathers who parent their daughters (Coles, 2009). Furthermore, the literature on African-American father-daughter relationships is heavily saturated with research examining the phenomena and resulting impact of father absence (Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 2000; Matthews-Armstead, 2010).

Many scholars remark that further examination of the African-American father-daughter dyad is necessary in order to make greater implications about the relationship (Morgan & Wilcoxon, 1998; Morgan & Wilcoxon, 2003). This author believes that the literature regarding African-American father-daughter dyads and relationships lacks substance in many areas. African-American father and daughter interactions deserve more in-depth examination. Evaluation of this interaction would serve as means of providing further information about the quality of their relationship. Also, this evaluation will present details related to protective factors that are offered through the relationship.

## Chapter 2: Method

### Participants

Participants of this study consisted of five African-American father-daughter dyads, which was a total of ten participants. For the purposes of this study, the term “father” may include biological father, step-father, adoptive father, or any other social-father or father-figure. Furthermore, this study included residential fathers as well as non-residential fathers. The age range of the five African-American fathers who participated in this study was 28-51 years, with the mean age being 38.2 years. The five African-American daughters who participated in the study were between the ages of 7 and 12 years, with the mean age being 9.4 years. Table 1 displays demographic information for both sets of fathers and daughters.

Table 1

*Father and Daughter Characteristics as a Percentage of the Sample*

Characteristics	Father (n=5)	Daughter(n=5)
Black/African-American	100.0 (5)	100.0 (5)
Current Age	(M=38.2)	(M=9.4)
Daughters		
7-8	n/a	40.0 (2)
9-10	n/a	40.0 (2)
11-12	n/a	20.0 (1)
Fathers		
20-30	20.0 (1)	n/a
31-40	40.0 (2)	n/a



41-50	20.0 (1)	n/a
50+	20.0 (1)	n/a
Fathers' Marital Status		N/A
Single/Never Married	20.0 (1)	
Married	80.0 (4)	
Divorced	0.0 (0)	
Fathers' Level of Education		N/A
H.S. Diploma/GED	20.0 (1)	
Some College	60.0 (3)	
Bachelor's Degree	0.0 (0)	
Master's Degree	0.0 (0)	
Doctoral/Professional	20.0 (1)	
Fathers' Sexual Orientation		N/A
Heterosexual	100.0 (5)	
Religion/Spirituality		
Christianity	80.0 (4)	80.0 (4)
Other	20.0 (1)	20.0 (1)
Disability Status	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)
Father-Daughter Status		
Biological Relationship	60.0 (3)	60.0 (3)
Adoptive/Father	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)
Step-Father/Daughter	40.0 (2)	40.0 (2)
Social or Father-figure	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)
Father-Daughter Residence		
Father and daughter reside in the same home	80.0 (4)	80.0 (4)
Father and daughter reside in separate homes	20.0 (1)	20.0 (1)

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## Instruments

Each father completed the *Multidimensional Parenting Inventory (MDPI)* (Dobbins, et al., 2011), which is an instrument that has been used in family intervention programs to determine parenting styles. The MDPI has a test-retest reliability of .78 (Dobbins, et al., 2011).

Additionally, each father also completed the *Achenbach Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL)* for ages 6-18, which has an inter-interviewer reliability of .93 for the 20 competency items and .96 for the 118 specific problem items, and a test-retest reliability of 1.00 for the 20 competency items and .95 for the 118 specific problem items (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001). This will provide insight into the daughter's behaviors and overall temperament, through the father's perspective.

Lastly, the *Marschack Interaction Method (MIM)* was used to assess the father-daughter relationship. The Theraplay Institute (2011) describes the Marschack Interaction Method (MIM) as a structured technique used for observing and assessing parent-child relationships. This technique consists of a series of eight to ten simple yet interactive tasks that provide information on the parent's level of capacity within the following four dimensions: *structure*, *engagement*, *nurturance* and *challenge*. The Theraplay Institute (2011) has operationalized these four dimensions in the following ways: Tasks that evaluate the amount of *structure* within the parent-child relationship assess for the parent's capacity to set limits for the child and to provide an "appropriately ordered environment." Tasks that evaluate the level of *engagement* within the parent-child relationship provide information regarding the parent's ability to "engage the child in interaction while being attuned to the child's state and reactions." *Nurturance* tasks assess for the parent's capacity to meet the child's needs for attention, soothing and care. Finally, *challenge* tasks evaluate how well parents' support and encourage their child's efforts to complete "developmentally appropriate" tasks.

While the MIM seems to focus heavily on the parent's ability to provide *structure, engagement, nurturance* and *challenge* within the relationship, this technique also allows for information to be determined about the ways in which the child responds to the parent. Additionally, information is able to be drawn regarding the amount of playfulness demonstrated within the relationship and the quality of empathic attunement between the parent and child. As a result, the MIM is a thorough technique that supplies an in-depth examination of problem areas and strengths within the parent-child relationship. The MIM is suitable for use in treatment planning to establish interventions to strengthen family relationships. Additionally, this author believes that the MIM will be valuable in the examination of the African-American father-daughter relationship. Not only will applications of this technique examine the interaction between African-American fathers and daughters, but it will also assist clinicians in gaining further knowledge about the African-American father-daughter relationship.

Although the MIM was originally developed for research purposes, the technique does not yet have published reliability and validity data; however the technique has been explored through various research studies (Bojanowski & Ammen, 2011; Fung, 2010; Hitchcock, Ammen, O'Connor & Backman, 2008) and used extensively in clinical settings, primarily for the purposes of planning family oriented treatment. Materials used to complete the technique included a small toy, drinking straws, hand lotion, fruit snacks (or a similar food item), juice box, paper, coloring materials (i.e. crayons, markers and colored pencils), challenging reading material and pictures taken from various magazines that demonstrate various African-American father-daughter interactions.

## **Design**

This study included an examination of how several variables related to the quality of father-daughter relationship and healthy social and emotional outcomes for fathers and daughters. The gender and race of the participants were controlled, in that all of the participants identified as African-American fathers or daughters. These father-daughter dyad variables, in addition to variables of *structure*, *challenge*, *engagement* and *nurturance* elicited by the father were observed in relation to the social and emotional well being of the daughters and the dyad itself. This study followed an exploratory multiple case study design (Yin, 2009), in which multiple father-daughter cases are reviewed individually for the purpose of potentially guiding another investigation on a much larger scale at a later time.

## **Procedure**

Each individual case examination was completed within the home of the participants' during a day and time that was convenient for both the researcher, and father-daughter dyad. Prior to beginning the examination, both the father and daughter were briefed on the purpose of the study. Additionally, both father and daughter read and signed consent and assent, respectively, which informed them of their level of participation, in addition to use of video recording throughout the MIM procedures.

After consent and assent had been received, both father and daughter individually completed a Demographic Sheet (Appendix A & B). Additionally, the fathers also were asked to complete the MDPI and CBCL, as mentioned above.

After the completion of all forms, including assessment measures, the father-daughter dyad was given both verbal and written instruction on how to complete

Marschack Interaction Method (MIM) protocol. Both were instructed to work together to complete ten interactive tasks and asked to inform the research of their completion. The ten tasks and the domain which they assess for are as followed:

- 1) Squeaky animals: Adult and child each take one squeaky animal. Make the two animals play together (Structure).
- 2) Teaching: Adult teaches child something he/she doesn't know (Challenge).
- 3) Fortune telling: Adult tells child what he/she will be like when he/she grows up (Engagement).
- 4) Cotton ball blow: Adult places 3 cotton balls on the center of the table. Adult and child stand at opposite ends of the table. Each takes a straw and tries to blow all three cotton balls to "opponent's" side (Structure).
- 5) Thumb wrestling: Adult and child engage each other in 3 rounds of thumb wrestling (clasp right hands and try to force each other's thumbs down toward the table top) (Engagement).
- 6) Lotion: Adult and child each take one bottle and apply lotion to each other (Nurturance).
- 7) Reading challenge: Adult gives child card and asks him/her to read it aloud (Stress Reduction).
- 8) Draw "Our house": Adult asks child to draw "our house" (Challenge).
- 9) Picture and storytelling: Adult and child both work together to develop a story about each picture (Structure and Engagement).
- 10) Feed and drink: Adult and child feed each other. Adult and child give each other a drink (Nurturance).

After completion of the MIM tasks, both participants were debriefed on the process and asked follow-up questions (Appendix C) regarding their experience while completing the tasks.

Lastly, both father and daughter were informed that their video recording would be destroyed after completion of the study.

### Chapter 3: Results

The *Achenbach Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL)* for ages 6-18 was used to provide insight into the daughter's behaviors and overall temperament, through the father's perspective. None of the fathers endorsed any concerns of *borderline* or *clinical significance* regarding their daughters' behaviors and overall temperaments. Table 2 displays means and descriptors of the T-Scores from each CBCL Syndrome Scale.

Table 2

*Means and Descriptors of T-Scores Based Upon CBCL Syndrome Scale*

CBCL Syndrome Scales for Girls	Mean T-Score	Descriptor of Mean T-Score
Anxious/Depressed	51.6	Normal
Withdrawn/Depressed	53.2	Normal
Somatic Complaints	50.6	Normal
Social Problems	51.6	Normal
Thought Problems	52.8	Normal
Attention Problems	52.2	Normal
Rule-Breaking Behaviors	54.6	Normal
Aggressive Behavior	51.8	Normal

Each father provided information regarding their parenting style by completing the *Multidimensional Parenting Inventory (MDPI)*. Table 3 displays mean scores and descriptors for each MDPI scale.

Table 3

*Means and Descriptors of Fathers' Parenting Characteristics Based Upon MDPI Scales*

MDPI Scales	<i>M</i>	Descriptor of the <i>M</i>
Permissiveness	9.0	Low
Control/Authoritarian	14.2	Low
Objectivity/Accommodative	24.8	High
Child Development Knowledge	14.6	Low
Skill/Sense of Effectiveness	21.4	High

The following cases will present data gathered from each father-daughter dyad and their completion of the *Marschack Interaction Method (MIM)*. Two raters were used for analysis of MIM data to increase inter-rater reliability. Each rater used the Marschack Interaction Method rating sheet, which is composed of various questions that are specific to each domain area. Each question is to be answered using a 7-point Likert scale and should reflect observations made regarding the parent-child interaction. Overall ratings were composed by averaging scores provided by both raters for each father-daughter dyad.

**Case A**

Both Father A and Daughter A participated together in the Marschack Interaction Method (MIM). Demographics for both Father A and Daughter A are displayed in Table 4. Additionally, Father A's MDPI raw scores are displayed in Table 5.

Table 4

*Demographics of Case A*

Characteristics	
Daughter's Current Age	7
Daughter's Religion/Spirituality	Christian
Daughter's Disability Status	None
Father's Current Age	28
Father's Marital Status	Married
Father's Level of Education	Doctoral/Professional



Father's Sexual Orientation	Heterosexual
Father's Religion/Spirituality	Christian
Father's Disability Status	None
Father-Daughter Status	Step-father
Father-Daughter Residence	Father and daughter reside in the same home

Table 5

*MDPI Raw Scores of Father A*

MDPI Scales	Raw Score	Descriptor
Permissiveness	8	Low
Control/Authoritarian	6	Low
Objectivity/Accommodative	21	Average
Child Development Knowledge	18	Average
Skill/Sense of Effectiveness	20	Average

**Structure:** Father A seemed to fulfill an appropriate parent role during such tasks. Additionally, he seemed to demonstrate the ability to be “in charge” within the father-daughter interaction. Father A did not frequently provide clear verbal direction, however several non-verbal responses (i.e. head nodding, finger pointing) were utilized to instruct Daughter A regarding structure and direction of certain tasks. Father A’s approach to most tasks could be described as “task-driven,” with task completion as the central goal.

**Challenge:** Throughout the tasks, Daughter A seemed to display a high frustration tolerance and was able to remain calm and focused during tasks. It was observed that Father A chose a simplistic task for Daughter A to complete that did not seem challenging enough for her current developmental level.

**Engagement:** Throughout these tasks, neither Father A nor Daughter A insisted on continuous or inappropriate physical contact during tasks. Furthermore, neither of

them overtly rejected the physical advances of the other. Father A did not often provide appropriate amounts of autonomy, as he was observed encouraging and probing for Daughter A to change several of her responses during a storytelling task. It was also noted that while there were low amounts of physical contact between Father A and Daughter A, Father A was observed to at times avoid contact while Daughter A made attempts to establish contact (i.e. Daughter A was observed to be leaned into Father A's space, Daughter A made attempts to establish eye contact with Father A but Father A did not reciprocate the contact).

**Nurturance:** Father A was observed to provide low amounts of nurturance to Daughter A during both nurturing tasks (i.e. quick termination of physical touch, low amounts of eye contact, stern physical touch). Despite low nurturance provided by Father A, Daughter A seemed to be accepting of his attempts to establish nurturing contact.

Overall, Father A seems to adequately respond to Daughter A's needs to be calmed down during high frustration tasks (i.e. difficult reading task). In response, Daughter A did not display any difficulty in accepting Father A's attempts to calm her, nor did she have difficulty calming herself. With regard to empathy, Father A did not provide frequent evidence of emphatic response to Daughter A (i.e. limited praise and encouragement during and after difficulty tasks, lack of response to Daughter A's attempts to establish physical closeness). Finally, Father A and Daughter A's level of playfulness throughout the entire interaction was observed to be low. Father A initiated few playful interactions, and frequently terminated playful interactions that were initiated

by Daughter A (i.e. quickly putting away play materials rather than letting the play session terminate naturally).

**Case B**

Both Father B and Daughter B participated together in the Marschack Interaction Method (MIM). Demographics for both Father B and Daughter B are displayed in Table 6. Additionally, Father B’s MDPI raw scores are displayed in Table 7.

Table 6

*Demographics of Case B*

Characteristics	
Daughter’s Current Age	8
Daughter’s Religion/Spirituality	Christian
Daughter’s Disability Status	None
Father’s Current Age	45
Father’s Marital Status	Married
Father’s Level of Education	Some College
Father’s Sexual Orientation	Heterosexual
Father’s Religion/Spirituality	Christian
Father’s Disability Status	None
Father-Daughter Status	Biological relationship
Father-Daughter Residence	Father and daughter reside in the same home

Table 7

*MDPI Raw Scores of Father B*

MDPI Scales	Raw Score	Descriptor
Permissiveness	10	Low
Control/Authoritarian	18	Average
Objectivity/Accommodative	24	Average
Child Development Knowledge	19	Average
Skill/Sense of Effectiveness	20	Average

**Structure:** Father B seemed to fulfill an appropriate parent role during such tasks. Additionally, he seemed to demonstrate the ability to be “in charge” within the father-daughter interaction. Father B occasionally provided verbal direction when instructing Daughter B, however his use of verbal direction was not consistent. Father B’s approach to most tasks could be described as “task-driven,” with task completion as the central goal.

**Challenge:** Throughout the tasks, Daughter B seemed to display a high frustration tolerance and was able to remain calm and focused during tasks. It was observed that Father B chose a simplistic task for Daughter B to complete that did not seem challenging enough for her current developmental level.

**Engagement:** Throughout these tasks, neither Father B nor Daughter B insisted on continuous or inappropriate physical contact during tasks. Furthermore, neither of them overtly rejected the physical advances of the other. Father B seemed to provide appropriate amounts of autonomy to Daughter B. Furthermore, neither Father B nor Daughter B rejected the physical advances of the other.

**Nurturance:** Father B was observed to providing adequate nurturing contact to Daughter B; however his level of nurturance was not consistent. Daughter B seemed to be accepting of his attempts to establish nurturing contact, however she displayed slight discomfort during one of the nurturance tasks (i.e. “This is awkward and hard.”)

Overall, Father B seems to adequately respond to Daughter B’s needs to be calmed down during high frustration tasks (i.e. difficult reading task). In response, Daughter B did not display any difficulty in accepting Father B’s attempts to calm her,

however she displayed some difficulty with calming herself (i.e. fidgeting and somewhat distracted during the tasks). With regard to empathy, Father B did provide frequent evidence of emphatic response to Daughter B (i.e. frequent praise and encouragement during and after difficulty tasks). Finally, some playfulness was observed throughout their interaction (i.e. playful competition during competitive tasks); however most of the playful interactions were initiated by Daughter B. Father B initiated few playful interactions, and frequently terminated playful interactions that were initiated by Daughter B.

### Case C

Both Father C and Daughter C participated together in the Marschack Interaction Method (MIM). Demographics for both Father C and Daughter C are displayed in Table 8. Additionally, Father C's MDPI raw scores are displayed in Table 9.

Table 8

#### *Demographics of Case C*

Characteristics	
Daughter's Current Age	10
Daughter's Religion/Spirituality	None
Daughter's Disability Status	None
Father's Current Age	32
Father's Marital Status	Single
Father's Level of Education	Some College
Father's Sexual Orientation	Heterosexual
Father's Religion/Spirituality	"Believe in God"
Father's Disability Status	None
Father-Daughter Status	Biological relationship
Father-Daughter Residence	Father and daughter reside in separate homes

Table 9

*MDPI Raw Scores of Father C*

MDPI Scales	Raw Score	Descriptor
Permissiveness	4	Low
Control/Authoritarian	14	Low
Objectivity/Accommodative	29	High
Child Development Knowledge	13	Low
Skill/Sense of Effectiveness	21	High

**Structure:** Father C seemed to fulfill an appropriate parent role during such tasks. Additionally, he seemed to demonstrate the ability to be “in charge” within the father-daughter interaction. Father C occasionally provided verbal direction when instructing Daughter C, however his use of verbal direction was not consistent. Father C’s approach to most tasks could be described as “task-driven,” yet playful.

**Challenge:** Throughout the tasks, Daughter C seemed to display a high frustration tolerance and was able to remain calm and focused during tasks. It was observed that Father C chose a developmentally appropriate task for Daughter C to complete that seemed to be challenging enough for her current developmental level.

**Engagement:** Throughout these tasks, neither Father C nor Daughter C insisted on continuous or inappropriate physical contact during tasks. Furthermore, neither of them overtly rejected the physical advances of the other; however Daughter C was observed to reject moments of emotional closeness and intimacy during certain tasks (i.e. avoidance of eye contact and termination of the interaction when Father C discusses how

she will be in the future). Father C seemed to provide appropriate amounts of autonomy to Daughter C, as he frequently encouraged Daughter C to provide direction on several tasks.

**Nurturance:** Father C was observed to provide adequate nurturing contact to Daughter C. Daughter C seemed to be somewhat accepting of his attempts to establish nurturing contact; however she displayed discomfort during both of the nurturance tasks (i.e. “What the heck?” in response to lotion tasks; abrupt response to Father C during the feed tasks, “Give it to me!” “Open [your mouth] wider!”)

Overall, Father C seems to adequately respond to Daughter C’s needs to be calmed down during high frustration tasks (i.e. sufficient encouragement and praise during difficult reading task). In response, Daughter C did not display any difficulty in accepting Father C’s attempts to soothe. With regard to empathy, Father C did provide frequent evidence of emphatic response to Daughter C (i.e. frequent praise and encouragement during and after difficulty tasks). Finally, ample amounts of playfulness were observed throughout their interaction (i.e. playful competition during competitive tasks; laughter; playful joking amongst one another). Both Father C and Daughter C were observed to initiate playful interactions. Neither Father C nor Daughter C was observed to terminate playful interactions prematurely.

#### **Case D**

Both Father D and Daughter D participated together in the Marschack Interaction Method (MIM). Demographics for both Father D and Daughter D are displayed in Table 10. Additionally, Father D’s MDPI raw scores are displayed in Table 11.

Table 10

*Demographics of Case D*

Characteristics	
Daughter's Current Age	10
Daughter's Religion/Spirituality	Christian
Daughter's Disability Status	None
Father's Current Age	51
Father's Marital Status	Married
Father's Level of Education	Some College
Father's Sexual Orientation	Heterosexual
Father's Religion/Spirituality	Christian
Father's Disability Status	None
Father-Daughter Status	Step-father
Father-Daughter Residence	Father and daughter reside in the same home

Table 11

*MDPI Raw Scores of Father D*

MDPI Scales	Raw Score	Descriptor
Permissiveness	14	Average
Control/Authoritarian	15	Low
Objectivity/Accommodative	25	High
Child Development Knowledge	14	Low
Skill/Sense of Effectiveness	19	Average

**Structure:** Father D did not seem to consistently fulfill an appropriate parent role during several tasks. Father D was often observed to fulfill a “school teacher” role, which is characterized by frequent teaching and less emotional reciprocity. Father D demonstrated the ability to be “in charge” within the father-daughter interaction. Father D occasionally provided verbal direction when instructing Daughter D, however his use



of verbal direction was not consistent. Father D's approach to most tasks could be described as "task-driven," with task completion as the central goal.

**Challenge:** Throughout the tasks, Daughter D seemed to display a high frustration tolerance and was able to remain calm and focused during tasks. It was observed that Father D chose a simplistic task for Daughter D to complete that did not seem challenging enough for her current developmental level.

**Engagement:** Throughout these tasks, neither Father D nor Daughter D insisted on continuous or inappropriate physical contact during tasks. Furthermore, neither of them overtly rejected the physical advances of the other. Father D seemed to provide appropriate amounts of autonomy to Daughter D. Finally, low amounts of physical contact were observed between Father D and Daughter D.

**Nurturance:** Father D was observed to provide low amounts of nurturance to Daughter D during both nurturing tasks (i.e. quick termination of physical touch, low amounts of eye contact, stern physical touch). Despite low nurturance provided by Father D, Daughter D seemed to be accepting of his attempts to establish nurturing contact.

Overall, Father D seems to adequately respond to Daughter D's needs to be calmed down during high frustration tasks (i.e. assistance with reading difficult words during reading task). In response, Daughter D did not display any difficulty in accepting Father D's attempts to help. With regard to empathy, Father D did not provide frequent evidence of emphatic response to Daughter D (i.e. little to no praise and encouragement during and after difficulty tasks). Finally, Father D and Daughter D's level of playfulness

throughout the entire interaction was observed to be low. Father D initiated few playful interactions, and frequently terminated playful interactions that were initiated by Daughter D (i.e. quickly putting away play materials rather than letting the play session terminate naturally).

### Case E

Both Father E and Daughter E participated together in the Marschack Interaction Method (MIM). Demographics for both Father E and Daughter E are displayed in Table 12. Additionally, Father E's MDPI raw scores are displayed in Table 13.

Table 12

#### *Demographics of Case E*

Characteristics	
Daughter's Current Age	12
Daughter's Religion/Spirituality	Christian
Daughter's Disability Status	None
Father's Current Age	35
Father's Marital Status	Married
Father's Level of Education	H.S. Diploma/GED
Father's Sexual Orientation	Heterosexual
Father's Religion/Spirituality	Christian
Father's Disability Status	None
Father-Daughter Status	Biological relationship
Father-Daughter Residence	Father and daughter reside in the same home

Table 13

#### *MDPI Raw Scores of Father E*

MDPI Scales	Raw Score	Descriptor
Permissiveness	9	Low
Control/Authoritarian	18	Average
Objectivity/Accommodative	25	High
Child Development Knowledge	9	Low

**Structure:** Father E seemed to fulfill an appropriate parent role during completion of tasks. Father E demonstrated the ability to be “in charge” within the father-daughter interaction. Father E occasionally provided verbal direction when instructing Daughter E, however his use of verbal direction was not consistent. Father E’s approach to most tasks could be described as “task-driven,” yet playful and humorous.

**Challenge:** Throughout the tasks, Daughter E seemed to display a high frustration tolerance and was able to remain calm and focused during tasks. It was observed that Father E chose a complex task for Daughter E to complete that seemed to be too challenging for her current developmental level.

**Engagement:** Throughout these tasks, neither Father E nor Daughter E insisted on continuous or inappropriate physical contact during tasks. Furthermore, neither of them overtly rejected the physical advances of the other. Father E seemed to provide appropriate amounts of autonomy to Daughter E, however the autonomy provided was not consistent (i.e. moment of low autonomy provided when Father E encouraged Daughter E to alter several of her responses during the story telling tasks).

**Nurturance:** Father E was observed to provide adequate nurturing contact to Daughter E; however his level of nurturance was not consistent. Daughter E seemed to be accepting of his attempts to establish nurturing contact; however she displayed slight

discomfort during one of the nurturance tasks (i.e. Daughter E backed away and said “Eww” when Father E made attempts to feed her).

Overall, Father E seems to adequately respond to Daughter E’s needs to be calmed down during high frustration tasks. In response, Daughter E did not display any difficulty in accepting Father E’s attempts to help. With regard to empathy, Father E did not provide frequent evidence of emphatic response to Daughter E (i.e. little to no praise and encouragement during and after difficulty tasks; lack of response to Daughter E’s dismay about altering the storytelling tasks). Finally, Father E and Daughter E’s level of playfulness throughout the entire interaction was observed to be high; however Father E initiated most of the playful interactions and seemed to be having more fun than Daughter E. Neither Father E nor Daughter E was observed to prematurely terminate playful interactions. Additionally, Father E seemed to utilize high amounts of humor throughout the interaction.

### **General Responses to Follow-Up Questions**

After completion of the MIM tasks, both father and daughter were jointly asked follow-up questions (Appendix C) regarding their experience together. Overall, positive reactions to the session were provided, including “I enjoyed doing this with my daughter,” “This was fun,” and “We should do more things like this together.” Neither of the fathers and daughters noted any surprises during the session. Furthermore, neither of them reported the other to be different from usual throughout the session. The following tasks were all indicated to be tasks the fathers and daughters enjoyed the most: Cotton ball blow, Thumb wrestling, Picture and storytelling, and Feed and drink. The following

tasks were all indicated to be task the fathers and daughters enjoyed the least: Lotion, and Reading Challenge.

## **Chapter 4: Discussion and Conclusions**

General themes were drawn based upon data collected from the African-American fathers and daughters who participated in this study. The conclusions drawn from observations and data collected from all of the participant dyads reflected: Low nurturance and playfulness between step-fathers and step-daughters, Overall low child development knowledge, Discomfort regarding physical nurturance and affection between fathers and daughters, Frequent competitive play, Overall high sense of parental effectiveness, and Sense of regard for role flexibility and extended family. These findings are further discussed below.

### **Low Nurturance and Playfulness Between Step-fathers and Step-daughters**

The step-father and step-daughter dyads were unique in terms of the low amounts of nurturance and playfulness observed, particularly when analyzing their MIM data. This was characterized by low amounts of mutual eye contact, little to no physical contact, stern physical touch provided by the step-father, and the step-father frequently terminating play and other mutual interactions. For example, Father A was observed to prematurely terminate the squeaky animal task despite Daughter A's desire to continue to play. Additionally, Father D was observed to only play one round of thumb-wrestling, despite instructions asking for both father and daughter to play three rounds of thumb-wrestling.

Research suggests variety and diversity regarding quality of step-parenting relationships (King, 2006); however several studies have identified discrepancies in the amounts of warmth and closeness provided by biological fathers versus step-fathers (Claxton-Oldfield, Garber & Gillcrist, 2006; Cartwright, Farnsworth & Mobley, 2006; Lamb & Tamis-Lemonda, 2004; Pleck, & Masciadrelli, 2004). In these studies, adolescents frequently rated their step-fathers as lower in their provision of warmth and reported feeling closer to their biological fathers. Furthermore, several step-fathers in these studies reported increased feelings of closeness to their own biological children, as opposed to their step-children.

Boyd-Franklin (2006) suggests that one of the challenges regarding stepfamilies, particularly African-American stepfamilies, is the ambiguity of family roles and evolving relationships. Therefore, an important consideration would be longevity of the step-father and step-daughter relationship and its current state of evolution. Father A reported that he has been involved as a step-father to Daughter A for approximately three years. Likewise, Father D noted that he has been involved as a step-father for approximately six years. Despite the increased length of time Father D has spent with Daughter D in comparison to Father A and Daughter A, Father A and Daughter A were observed to be more in sync and attuned to one another. However the difference in age between Daughter A (age 7) and Daughter D (age 10) may account for the difference in the evolution of their step father-daughter relationship due to distinctions in their developmental stages. Furthermore, the difference in age between Father A (age 28) and Father D (age 51) may also contribute to the differences in evolutionary states of the relationships.

## Overall Low Child Development Knowledge

The overall mean score yielded from the Child Development Knowledge scale from the MDPI was 14.6, which is categorized as *low*. Items that fell within this scale include: “I just ignore him/her until he/she treats me with respect,” “No adolescent is capable of consistently making good decisions,” “I lecture and lecture until they give in,” “I have found that getting them to laugh is the best way of breaking through,” “I try to show him/her why his/her friends are wrong and I am right,” and “I believe children are born with temperaments, some are easy and some are hard.”

Similarly, a limitation in child development knowledge was observed during tasks that fall within the Challenge domain of the MIM, particularly, the teaching task. When the fathers were asked to teach their daughter something new, three out of five fathers taught a task that was too simplistic for their daughter’s developmental level. One of the five fathers taught a task that was too challenging for their daughter’s developmental level and only one of the fathers taught a task that was appropriate for the daughter’s developmental level. Table 14 displays comparisons that have been mentioned between the MDPI Child development Knowledge scale and the teaching task found within the MIM.

Table 14

*MDPI Child Development Knowledge and Teaching Task Data Comparison*

Case	MDPI Child Development Knowledge Score & Descriptor	“Tasks/Activities chosen by the parent are developmentally appropriate” *	Level of Developmental Appropriateness**
A	18 ( <i>Average</i> )	4	“Too simplistic”
B	19 ( <i>Average</i> )	4	“Too simplistic”
C	13 ( <i>Low</i> )	5	“Developmentally appropriate”



D	14 ( <i>Low</i> )	3.5	“To simplistic”
E	9 ( <i>Low</i> )	4.25	“Too challenging”

*Note:* \*7-pt Likert scale, 1: Not appropriate, 7: Very appropriate  
\*\*Developmentally appropriateness of task/activity chosen by the father within the MIM Teaching Task

Further analysis of MDPI Child Development Knowledge scores revealed that overall, the father’s level of educational attainment was positively correlated with the Child Development Knowledge score. Table 15 displays comparisons between father’s level of education and Child Development Knowledge score. A large discrepancy is noted between Father A’s score and Father E’s score, both of whom represent the highest and lowest levels of education, respectively.

Table 15

*Father’s Level of Education and MDPI Child Development Knowledge Comparison*

Father	Father’s Level of Education	Child Development Knowledge Score
A	Doctoral/Professional	18 ( <i>Average</i> )
B	Some College	19 ( <i>Average</i> )
C	Some College	13 ( <i>Low</i> )
D	Some College	14 ( <i>Low</i> )
E	H.S. Diploma/GED	9 ( <i>Low</i> )

Research suggests that low parental child development knowledge could be detrimental to the quality of the parent-child relationship because inaccurate beliefs or overestimations of a child’s performance have an effect on parenting behaviors. When parents are unaware of normal developmental milestones, it could lead to difficulty with effective management of child behavior, and may resort to harsh discipline or emotional withdraw (Sanders & Morawska, 2008). Furthermore, several studies have identified accurate knowledge of child development has been associated with better coping skills

for children and better child socio-emotional and cognitive competencies (Sanders & Morawska, 2008). The research regarding child development knowledge and African-American fathers is limited; however there seems to be a need for intervention within this area.

### **Discomfort Regarding Physical Nurturance and Affection Between Fathers and Daughters**

Several of the fathers and daughters participating in this study expressed some discomfort when completing nurturance tasks (i.e. rubbing lotion upon one another and feeding one another). Comments made by the daughters in response to these tasks include: "This is awkward...", "Hurry up!" and "Eww..." Additionally, nonverbal responses were noted, which included increased distancing between the father and daughter during such tasks, hesitation to begin the tasks from both father and daughter and sooner termination of such tasks in comparison to other non-nurturing tasks. It should be noted that this discomfort does not represent overall discomfort with one another, but rather discomfort with general tasks that elicit physical nurturing behaviors.

It was observed that the most overt implications of discomfort were associated with the oldest female participants: Daughter C (age 10) and Daughter E (age 12). Both Daughter C and Daughter E made both verbal and non-verbal indications of discomfort as a result of nurturance tasks, more so than the younger female participants. This seems to be reflective of differences in developmental stages, in which it may be more appropriate and acceptable to experience physical nurturance from a father-figure during pre-adolescent stages, as opposed to after reaching adolescence.

Johnson (1988) discusses a common trend amongst working class fathers involving the withdrawal of nurturance and physical affection from their daughters, starting as early as infancy. Research suggests that such withdraw is due to fathers' discomfort with their daughter's sexuality. As a result, it is common for fathers to "play" with their daughters (i.e. competitive play), rather than nurture them. Additionally, it is common for these fathers to become "protectors" over their daughters, hoping to shield them from the sexual advances of other young boys or men (Johnson, 1988). Similarly, Cole (2009) found that African-American single fathers who parent daughters rated "provider" as their most important role, followed by "nurturer."

When applying such findings to the African-American fathers and daughters who participated in this study, it is likely that the daughters reacted aversively to overt nurturing behaviors associated with nurturance tasks if those behaviors are not typical within the father-daughter relationship. Cole's (2009) finding regarding the rating of "nurturer" as an important role to African-American single fathers implies that this role is significant and is commonly fulfilled in some ways. This implication was not supported by results found by this author's study. However, a distinction should be made regarding the type of father-daughter relationships examined. Cole's (2009) study examined African-American single fathers, while this author's study primarily examined African-American fathers who were married to a female spouse. Therefore, one must consider the ways in which African-American fathers attempt to fulfill the role of nurturer to their daughters and the impact additional variables (i.e. marital status, father status, etc.) may contribute to this role. Furthermore, the fathers' role of "protector" or "provider" was not

measured within this study; however it would be beneficial for this role within African-American fathering literature to be investigated further.

### **Frequent Competitive Play**

Fathers' tendency to "play" rather than provide nurture to their daughters, as indicated by Johnson (1998), is also relevant to discussion of this next theme. As previously mentioned during discussion of the MIM, level of playfulness between the fathers and daughters is a relational component that was able to be observed and analyzed. While playfulness was observed during several of the MIM task, the most notable form of play observed between the fathers and daughters within this study was *competitive play*, or play that involves rules, turn-taking, and a goal directed toward winning. Competitive play was most frequently observed between fathers and daughters during two specific tasks: cotton-ball blow and thumb wrestling. What was most unique about these interactions was the fathers' competitiveness, which was overt and noted in all of the father-daughter cases. Several of the fathers verbally expressed gratification in winning with responses such as "I won!" Similar gratification was expressed nonverbally, such as with a smile expressed to the daughter. Neither of the fathers was observed to let their daughters win during any of these tasks.

According to Hughes (2009), to some degree, play is a reflection of cultural values. For example, Franklin (2010) has found that African-American fathers often establish high expectations for their children, as a strategy for parenting. Such expectations frequently emphasize the importance of "not let[ting] the family down." Therefore, it seems likely that values learned through competition (i.e. goal-directedness, perseverance, turn-taking, resilience) are significant and were transmitted through the

fathers' style of play with their daughters. Additionally, it is also likely that the intrapsychic development of the fathers could have played a role in their competitive nature with their daughters. In other words, their competitiveness and drive to win may have been self-gratifying and served to fulfill a selfish need for achievement. Overall, one should consider the fathers' motivation for competitive play with their daughters and whether it serves an educational purpose or if it is self-gratifying.

### **Overall High Sense of Parental Effectiveness**

Research studies conducted by both Schock and Gavazzi (2005), and Cole (2009) imply that fathers who parent daughters have concerns regarding their effectiveness and satisfaction of their parenting. However, results from this study did not confirm those findings, as the overall mean score yielded from the Sense of Effectiveness scale from the MDPI was 21.4, which is categorized as *high*. This suggests that these fathers demonstrate the presence of basic parental skill and confidence regarding these skills. Items that fell within this scale include: "My child listens and cheerfully carries out what I tell him/her to do," "My child will always obey when they see my cry or get sad," and "I have to confess that I don't know what to do to get my child to behave."

Analysis of these scores revealed that the Sense of Effectiveness score was positively correlated with the fathers' reported number of children. Table 16 displays comparisons between the fathers' number of children, father-daughter status and MDPI Sense of Effectiveness score. For example, both Father C and Father E reported raising five children, and each rated themselves *high* on the Sense of Effectiveness scale. This is opposed to the other fathers, who reported raising fewer children, and only rated themselves as being *average* on this scale. Additionally, a trend was observed regarding

step-fathers and their Sense of Effectiveness score. Both step-fathers (Father A and Father D) represent the lowest Sense of Effective scores, in comparison to the other biological fathers who have higher scores.

Table 16

*Father's Number of Children, Father-Daughter Status and MDPI Sense of Effectiveness Comparison*

Father	Father-Daughter Status	Father's Number of Children	Sense of Effectiveness Score
A	Step-father	2	20 ( <i>Average</i> )
B	Biological relationship	3	20 ( <i>Average</i> )
C	Biological relationship	5	21 ( <i>High</i> )
D	Step-father	4	19 ( <i>Average</i> )
E	Biological relationship	5	27 ( <i>High</i> )

### **Sense of Regard for Role Flexibility and Extended Family**

Research conducted by Boyd-Franklin (2001; 2006) highlights the importance of role flexibility and extended family within African-American families. Additionally, Franklin (2010) noted that African-American fathers utilize community resources, such as extended family, as one of six strategies for parenting. The significance of both findings was demonstrated and confirmed in this study, as both Father A and Father D identified as step-parent to their daughter. Consequently, this author found Connor and White's (2006) definition of "social fatherhood" to be significant as various father types were demonstrated within this study. Furthermore, several of the fathers and daughters reported additional noteworthy family members, as documented on their demographic sheet. For example, both Father B and Daughter B reported the maternal and paternal grandmothers' role in the family, Father C and Daughter C reported significance of a

step-mother, as well as grandparent figures, and Father E and Daughter E reported additional foster children within the household.

**Additional strengths demonstrated by the African-American fathers.** In addition to the previous themes noted from data collected from the African-American fathers and daughters, several strengths were identified regarding their father-daughter interactions. Overall mean scores for the Permissiveness, as well as the Control/Authoritarian scales within the MDPI were both categorized as *low*, which implies that these fathers are able to appropriately balance child freedom and parental control. Furthermore, the overall mean scores for Objectivity/Accommodative scales were categorized as *high*. Consequently, this suggests that these fathers have the ability to demonstrate objectivity throughout parenting, especially when considering disciplinary actions or punishments. Lastly, several of the fathers consistently demonstrated the ability to provide structure within the father-daughter relationship by fulfilling an appropriate parental role, and representing the ability to be “in-charge” throughout the father-daughter interaction. This finding is consistent with a similar finding by Franklin (2010), which highlights African-American fathers’ use of strong limit setting as one of six strategies for parenting.

### **Limitations of the Study**

While this study has provided useful information for clinicians who engage with African-American families and more specifically, African-American fathers and daughters, this study is limited in the following ways. Most notably, the sample size of the study is size ( $n=10$ , five fathers and five daughters). With such a small sample size, it is likely that the data presented does not accurately portray the performance and

capabilities of African-American fathers who parent daughters. Rather, this data would be more suitable for the purpose of potentially guiding another investigation on a much larger scale at a later time.

A second limitation regards the use of the MIM for the purpose of assessing the father-daughter relationship. As previously mentioned, while the MIM was originally developed for research purposes, the technique is not yet supported by reliability and validity data; however the technique has been used extensively in clinical settings, primarily for the purposes of planning family oriented treatment. With that being said, caution and consideration must be taken when interpreting such results.

Thirdly, the sample of African-American fathers used is further limiting with regard to sexual orientation, religion and geographical location. Most of the fathers within the study self-identified as heterosexual, Christian and they all live in a small Mid-West city. Therefore, it is possible that results drawn from this study are specific to this unique population of African-American fathers who parent daughters. Again, caution and consideration must be taken if these results and conclusions are to be generalized to African-American fathers that do not fit such variables.

Lastly, a limitation involves rating and interpretation of the MIM data, which was conducted by two African-American women. It is possible that rating and interpretation of such data could contain biases of some form based on diversity variables, particularly race and gender. Yet again, consideration should be taken considering this matter.

### **Future Directions**

There are several ways in which this study can be expanded to broaden the breadth of data and to ensure more accurate generalizability for the African-American



populations of fathers who parent daughters. It would be beneficial for this study to continue, in order to increase the sample size and ideally to increase the variety of diversity variables found within the sample (i.e. sexual orientation, religion, geographic location, disability status, socioeconomic status). Furthermore, it would also be beneficial for this study to be continued so as to provide data regarding the similarities and differences found in the ways African-American fathers parent based on their daughters age. The current data provides data for African-American daughters whose ages range between 7-12 years old. Ideally, this study would be continued to include African-American daughters of from infancy through young adulthood.

This study did not investigate family history of the fathers who participated, which would include details regarding their own parents' parenting style, quality of parental relationship, sibling relationships and how they learned to become fathers. According to Connor and White (2006), Franklin (2010), and Cook et al. (2005), a man's own experience of fathering has the potential to significantly influence his own fathering style and approach. Therefore, further study of this topic should more thoroughly investigate how aspects of family history may impact the ways African-American fathers currently parent their daughters.

Lastly, this study could be expanded in a unique way through further analysis of possible projection found within the Picture and Storytelling task. This specific task falls within both the Structure and Engagement domains of the MIM, and asked for the fathers and daughters to work together to develop stories about several pictures that depict images of African-American fathers and daughters together. It is quite possible for

several of the stories developed during this task to contain some form of projection that could provide further information regarding the father-daughter relationship.

## Appendix A

### Demographics Sheet- FATHER'S VERSION

Name:

Age:

Age at Daughter's Birth:

Race:

Marital Status:

Occupation:

Highest Level of Education:

Religion/Spirituality:

Sexual Orientation:

Disability Status:

Primary Household Members:

Other Significant Family Members:

What is the status of the relationship with your daughter (Please select one):

- Biological daughter relationship
- Step-daughter relationship
- Adoptive or foster-daughter relationship
- "I am a Social-father/Father-figure to my daughter"
- Other (please explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Please select the option that is most appropriate:

- My daughter and I reside in the same home
- My daughter and I reside in separate homes
- Other (please

explain):\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B

### Demographics Sheet- DAUGHTER'S VERSION

Name:

Age:

Race:

Highest Level of Education:

Hobbies/Extra-Curricular Activities:

Religion/Spirituality:

Sexual Orientation:

Disability Status:

Primary Household Members:

Other Significant Family Members:

What is the status of the relationship with your father (Please select one):

- Biological father relationship
- Step-father relationship
- Adoptive or foster-father relationship
- Social-father/Father-figure relationship
- Other (please explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Please select the option that is most appropriate:

- My father and I reside in the same home
- My father and I reside in separate homes
- Other (please explain): \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C

### Follow Up Questions

What was your reaction to the session?

Were there any surprises for you?

Was (child's name) any different from usual or from what she is like at home? In what way?

Was (parent's name) any different from usual or from what he is like at home? In what way?

What task did you like best? What did you like about it?

What task did you like least? What did you not like about it?

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