“Someone who counts”:
Exploring father-daughter relationships when the daughter is living with a facial difference

by

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A Thesis
presented to
The University of Guelph

In partial fulfilment of requirements
for the degree of
Doctorate of Philosophy
in
Family Relations and Human Development

Guelph, Ontario, Canada

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ABSTRACT

“SOMEONE WHO COUNTS”: EXPLORING FATHER-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIPS WHEN THE DAUGHTER IS LIVING WITH A FACIAL DIFFERENCE

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Research on gender and its implications for the provision of care has burgeoned in the last thirty years; however, explorations of the intersection of gender and disability on caregiving remain limited. This dissertation reports on a feminist disability studies and post-structuralist research study examining father-daughter relationships across a diversity of ethnocultural and class backgrounds in contemporary Anglo-western contexts when the daughter is living with a facial difference. Specifically, it explores the way fathers and daughters experience their relationship with one another, how the relationship contributes to the identity formation and transformation of both parties, and the re/production and subversion of gendered models of care within the relationship when the daughter is living with a congenital facial difference. Ten young women (age 16-33) and eight fathers (age 38-74) were interviewed. Both fathers and daughters relied on three dominant discourses in constructing the meanings they made of their relationship, namely: mothers are more proficient caregivers, fathers know best, and gendered silence. These three discourses subsequently informed and were informed by a central dynamic characterizing father-daughter relationships that may be described as “precarious closeness”: the fragile, tentative and unstable intimacy forged between fathers and daughters in postfeminist neoliberal times that is facilitated and complicated by a host of social, economic, political and developmental forces. Although participants spoke of facial difference in their interviews, gender
surfaced as more central and critical to daughters’ and fathers’ conceptualizations of their relationship. Together, these discursive and relational themes may have an influence on the way our society understands gender, bodies, families, and care, with particular implications for family scholarship, social policy, the education system, and disability advocacy.
This dissertation is dedicated to each of my grandparents:
Manuel and Jacinta Rego, and the late Vincenzo and Vittoria Pileggi.
Thank you for teaching me the value of life-long learning and embodying the true meaning of hard work. Your sacrifices made everything I’ve achieved possible.
Acknowledgements

I would first like to express my sincerest gratitude to the fathers and daughters who participated in this project. The thoughtful honesty and profound emotions that characterized your stories not only made this project possible, but greatly enriched my understanding of human relationships. I am forever grateful for your willingness to make yourselves available and share your experiences with me.

To my advisor, Dr. Carla Rice, I cannot put into words how thankful I am for your consistent mentorship, stimulating feedback, listening ear, and unwavering support. Even in the most difficult moments of the last six years, you always made me believe I was capable and worthy of this achievement. Thank you for your patience as I discovered who I wanted to be as a student, teacher, scholar, feminist and woman. Special thanks to my committee members, Dr. John Beaton and Dr. Khrista Boylan, as well. Your professional and personal insights, and the passion with which you approached this project are greatly appreciated. Together, the three of you comprised the most wonderful team, and I am immensely grateful for your wisdom and encouragement.

A warm shout out to everyone in the Department of Family Relations and Applied Nutrition, including faculty, staff and my fellow students: you made U of G such a wonderful home away from home and I cherish the time I spent learning from you and with you.

Finally, and most importantly, I must acknowledge my entire family, especially my mother, father, sister and husband. Thank you for helping me to fully embrace this process and honour both the highs and lows. You have been the source of the best celebrations when things have gone right, and the well from which I drew new confidence and motivation when my own
well (repeatedly) ran dry. I could have accomplished none of this without your endless positivity, patience, love and support.

This project was generously funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.
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In her 1991 study of mothers and gendered caregiving, Rannveig Traustadottir spoke of the then emerging trend of studying families raising children with disabilities, to better understand their experiences and needs. While she praised this trend as being instrumental in facilitating relevant policy changes and creating significant social services to support such families, she also criticized the scholarly literature for not attending to the role of gender in family processes. Despite gender’s burgeoning into a key analytic concept in recent years, particularly in the field of family studies (Coltrane & Adams, 2008; Ferree, 2010; Lloyd, Few, & Allen, 2009), the tendency to overlook the intersecting forces of gender and disability, and their tandem influence on family life, persists almost 30 years after the publication of Traustadottir’s 1991 study. Theorists of feminist disability studies, such as Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (1994, 2002, 2005, 2011), Kim Hall (2011), Allison Kafer (2013), and Carla Rice (2014), have critiqued the reductive, biological understanding of both disability and gender by highlighting their social, relational, and political construction, underscoring the implications of their intersection in the lives of individuals. Less work has been done, however, to examine the influence of gender on structuring family relationships and caregiving when a child is living with a disability or bodily difference.

One subset of disability literature particularly guilty of this elision is scholarship on facial difference. Facial difference is the broad term used to refer to multiple conditions that affect the structure and appearance of an individual’s head and face. This includes differences present at birth, such as birthmarks and a cleft lip and/or palate, and those acquired through accident or
illness such as burn injuries and cancers (Charkins, 1996). It is estimated that 1.5 million
Canadians are currently living with a facial difference; statistics suggest that approximately
17,000 Canadian babies are born with a congenital difference, and more than 280,000 Canadians
acquire a difference each year (AboutFace, 2010). Most of the developmental and psychological
research on facial difference done in the last 50 years has focused on its impacts on individuals:
how facial difference reduces one’s quality of life, leads to poor self-esteem, and increases risk
for various psychiatric diagnoses (Broder, Richman, & Matheson, 1998; Pope & Snyder, 2005;
Rumsey & Harcourt, 2004; Tobiasen & Speltz, 1996; Turner, Thomas, Dowell, Rumsey, &
Sandy, 1997). More often than not, researchers elide the significance of relationality in the
development of an individual’s sense of self. According to relational theory, human beings enter
into a number of relationships throughout their lives, both private and public. These relationships
are conceptualized as a primary and fundamental aspect of human life; it is in and through these
relationships that individuals are constituted (Gilligan, 1995; Jordan, 2008; Koggel, 2012;

Within the existing literature exploring familial processes and relations, there has been a
strong bias toward investigating the maternal role and relationship (Campis, DeMaso, & Twente,
1995; Klein, Pope, Getahun, & Thompson, 2006; Maris, Endriga, Speltz, Jones, & De Klyen,
2000; Pileggi, Rice, Stead, & Atkinson, in press; Pope, 1999; Speltz, Armsden, & Clarren, 1990;
vан Staden & Gerhardt, 1995). Though mothers most often occupy the role of primary caregiver
for their children, due to gendered ideologies and regimes of care (Traustadottir, 1991), focusing
exclusively on the mother-child relationship and maternal perceptions of caring for a child with
facial difference presents a limited view of other familial experiences and relationships, and
discursively buttresses gendered care ideologies and structures. Fathers in particular are left out of facial difference research, and are rarely assumed to be involved in the provision of care. Consequently, little is understood about their caregiving experiences and their relationships with their children, particularly those living with a facial difference.

However, for feminist post-structuralists like Judith Butler (2004a), the very distinctions between mother and father are normative examples of gender regulation at work. Just as motherhood and femininity have been traditionally concomitant, so too have fatherhood and masculinity, and these constructs define and delimit the boundaries of how people are expected to act in these roles. Much like the discourses that surround difference, hegemonic discourses that exist around gender and parenthood place constraints on the subject positions and identities that individuals can construct and occupy, enjoining those with female-coded bodies to become mothers and those with male-coded bodies to become fathers. However, in the tradition of Butlerian feminist post-structuralism, gender is not considered something that someone necessarily “has” or essentially “is,” but rather is the “apparatus by which the production and normalization of masculine and feminine take place” (Butler, 2004a, p. 42). Thus, research that has explored the practices of mothering and fathering, particularly in a disability context, has in fact reified gendered notions of these constructs, and remains limited in its understanding of how kinship relations exist and persist in ways that may not conform to the existing gender binary.

1.1 Understanding Fathers and Daughters in New Ways: Objectives of the Project

Analyzing facial difference and/in families through a feminist post-structuralist and disability studies lens presents a nuanced way to theorize how young women/daughters and men/
fathers define themselves in and through the language they use and the relationships they forge in the context of family. I acknowledge that, given their radically different origins, logics, and emphases, post-structuralist and family relationship theories appear to be inconsistent; however, this project brings these framings together in order to understand the operations of gender and disability in father-daughter relationships, as well as the role of language in doing and undoing of both of these constructs when exploring how daughters living with facial difference and their fathers subjectively understand themselves. These epistemological frameworks enable theorization as to how the relational constructs of motherhood and fatherhood may become blurred in the context of caring for a child with a facial difference, and how the ways in which gender (of both parent and child) interacts with bodily difference in these “cripped” family forms.

Through the use of semi-structured interviews, this project was interested in qualitatively understanding various enactments and perceptions of fatherhood, and how these intersect with and influence the development and revision of young women’s personal subjectivities when living with a facial difference, from the perspectives of both fathers and daughters. Specifically, I explored how young women’s understandings of themselves, their bodies, and their gender are influenced by their relationships with their fathers. I also investigated how fathers understand their roles, genders, and subjectivities in relationship with their daughters. In alignment with its objectives, my project sought to answer three research questions: a) How do daughters and fathers experience and understand their relationships with one another?; b) How does the relationship between father and daughter contribute to the development of the identity and
subjectivity of both parties?; and c) How are gendered models of care produced, reproduced, or
subverted in father-daughter relationships when the daughter is living with a facial difference?

I use the term “experience” throughout this dissertation when describing participants’
accounts of their relationships and of facial difference. Historically, poststructural theorists have
critiqued the concept of experience because it is taken as an objective description of what an
individual has “lived through” (Scott, 1992). Once closely connected to the idea of both
experiments (a process of “arriving at” knowledge through testing and observation) and
reflection (a process of learning from observed events and becoming fully aware of feelings and
thoughts), experience is typically thought to denote an authentic personal truth and to establish
an autonomous notion of personhood (Williams, 1983). Yet taken-for-granted understandings of
experience are problematic because they neglect to consider how the knowledge that informs
experience is constructed as well as how discourse, cognition and reality together construct
experience. For Scott (1992) and de Lauretis (1984) individuals don’t “have” experiences, but
are constituted through them. Moreover, for these and other post-structuralist scholars,
experiences should be considered as neither self-evident nor straightforward, but as politicized
and contested; they are not the “origin” of our explanations of the world, but the very things that
we want to explain. Thus, while some theorists have argued that the concept of experience
should be abandoned, Scott (1992) argues that we work with it, analyze and clarify its
operations, and reformulate its meaning. Thinking with Scott, in this dissertation I do not
approach experience as an objective/truthful/factual representation of participants' realities, but
rather, as a shifting account of their understandings from their unique subject positionings that
requires further interpretation. As such, any reference to experience within the dissertation can be
understood as participants’ accounts of their experiences or their storied, narrated, or voiced experiences. Following Reissman (2008), I use the terms “stories”, “voices” and “narratives” interchangeably. While each of these concepts have different informing literatures, as Riessman notes, they all point to the co-constructed descriptions (in the context of research interviews) that participants offer of their relationships, bodies, and lives.

1.2 Organization of the Dissertation

The dissertation is organized into seven chapters. The first half of Chapter One establishes the importance of the study by problematizing the ways facial difference, gender, and disability have been studied previously, and outlines the objectives and questions central to this research. The remainder of this chapter presents critical feminist, disability, and post-structuralist theories that frame this project. Identifying the central tenets of feminist disability theory informs the social, political, and relational way I understand and approach disability and facial/bodily difference in my work with young women and their fathers. By introducing post-structuralism, I construct the gendered subject positions that I explored in this study (including father/daughter, male/female) as fluid “performances,” rooted in language and discourse, rather than rigid constructs or relationships. This chapter highlights the way these principles influence the development of this project, as well as its recruitment strategies, participant selection, and analysis.

Chapter Two provides an in-depth review of the literature on femininity and fatherhood. I begin by exploring the damaging representations of female and disabled bodies that circulate in Anglo-western cultures, to emphasize the centrality of intersectionality in my analysis. I
complicate the universal and unidirectional theories of development in psychology to justify my recruitment of diversely aged women. Additionally, I critique the individualized model of resilience that governs the contemporary understanding of disability, and instead offer relationality as a more appropriate alternative to understanding young women’s sense of body and self. The second part of the chapter identifies the persistent gaps in fatherhood research, including: the continued focus on mothers as caregivers of interest, the relevancy of and challenges to the involvement paradigm, the limited purview of the father-daughter relationship in psychology, and the shortage of research on facial difference and fatherhood. Chapter Three provides additional detail about recruitment, the fathers and daughters that participated in interviews, and the data collection procedures and analytic processes used.

Chapters Four and Five comprise the results sections of this dissertation. Acknowledging the primacy of discourse to post-structuralism, Chapter Four identifies themes in the overarching social narratives that structure the way fathers and daughters interact with and perceive each other. Using participants’ own words, I demonstrate how they both adhere to and resist the dominant views of femininity, masculinity, bodies, and caregiving in their relationship. Chapter Five attends to themes showing how fathers and daughters conceptualize and experience their relationship and facial difference.

In Chapter Six, drawing on theories and concepts from economics and social policy, critical feminism, and gender and family studies, I discuss the origins of the discourses and relational patterns on which fathers and daughters rely. I bring these seemingly incompatible domains together to illuminate how discourse and relationality simultaneously shape and are
shaped by one another. Returning to the objectives of this project, I also theorize the centrality of gender and bodily difference in both father-daughter relationships and family systems. Finally, in Chapter Seven, I probe the potential implications of my findings, with particular attention to the areas of social policy, education, scholarship, and disability activism. These imaginings are followed by a discussion of the strengths and limitations of my study, and suggestions for future research.

1.3 Theoretical Frameworks

Perspectives from both feminist post-structuralism and disability studies inform this study. These theoretical orientations also inform my recruitment strategy and participant selection process, as well as data collection and analytic approach. Feminist disability theory and post-structuralism are also used to frame the review of existing scholarship relevant to this study and its objectives. A description of each of these theoretical positions and how they were applied in this study is provided below.

1.3.1 Feminist disability theory. Considered “academic cultural work with a sharp political edge and vigorous critical punch” (Garland-Thompson, 2005, p. 1,557), feminist disability theory informed and framed this project in a number of ways. The birth of feminist disability studies (FDS) stemmed in part from a call by women living with disabilities to consider and recognize gender and the multitude of other socially marked differences that influence their subjectivities, including disability, race, and class (Garland-Thomson, 1994). As a theoretical perspective, FDS is rooted in the idea that disability, like femaleness, is not a natural state of inferiority, inadequacy, or insufficiency. Instead, ableist ideologies that view disability as
an inferior and negative condition that must be tolerated and/or eliminated, combined with masculinist logics that construct men as the idealized “corporeal standard” for human bodies, inform and fuel modes of ableism and sexism—attitudes that promote the subordination and unequal treatment of people living with disabilities and women respectively (Campbell, 2008; Hall, 2011; Wendell, 1989). Feminist disability studies aims to disrupt recurring stereotypes of people with disabilities, and contest popular assumptions about what it means to live with a disability or difference. In so doing, it works toward achieving full integration and inclusion of those members of society that have been subordinated and excluded, as well as a transformation of the established knowledge and social order that guides human behaviour and thought (Garland-Thompson, 2002, 2005).

According to Hall (2011), an FDS approach invites a re-imagination of both disability and gender, such that disability becomes irreducible to bodily impairment, just as gender is irreducible to biological sex. Early disability scholars proposed a social model of disability, renouncing the reductive biological and medical understandings of disability (and gender) as inherent deficiency or natural inferiority. In this framework, impairment—a difference in an individual’s mental, physical, or sensory functioning—is distinct from disability, defined as a condition stemming entirely from social structures, built environments, and communication technologies that exclude people with impairments (Northern Officers Group, 1999; Rice, 2014; Silvers, 2013). According to the social model, disabled people are not defined as such by their body, but by their inability to participate in everyday life as a direct consequence of the physical and attitudinal barriers that exist. For proponents of this model, the solution to ableism lies not in modifying people’s bodies but in reforming oppressive societal practices and structures (Morris,
Though this model helps reduce the pathologizing of people’s embodiements, in recent years the social model has been critiqued for failing to acknowledge the lived reality of disability, the meanings individuals assign to their bodies, and the ways disabling attitudes and structures impact those, including family and friends, who do not identify as impaired (Rice, 2014). In fact, many theorists have cast off the fundamental distinction between impairment and disability as irrelevant; according to Kafer (2013), impairment is not rooted solely in the physical but is socially determined, and shifts across time and place.

Extending beyond the social model, some contemporary FDS scholars, including Nirmala Erevelles (2011) and Susan Bordo (2003), explore difference and disability from a constructivist perspective. In this framework, difference can be defined as any divergence from the “mythical norm” (Lorde, 1984) or “archetypal citizen” (Rice, Chandler, Liddiard, Rinaldi, & Harrison, 2016): a white, cisgender, male who is able-bodied, middle-class, heterosexual, speaks a standard language (English), and practices a standard religion (Christianity). Any body that diverges from this idealized form—one that identifies as female, racialized, disabled, non-heterosexual, transgender, immigrant, living in poverty, etc.—is socially constructed as deviant or other. This definition aligns with the post-structuralist theory of performativity (described in more detail in the following sections). Arguably, this conceptualization of difference can be criticized for not attending to the physicality of bodies or embodiment. In this line of thought, there is no ontological truth to difference or disability; it is defined by what it is not rather than what it actually is. Acknowledging the limitations of this view, Butler, in her book *Bodies That Matter* (1993), attempted to reconsider the centrality of the body in defining difference. Here, she described sexual difference as both given and constructed, but did little to explore its “given”
nature. Alternatively, she focused on problematizing how certain bodies are constructed as “ideal” in the first place.

Using Butler’s under-theorized position as a launching pad, feminists in the materialist and post-human traditions have returned to the facticity of the body in their definitions of disability. They’ve posited that although we struggle to understand and know it, there is an ontological truth to bodily difference (Braidotti, 1994, 2013; Grosz, 1994, 2010). Clarifying this position in relation to sexual difference, Rosi Braidotti claimed, “being a woman is always already there as the ontological precondition for my existential becoming a subject” (1994, p. 187). The biological materiality of disabled bodies does exist in the opinions of these scholars, and while this materiality may not determine how these bodies are read and experienced by self and other, it does make disabled subjectivities and identities possible. Drawing on this materialist argument, FDS scholars like Rice and colleagues (2015) and Garland-Thomson (2011) suggested that disability and difference emerge through the overlapping of the social and biological—the interplay of world and flesh. This perspective is fundamental to Garland-Thomson’s (2011) theory of disability as a “misfit,” or the result of an incongruent relationship between the body and the environment in which it exists. The shape, size, and function of a particular body may conform to the requirements of one particular environment, but not another. Seeing disability and difference in this way can help elucidate the universality of disability and difference, encouraging the valuing of disabled people as knowledgeable members of society.

In addition to disrupting dominant ideas about what disability is, FDS is committed to retrieving and honouring the voices that have traditionally been dismissed or misrepresented,
especially those of women with disabilities. Both theoretically and methodologically, FDS
invests these women with subjectivity, agency, and a capacity for reflecting on their experiences,
and recognizes them as having unique insights into the intricate processes of embodying gender
and disability in an ablest, sexist society. Feminist disability studies explore the idiosyncratic
relationship between gender and disability, and interrogate the role that gender plays in
individuals’ experiences of disability (Hall, 2011). In doing so, FDS probes the cultural and
personal meanings that are attributed to certain bodies marked as subordinate, and exposes the
intersecting sexist and ablest attitudes and practices that impact those bodies (Garland-Thomson,
2005; Wendell, 1989). Here, the concept of intersectionality emerges as important. Garland-
Thomson (1994, 2002) argued that interrogating how disability and gender interact with other
social forces is imperative because no otherwise unmarked “woman” (or man) exists; rather, we
each occupy multiple cultural categories concurrently. Intersecting oppressions and privileged
positionalities such as disability/ability, racialized/white, male/female, masculine/feminine, and
heteronormative/queer are not necessarily additive (disadvantaging or advantaging people in
incremental or compounding ways), but rather overlap in unique and unpredictable ways,
producing a wide array of marginalizing and privilege-producing experiences (Erevelles &
Minear, 2010; Garry, 2011; Hirschmann, 2013). Therefore, FDS acknowledges that the stories of
those it makes visible, audible, and perceptible must not be taken as representative of all
members of a community; the discourse that develops from analyses of individuals’ narratives
must attend to complexity and variation within individuals’ experiences (Garland-Thomson,
1994; Wendell, 1989).
To achieve these aims, feminist disability scholars engage in a few critical practices. First, they attempt to avoid any impairment-specific, medical, or diagnostic language to describe disabilities. They may acknowledge or refer to communities that are forged on the basis of shared experiences of disability, but remain committed to recognizing the broad range of stigmatized embodiments. Second, feminist disability scholars purposefully use “precise language that may seem convoluted” when referring to or speaking about disability (Garland-Thomson, 2005, p. 1,558). This includes people-first language such as “individuals living with facial difference,” or other phrases such as “traits we think of as disability,” and “bodies that violate the normative standard and expectations of bodily form and function” (Garland-Thomson, 2005, p. 1,558). This is done with the intent to clarify the critical difference between a physical body and a social identity/positionality, and calling for readers to not fall back on the essentialist definitions of disability that proliferate in the wider conventional disability literature, and which promote the deficit model (Garland-Thomson, 2005). Last, FDS moves beyond oft-cited topics of health, illness, reproductive technologies, access to care, genetics, and prosthetics, and instead considers broader feminist concerns in a disability context, including but not limited to questioning the following: “the unity of the category woman, the status of the lived body, the politics of appearance, the medicalization of the body, the privilege of normalcy, multiculturalism, sexuality, the social construction of identity, and the commitment to integration” (Garland-Thomson, 2002, p. 4).

Moreover, FDS advocates that people should strive to accommodate and appreciate bodily difference because those with disabilities come with their own unique knowledge, and because reconceptualising non-normativity as human variation also helps people to rethink what
it means to be human, embodied, and in relationship (Garland-Thomson, 2002; Sedgwick, 1990). As Linton (1998) argued, studying disability is a “prism through which one can gain a broader understanding of society and human experience” (p.118). In this way, FDS aligns well with the central tenets of the contributitional perspective on disability, which approaches disability and difference in terms of the value these ways of being may add to—rather than focusing solely on how they may complicate or compromise—the individual, family, and wider community. Like FDS, a contributitional perspective on disability aims to empower individuals by destabilizing the continuum of “normalcy” and foregrounding how people considered “non-normative” work within their circumstances to lead valuable and productive lives through and against the inhospitable environments in which they are situated (Eiserman, 2001).

Consistent with the tenets of FDS, I approached facial difference in this project as a cultural interpretation of human variation, rather than a natural state of inferiority or inadequacy, both in my interview questions and in the data analysis. However, by interviewing young women living with facial differences and their fathers, I attended to two groups that have been misrepresented or overlooked in existing scholarship on parenting children/youth with disabilities. Arguably, just as female and disabled bodies have been positioned as lacking and/or deficient in relation to male and able bodies, fathers have been positioned as deficient and inept vis-à-vis mothers in the realm of care work, particularly in the context of hegemonic masculinity. According to the dominant discourses of masculinity, all that is coded as female and feminine is seen as outside the purview of masculinity and maleness, therefore to successfully accomplish masculinity and appropriately “do” their gender (Butler, 2004a), men must be seen as failing at being feminine (including being nurturing, warm, affectionate, etc.). Ultimately, this buttresses
the binary and asymmetrical power relations that persist between men and women in many facets of social life, including caregiving (Atkinson, 2011; Doucet, 2006).

In this study, I interviewed young women about their relationships with their bodies and their sense of gender, explored how they felt their relationships with their fathers have influenced them, and in turn examined how they felt their bodies and gender have influenced the father-daughter relationship. I also probed these processes from fathers’ perspectives; namely, in interviews with fathers, I explored the relationship that they maintain with their own bodies and gender, and how they felt they have influenced and been influenced by their relationship with their daughters. I addressed specific topics such as daughters’ sense of becoming women, fathers’ experiences of daughters’ developmental processes, the larger politics of appearance and desirability with which both must contend, experiences of both with medicalization, as well as themes of sexuality, relationships, and identity. For my analytic approach, I intentionally emphasized the influence of marginalizing attitudes, looking- and gender-relations on the young women interviewed, their fathers, and their families, rather than implicating the facial difference itself as a reason for potential challenges that both daughters and fathers confront. Moreover, I sought to acknowledge the complexity of participants’ narratives, recognizing the potential barriers and pains, while simultaneously highlighting the beneficial aspects of facial difference so as to talk back to the pathological narratives currently dominating the literature on disability and facial difference.

1.3.2 Feminist post-structuralism. Tied to the work of philosophers such as Karl Marx, Louis Althusser, Jacques Lacan, Sigmund Freud, Jacques Derrida, and Michel Foucault (Belsey, 2002; Harcourt, 2007; Lupton & Barclay, 1997), post-structuralism endorses non-positivist
knowledge and language (Agger, 1991). Tethered to social constructionism, it contends that all knowledge is constructed. In other words, post-structuralism views knowledge as understood only through social and cultural processes, and draws attention to the constitutive role that language plays in creating reality and identities (Lupton & Barclay, 1997). While its predecessor, structuralism, sought to predict and understand “universal” human behaviour through observing, deciphering, and labelling patterns (including in social formations such as families, and in the gendering of roles and relationships such as fathers and daughters), post-structuralism instead understands that there is no ontological truth about human selves or socialities, and thus, there is no universal, natural, inherent, or predictable “truth” about either that needs to be “discovered” or “revealed” (Agger, 1991; Harcourt, 2007; Vick, 2006). Rather, post-structuralists posit that meanings are constantly constructed and re-constructed, non-essential, unpredictable, fluctuating, challenged and contested (Agger, 1991; Harcourt, 2007; Reeser, 2010; Vick, 2006).

Accordingly, post-structuralism is less concerned with identifying and labelling regularities in the social world (this was structuralism’s main preoccupation), and is more focused on analyzing what discovered regularities could mean, and questioning that which is assumed to be “normal” or “common sense” within social configurations (Barrett, 2005; Harcourt, 2007; Kumashiro, 2004; Weedon, 2004). To post-structuralist thinkers like Butler (1993, 2004a), Deborah Lupton, and Lesley Barclay (1997), any aspect of human experience considered “fixed,” “natural,” or “immutable” is the product of hegemonic social forces and power relations. Gender, for instance, is a key construct within feminist post-structuralism; scholars work to explain how gendered language defines, restricts, and forces people into prescribed, binary categories of identification: male or female, masculine or feminine, father or
mother, son or daughter, etc. (Belsey, 2002). Post-structural theorists posit that despite its position as a primary category of social organization in western society, gender is a dynamic “project of the self,” or a set of practices and techniques (including those involving bodily care and deportment) learned by one’s immersion in culture (Lupton & Barclay, 1997; Probyn, 1993). This perspective differs from the prior, still-predominant understanding of gender—that of a “psychological essence,” or an inner quality one inherits or adopts early in life, or that is tied to biological elements (Butler, 1990, 1993; Connell, 1993). Butler’s (1988) theory of performativity did not view gender as a tangible or established “locus of agency from which acts proceed” (p. 519), but as an unstable and tenuous identity that has itself been constituted over time through repeated actions, communications, gestures, and movements. The repetitive nature of these behaviours is precisely what makes gender a “performance”; with time, both the subject and their audience affirm the presentation as legitimate and reify it by “acting” in consistent ways.

Extending Butler’s theory, performativity can also be used to describe other identity categories including “disability,” “mother,” and “father.” According to Dino Felluga (2011) and Lupton and Barclay (1997), each of these categories can be conceptualized as “acts” or “performative” ideological illusions, learned and created by our bodily, communicative, and thinking practices, and enacted and maintained by individuals in the context of various institutions such as the family, workplace, school, and government. The meanings we ascribe to these labels are shaped by personal experience, social position, personal values, and other subjective factors (Vick, 2006). As such, there exists no such thing as a definitive, comprehensive, or representative account of any of these constructs.
Related to this deconstruction are the interrelated concepts of subjectivity, language, and discourse (Lupton & Barclay, 1997). Post-structuralism posits that, ontologically, there exists no fundamental or essential “self,” gendered or otherwise, only socially constructed notions of what a person is supposed to be or do (Barrett, 2005; Davies, 2000). Rather than being given, static, or fixed, the way people experience and define themselves is highly varied, dynamic, and heterogeneous across the lifespan and is worked at on a daily basis (Lupton & Barclay, 1997). Consequently, subjectivity is far too unstable to suggest that an individual is. As proposed by Reeser (2010), individuals (shaped and self-shaping through discourse and structure) continue to become many things at many different points in life, slipping in and out of categories by way of their permeable boundaries.

This becoming is contingent upon the presence of available discourses (Davies, 2000; Foucault, 1984; Lupton & Barclay, 1997). By definition, discourses are patterned ways of being in and understanding the world that stem from certain reinforced social ideas, attitudes, and beliefs (Foucault, 1972; Weedon, 2004). Some discourses are hegemonic over others—those of femininity and masculinity, which regulate gender—and sometimes these discourses are more tenuously hegemonic than at other times. For example, it is more permissible for pre-adolescent girls to perform “boy” than for boys to perform “girl,” suggesting gender is more tenuously hegemonic for girls in childhood. The purpose of discourses is to make and reinforce knowledge claims about the self, other, and world; they construct what it means to be a normative human being and to belong to a certain identity category, and persuade individuals and groups to conform to powerful norms and expectations proliferated across cultural spheres and social institutions (Barrett, 2005; Foucault, 1984; Reeser, 2010). These “norms” construct and define
“anti-norms” (Reeser, 2010), outlining what it means to not belong to the given categories, and casting individuals who do not conform to any one category as “other.”

There exists a range of competing discourses that people draw upon in an effort to talk about themselves, present themselves to the public, and ultimately to understand who they are. Moreover, the construction of identity is not a personal process. Rather, people are continuously positioned and labelled by others through existing discourses that become integrated into their perception of self (Lupton & Barclay, 1997). From a feminist post-structuralist perspective, people cannot be agentic outside the confines of the discourses of masculinity and femininity, or maleness and femaleness that produce them. Therefore, freedom does not necessarily lie outside of discourse, but in the disruption of the unstable hegemonic discourses that circulate, and in the co-production and adoption of unfamiliar or even invisible ones, such as the emergent discourses of trans and genderqueer identities (Barrett, 2005; Butler, 1993; Davies, 2000; Reeser, 2010).

The line between maintenance and disruption of these discourses is rooted in language practices (Barrett, 2005). It is through language that we create “fictions” and present them as reality. Thus language can never be separated from reality because it defines reality (Bartlett, 2005; Reeser, 2010). Our understanding of reality, what “makes sense” or is “possible,” is “entirely or largely mediated by language” (Bartlett, 2005; Reeser, 2010, p. 29). There is absolutely nothing natural about the meaning of words; they do not mirror an objective world (Barrett, 2005). In fact, any definition we have associated with a term is reflective of “a cultural or arbitrary connection made and then presented as natural or inevitable” (Reeser, 2010, p. 30).
Accordingly, meanings must always be considered plural and contextualized (Davies, 2000; Weedon, 2004).

Furthermore, and related to the creation of norms and anti-norms, the oppositional nature of language is highlighted in post-structuralism. In the culturally hegemonic, positivist, objective view of the world, there exists an implicit assumption of binary contradiction such that every word is considered to have an opposite: black versus white, alive versus dead, thick versus thin, man versus woman, etc. (Reeser, 2010). The functionality of these oppositional terms is to create and maintain constructs as solid, tightly bound, and impervious. For French post-structuralist theorist Derrida (as cited in Reeser, 2010), these categories exist solely by virtue of their opposite; they might be considered as “linguistically dependent on the exact things against which they are defined” (Reeser, 2010, p. 37). However, as Reeser (2010) noted, this dependence speaks to the volatility of seemingly rigid categories. As is clear with the above examples, in any binary the separation is not inflexible and impermeable, but rather porous and unstable. There is always an array of ways of being that exist between seemingly divergent extremes (tomboy, soft guy, etc).

This project was committed to the tenets of feminist post-structuralism, namely the privileging of these mutable, fluid, “in-between” subjectivities, the deconstruction of taken-for-granted labels, and the subversion of dominant discourses. In carrying out my research, I integrated these ideas into recruitment, data collection, and analysis in several key ways. First, I recruited participants using open-ended language that invited self-identification, as I wanted to recognize the socially constructed nature of cultural categorizations, people’s possible discomfort
with these categorizations in a highly individualized society, and their potential lack of fit with the categories available. At the same time, I recognize that the labels used in recruitment did not always “fit” all of the people to which they were assumed to apply; some young women were perceived as “facially different” but did not identify as such, while others experienced themselves as facially different but were not read socially in this way. At the same time, individuals who identified as fathers to these young women did not always conform to the socially constructed idea of what a father is or should be (i.e. were not involved a heterosexual marital relationship, biologically related to their daughters, or living in close proximity to them). I not only welcomed this diversity of identities but also actively pursued them in the recruitment phase of this study.

Second, through adopting qualitative methodology, I sought to foreground informants’ subjective perspectives—young women’s experiences living with a facial difference, and fathers’ experiences parenting a daughter with a difference. Throughout analysis, I actively resisted positivist, structuralist methods of prescription in communicating research findings so as to deconstruct prevailing discourses, and to avoid the creation of new, but similarly exclusionary discourses about disability, parenting, and family life. I also resisted the idea of “normality” in conceptualizing processes of development, practices of parenting, and patterns of family dynamics, and allowed all participants to narrate their own ideas and experiences in ways that were meaningful to them. Thus, in this study I aimed to lend voice to the subjective, contextualized, temporally specific experiences of the young women and fathers who participated in interviews, and centre the sometimes similar yet often diverse enactments of
disability, parent-child relationships, and families among individuals who conform to, contradict, and resist prevailing discourses, so as to underscore their constructed unstable nature.
Chapter 2: Literature Review and Rationale

Having outlined the theoretical frameworks that underpin the objectives and methods of my project, I now turn to describing my rationale for conducting this research. Specifically, I attend to the implications of being born in a body coded as female and disabled/anomalous in an image-oriented culture, and explore the ramification of non-normative gendered and feminized embodiment in adolescence and young adulthood. I also present a summary of the way fatherhood and father-daughter relationships are conceptualized in psychological and sociological research, and juxtapose these with the scholarship on fathers of children with disabilities. Woven throughout these discussions is an emphasis on how feminist disability and post-structuralist research nuances our understanding of these concepts and intersections.

2.1 Why Adolescent and Emerging Adult Women? An Intersectional Approach

Contemporary Anglo-western cultures are appearance-oriented, and thus value certain body forms and functions over others in a number of ways—according to size, shape, hue, age, strength, ability, and more—which have profound impacts on girls’ and women’s sense of bodily self. Concepts of beauty shift across time and place, and depending on the culture are not necessarily rooted in the physical; however, in the western world, beauty has been reduced to physicality and made synonymous with “femininity” (Rodin, 1993). As such, it is now regarded as a gendered means of appraising women’s bodies (Reisher & Koo, 2004). More specifically, our sexist, consumer-focused culture positions women as objects to be looked at by men through media, advertising, and art. As the “lookers,” men are afforded the privilege and power to evaluate a woman’s value and desirability (Berger, 1972; Rice, 2014). Given this dynamic, and
women’s awareness of it, girls tend to be concerned about the gazer’s assessment of them, and police their bodies accordingly. With time, women associate being looked at with being female, and treat their bodies as objects to be consumed and appraised (Gill, 2008; Rice, 2014). This idea is consistent with objectification theory, which posits that girls’ image concerns originate from being part of a culture of bodily objectification (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Consequently, young women learn to judge their worth, desirability, and womanhood based on their achievement of body ideals dictated by society, men in particular.

Westernized cultures also communicate powerfully destructive messages about “abject” bodies, by circulating potent representations of non-normative and anomalous embodiments. Historically, radicalized individuals and those living with bodily difference were featured in circuses and freak shows (Rice, 2014), but the legacy of putting individuals with disabilities on display continues in modern society. Examples include literary, television, and movie characters such as: the mysterious, hidden-away figures of Boo Radley and Quasimodo; the feeble and lonely Colin Craven; the villainous Lord Voldemort, Freddy Krueger, and Doctor Poison; and the stigmatized subjects of almost all of the TLC network’s documentaries (e.g., My 600-Lb Life, I am the Elephant Man, The Boy with a Tumor for a Face). Each of these representations instills feelings of fear, fascination, and pity in onlookers. In these contexts, non-disabled bodies become synonymous with the proper, intelligible, safe, and good, while disabled or different bodies become tantamount to what’s ugly, immoral, dangerous, and bad (Kristeva, 1982). As a result, women living with bodily differences frequently report that they exist at the intersection of two marginalized identities: one based on gender and the other on disability. Because their bodies
often do not conform to cultural prescriptions for symmetry and ability, many describe feeling undesirable and sexless, and struggling with intensified body image issues (Rice, 2014).

Interlocking and forceful messages pertaining to beauty, femininity, and physical difference are complicated further when considering the subjectivities of adolescent and emerging adult women. According to socially constructed norms of development in the western world, young people begin to explore and validate their identities during adolescence and young adulthood—including their gender, sexualities, convictions, values, desires, and relationships—in an attempt to navigate the world with self-assurance (Bassoff, 1988; Steinberg & Sheffield-Morris, 2001). These years can be experienced as immensely stressful, even traumatic, for young women whose embodiments do not conform to “standards” of desirability at a time when there exists a heightened cultural pressure to do so (Basow & Rubin, 1999; Beaune, Forrest, & Keith, 2004; Bilboul, Pope, & Snyder, 2006; Rice, 2014; Snyder, Bilboul, & Pope, 2005).

In this study, I did not subscribe to psychological theories of development defined by the principles of universality, unidirectionality, and personal history (Burman, 1997). Consistent with feminist post-structuralist theory, I approached development as an open-ended process, “constrained rather than determined, emergent not given, historically and culturally contingent not universal, more constructed than natural” (Greene, 2003, p. 18). Although the young women I interviewed fit the categories of “adolescent” and “emerging adult” as conventionally defined, I did not start from the assumption that these life phases can or should be understood in other predictable ways. I contested the idea that they have marked beginnings and endings, or pre-set developmental benchmarks (e.g., graduation, employment, initiation into sex or intimate
partnerships). Nor did I assume that the young women complied with linear assumptions about embodied experience throughout the life course, where girls’ sense of bodily self is taken to be uniformly positive in childhood, becomes fraught during puberty, and then ameliorated in adult life (Piran, Carter, Thompson, & Pajouhandeh, 2002; Rice, 2014). Instead, I attempted to pay close attention to the unpredictable and varied life experiences that young women described, whether their narratives aligned with or departed from the dominant narrative of adolescence/young adulthood as a particularly fraught transition.

Furthermore, attending to the intersectionality of my participants, my developmental approach was informed by Alison Kafer’s (2013) theory of “crip time”, defined as: “flex time not just expanded but exploded…a reimagining our notions of what can and should happen in time” (p. 27). For Kafer, illness and disability may allow people to experience time more slowly or rapidly, and by acknowledging these shifts, we may depart from the concept of “straight time” including “a firm delineation between past/present/future or an expectation of a linear development from dependent childhood to independent reproductive adulthood” (p. 34). Through interviews with these young women, I contest the rigid notions of what can and should happen at certain times in one’s life, acknowledging that these trajectories and milestones are predicated on normative embodiments. By evoking and exploring the narratives of diversely aged young women living with facial difference, I also refute the dominant discourse that positions disability as “out of time” or as lacking a future (Kafer, 2013). Alternatively, I demonstrate how those living with disabilities imagine and describe a myriad of futures for themselves and their relationships (Rice et al., 2017). Centralizing disabled bodies in this way expands the social understanding of what constitutes personhood instead of delimiting it (Rice et al., 2016).
The cumulative psychological impact of the pressure to conform to gendered beauty ideals while resisting damaging discourses about physical difference is evident in empirical research on young women living with facial differences. For example, Leonard, Brust, Abrahams, and Sielaff (1991) found that young women with facial differences are more likely to report dissatisfaction with their appearance and lower self-esteem than their male counterparts. Pope and Snyder (2005) found that girls with facial differences report more clinically significant social and emotional challenges, while Pope and Ward (1997) learned that young women endorse more feelings of sadness and loneliness, and experience more social withdrawal and rejection than their male peers. These experiences are not only noted by the young women themselves; Turner and colleagues (1998) suggested that parents of young girls who report their children are more concerned about their appearance than parents of young boys.

These empirical findings largely support the deficit discourse of disability, positing that living with a physical difference jeopardizes one’s mental, emotional, and social wellbeing. They also imply that women are at a higher risk of psychological maladjustment given the intersecting conditions of their gender and of having a physical difference. However, this implication is founded on the humanist idea that there exists a “core self” that is inherent, stable, and fixed, rather than an “emerging self” that is in a constant state of becoming through complex personal, psychic, relational, and collective identifications and dis-identifications (Hojgaard & Sondergaard, 2011; Lawler, 2008). The discourse of the core self overlooks the process of subjectification, and the powerful forces that produce and circumscribe what individuals can be and become (Hojgaard & Sondergaard, 2011). For example, cultural and symbolic systems that produce binaries of sex and gender regulate what it means to belong to the category of woman or
man (Butler, 1990). Though there is no biological essence underlying what it means to be
gendered, men and masculinity continue to be associated with mind, reason, logic, and order,
while women and femininity have become synonymous with the body, passion, emotion,
irrationality, and disorder (Grosz, 1994). These powerful mythologies circulate in the context of
various relationships and institutions, and delineate what is appropriate or inappropriate
behaviour and bodily comportment (Felluga, 2011; Hojgaard & Sondergaard, 2011), therein
limiting the positioning of subjects who identify as female.

The same is true of the discourses that surround disability. Feminist disability scholars
extend the reach of post-structural theories to contend that disability, like gender, is not an
“essential property of bodies,” but a “system of representation by which bodies are marked as
inferior” (Garland-Thomson, 2005, as cited in Coffey, Budgeon, & Cahill, 2016, p. 5). The same
relationships and institutions that reproduce hegemonic narratives of femininity and womanhood
work to construct narratives about what it means to live with a physical or mental difference.
Though the embodiment of difference often encompasses a wide range of characteristics,
identities, and experiences, the hegemonic discourse of disability, described previously, begets a
limited number of constitutive “disabled” subjectivities, which flattens the diversity of possible
subject positions (Garland-Thomson, 2005).

Thus, the intersection of gendered and disability discourses restricts the limited subject
positions available to women living with facial differences. Consistent with the post-structural
notion that subjects simultaneously influence and are influenced by the sociocultural categories
that define them (Butler, 1990; Hojgaard & Sondergaard, 2011), women with physical
differences report being adversely affected by the culturally narrow view of how gender and
disability interact—leaving many feeling vulnerable to negative discourses about higher rates of
psychological problems among girls with disabilities. In conventional empirical accounts, there
remains little room for women to resist or re-story what it means to live as a woman with
embodied differences.

Relatively, little empirical attention is given to young women’s experiences of resistance
or resiliency. To date, little to no research on facial difference explores the way adolescent and
emerging adult women navigate cultural representations of femininity and difference. This
disparity stems from our society’s current conceptualization of disability. Suggesting that
resistance and resiliency exist implies that living a positive, well-adjusted life is possible if you
embody difference—an assumption that is theoretically incongruent with the dominant discourse
that disabled lives are replete with unending tragedy and devoid of a future (Kafer, 2013). The
literature that does address this focuses almost exclusively on intrapersonal qualities and
behavioural responses rather than interpersonal factors and contexts that foster resilience. This
leads to an essentialist and individualistic conceptualization of gender and disability identity
formation. For example, Meyerson (2001) proposed that certain personality attributes act as
“buffers” to counteract the negative impact of facial difference, while Robinson and colleagues
(1996) claimed that individual coping skills could be fostered with clients in clinical work. These
results are consistent with the “resilience found” model, which presumes that resilience is
associated with an innate strength and inner resourcefulness (Aranda, Zeeman, Scholes, &
Morales, 2012). Inquiries into this type of resilience focus on individual and personal capacities
to adapt, cope, or succeed (Bottrell, 2009), but omit structural and cultural forces that expand or
impede individuals’ capacities to resist and thrive. This critique aligns with Goodley and Lawthom’s (2006) findings that much of the psychological literature on disability is oriented toward the individual; such research often starts from the assumption that people are inherently adequate or deficient, hopeless or recoverable, and does little to examine the implications of disabling attitudes and problematic ideals in compromising the health and potential of individuals.

By focusing on the individual, many scholars, both within and outside of psychology, overlook the potentially important function of relationality in constituting an individual’s emergent sense of self, or the idea that subject positions are formed in and through relationships (Gilligan, 1995; Jordan, 2008; Koggel, 2012; Llewellyn & Downie, 2012; Nedelsky, 2012; Sherwin, 2012). Ungar (2008, 2010) proposed a scholarly shift toward a “resilience made” model (Aranda et al., 2012), wherein resilience is something enacted in diverse, complex, fluid, and relational ways. Resiliency in this sense is located in specific contexts, generated and sustained through the navigation and negotiation of and among selves in relationship with others in communities and environments. In this framework, an individual’s risk of psychosocial maladaptation stems from the social disadvantage and inequity to which they are subject, and should not be read as the manifestation of their personal failings or ineptness (Bottrell, 2009; Munford & Sanders, 2008). Consequently, it is not the individual’s ability to manage risk that makes them resilient, but their subversion of normative labels and their ability to exercise agency when confronted with potentially damaging discourses (Coffey et al., 2016).
This study accounts for these critiques, and addresses related gaps and omissions in research. Specifically, it investigates the intersecting identities of young women living with facial differences and their fathers, and explores the ways in which they give rise to their subjectivities, producing, reproducing, and resisting dominant discourses that define what it means to be a young woman and/or the father of a young woman living with a physical difference. In so doing, this study disrupts and revises narratives that characterize gendered experiences of difference, and highlights the ways in which daughters fashion their resiliency in and beyond their relationships with their fathers. This study also probes how young women understand these relationships as contributing to or undermining their ability to effectively navigate and resist controlling narratives.

2.2 Why Fathers? Making Space for a New Perspective on Caregiving

The dominant understanding of what constitutes a “good” father has undergone notable shifts, each corresponding with discrete eras or events in Western history (Pleck, 1984). For instance, in the early 1800s, a time marked by intense religiosity, fathers were charged with overseeing the moral and spiritual development of their children, ensuring they were raised with a strong set of personal, Christian values. This “moral father” motif gave way to the “breadwinner” conceptualization of fatherhood during the Industrial Revolution, and during the Great Depression of the 1930s. In this model, fathers were deemed responsible for the financial stability of their families. Finally, the World War II era and the decades that followed emphasized fathers as models of appropriate gender roles for their children, especially stereotypically masculine behaviours for their developing sons (Lamb, 1995; Pleck, 1984). Although each of
these versions of fatherhood appear distinct, theorists believe that the guiding principles of integrity, paid-employment, and masculinity were additive over time, and the duties of the gender role model father encompassed elements of both the moral and breadwinning father. Moreover, despite being historical in nature, each of these three models remains critical to our contemporary understanding of fatherhood, albeit to varying degrees of importance across cultures (Lamb, 1995).

The 1990s and the new millennium brought about another significant shift in the social understanding of a father’s role and responsibilities. Specifically, there emerged widespread and public referencing of the “new” or “involved” father: a man who was highly caring, nurturing, and active in his children’s lives (Ball & Daly, 2012; Pleck, 2012; Wahlstrom, 2010). This transformation was spurred by numerous social, economic, and political forces including: an increase in the number of single-parent families (including single fathers), dual earning families, and same-sex partners (Ball & Daly, 2012; Statistics Canada, 2006a, 2006b, 2009); the growth of the liberal feminist movement that encouraged women’s participation in the workforce and sustained equality in the private and public spheres (Ball & Daly, 2012; Doucet, 2006, 2009; Silverstein, 1996); and a surge in father’s rights campaigns that have a vested interest in resisting the narrative of absence/un-involvement that characterized earlier theories of fatherhood, and demonstrating what fathers actually do in relation to their children (Ball & Daly, 2012; Pleck, 2010; Tiedje & Darling-Fisher, 1996; Wahlstrom, 2010). This new subject position has created, and been shaped by, a whole new wave of research on fatherhood and father involvement.
Operationally, father involvement is defined and measured according to three dimensions: a father’s engagement with a child, his accessibility to a child, and his responsibility for a child (Allen, Daly, & Ball, 2012; Ball & Daly, 2012; Lamb, 1995). However, a number of scholars have defined and measured the constructs of involvement, engagement, accessibility, and responsibility in different ways (Allen et al., 2012; Amato, 1998; Ball & Daly, 2012; Coleman, 1988; Furstenburg, 1998; Lamb, 1995; Marsiglio, Day, & Lamb, 2000; Palkovitz, 1997; Seltzer, 1998). Regardless of how father involvement is conceptualized, an involved father-child relationship is typically described as secure, supportive, affectionate, and accepting (Allen et al., 2012), with the child development literature frequently being used to buttress support for involved fatherhood. For example, children with involved fathers have been shown to have advanced cognitive abilities (Biller, 1993; McBride, Schoppe-Sullivan, & Ho, 2005; Yogman, Kindlon, & Earls, 1995; Zimmerman, Salem, & Notoro, 2000), enhanced emotional maturity and regulation (Biller, 1993; Culp, Shadle, Robinson, & Culp, 2000; Doyle, Markiewicz, Brendgen, Lieberman, & Voss, 2000; Fluori & Buchanan, 2003), and enriched social competency (Ducharme, Doyle, & Markiewicz, 2002; Fluori & Buchanan, 2003; Mosley & Thompson, 1995; Updegraff, McHale, Crouter, & Kupanoff, 2001; Stolz, Barber, & Olsen, 2005). In many ways, theories of father involvement challenge the once-dominant view still held by evolutionary psychologists: that men’s limited involvement in parenting reflects an essential or inherent inability of men to provide care—an assumption rooted in a biologically and behaviourally determinist view of gender/sexual relations (Belsky, 1993; Day & Mackey, 1989; Kraemer, 1991).
While the attention afforded to this “new” model of fatherhood, and the assertions made by Lamb and other father-involvement scholars rest on evidence of steady increases in father involvement since the 1980s (Pleck, 1997), the measurement of involvement remains limited to the amount of time fathers spend with their children and discrete events that take place during that time (e.g., feeding, playing, bathing) (Hawkins & Palkovitz, 1999). This emphasis on time relates to broader social concerns about gendered inequities in the household division of care, and the need for men to take on a larger share of the domestic load as women’s involvement in the workplace increases. However, some scholars have called for an expansion of the involvement paradigm to include richer, broader, more diverse, inclusive, and subjective conceptualizations and measures so to create a more complete picture (Hawkins & Palkovitz, 1999; Hawkins et al., 2002). This includes greater emphasis on the content and quality of father-child interactions.

Potentially of greater importance, some of the claims that surround father involvement contradict findings in feminist research on women’s work—in and outside the home—and thus must be interpreted with caution. For example, feminist economists and social reproduction researchers demonstrate that child rearing is still unequally distributed along gendered lines. Within our contemporary North American, neoliberal society, care work and social reproduction continue to be thrust onto women and coded as feminine (Sutherland, LaMarre, Rice, Hardt, & Jeffrey, 2016), but are still afforded little economic value (Bjørnholt & McKay, 2014). Feminist political economists are concerned that father involvement discourse, in its current iteration, is not balanced; though it may allow men to contribute to care in ways that they may not have previously (Hansen, 2005), the discourse has the potential to erase women’s disproportionate
historical and contemporary contributions to caring for their families and children (Doucet & Hawkins, 2012) and the skill involved in doing so (Douglas, Rice & Kelly, 2017). Here the involved father paradigm risks re-instating the patriarchal family of previous centuries, allowing men to establish dominance in the private sphere where women were once considered “in power” (Miller, 2011; Silverstein, 1996).

It can also be argued that the idea of the involved father has resulted in a shifting hierarchy, or even a new hegemony of fatherhood in contemporary Anglo-western society, one that establishes and celebrates a certain idealized notion of the “good” father that is difficult, if not impossible, for many men to attain (Tiedje & Darling-Fisher, 1996). Men who do not, or more critically cannot take on all the attributes or activities associated with involved fathering—due to social location or a lack of privilege/access to time and resources—are relegated to the subject position of bad, uninvolved, or even “deadbeat” dads. The majority of research to date on fatherhood and father involvement assumes that all fathers are part of nuclear families; that they are white, heterosexual, able-bodied, cisgendered, employed, middle-to-upper class, and that they live in the same home as their children. Fathers who live apart from their children, who are step-parents, queer-identified, disabled, living in poverty, and/or are members of racialized/minoritized groups that construct paternal care differently, are either erased or framed as lacking in this hegemonic involvement discourse.

Extending this critique further, the father involvement model incorrectly assumes that all children that fathers care for require the same quality and quantity of interaction, including those living with bodily/mental differences. However, children with disabilities often have highly
variable and individualized needs and experiences (Topolski, Edwards, & Patrick, 2005), including but not limited to: restricted mobility, sensory sensitivities, difficulty with verbal and/or bodily communication, numerous surgical interventions and recovery periods, and/or periods of extended hospitalization. These characteristics and events may understandably constrict how and when fathers are responsible for, engaged with, and accessible to their children. As a result, fathers of children with disabilities may not always be able to adhere to the hegemonic conceptualization of involved fatherhood, and can be viewed as inferior or deficient caregivers as a result. This is not to say that fathers of children with bodily differences are not caring, nurturing, or involved. Instead, the issue lies in the restricted definition of involvement that overlooks the unique and equally valid ways that fathers forge relationships with and care for their non-normatively embodied children.

Given the limitations in the contemporary conceptualization of father involvement, research needs to capture more nuanced and diverse accounts of fathers’ provision of care and overall investment in their children, especially fathers situated at the intersection of various marginalized social locations. To this end, this study endeavoured to recruit fathers of varying genders, embodiments, sexualities, races, and family structures, to explore and validate caregiving strategies and practices enacted in relationships with daughters living with facial difference, capturing positionalities that may not yet be recognized within the father involvement scholarship. My aim was not to determine whether the fathers interviewed should be considered involved or uninvolved in their daughters’ lives; instead, it was to document the experiences of an invisible group of fathers and daughters, and to lend voice to their subjective understandings of and perceptions toward their relationships.
2.2.1 Scholarship on the father-daughter relationship. Currently, there is some literature on both the developmental importance and distinctness of the relationship between fathers and daughters. For example, involved fatherhood has been found to positively influence daughters’ self-esteem, independence, social responsiveness, and educational and career achievements (Creamer & Laughlin, 2005; Grimm-Wassil, 1994; Flouri, 2005; Lamb, 1997, 2010; Morgan & Wilcoxon, 1998). Relationships forged between fathers and daughters are thought to be less argumentative and conflicted than mother-daughter relationships but also less open and more emotionally distant (Fingerman, Whiteman & Dotterer, 2010; Freeman & Almond, 2011; Lamb, 1997; Mathews et al., 2006; Nielsen, 1996, 2006; 2012; Proulx & Helms, 2008; Shulman & Krenke, 1996; Snarey, 1993; Way & Gillman, 2000). The vast majority of the literature on father-daughter relationships also emphasizes the impact of abusive or absent fathers, and the negative ways in which fathers can influence young girls’ body image, sexuality and future relationships (Agras, 2007; Alsheikh & Daoud, 2016; Black & Shutte, 2006; Danes, Frieman & Kitzmann, 2006; Erickson, 1998; Fluori, 2006; Hutchenson, 2002; Katz, 2010; Last, 2009; Leonard, 1998; Sanftner, Ryan & Pierce, 2009; Rosenthal, 2010).

It is important to note, however, that these conceptualizations rely on the same theories and discourses of gender relations that dictate how men and women should behave and interact. The relational patterns evidenced in these studies are examples of gender being “done”; they are guided by complex social, perceptual, structural, and micro-political activities that validate certain expressions and behaviours as being masculine or feminine, and invalidate others as inappropriate or inconsistent with the actors’ gender and sex. Consequently, when researchers take gender binaries as truth, they tend to analyze data in a way that presupposes that the manner
in which individuals relate to one another is limited by their gender—in other words, in a way that obscures or erases the moments of exception and transgression of normative gendered practices and relations. Consistent with a relational, post-structuralist perspective, this study proposed to think beyond gender binaries and roles, so as to facilitate a more expansive inquiry into how father-daughter relationships are experienced and constitutive of each individual’s subjectivity in ways that both conform to and transgress gendered norms.

2.2.2 The distinct, yet overlooked, position of fathers. Despite the emergence of father involvement theory, sociological, psychological, and developmental researchers still tend to privilege the mother-child or mother-daughter relationship, or to use the maternal relationship as the standard for understanding familial bonds. While research around what fathers do with and for their children has increased dramatically, the field of family and kinship studies has largely overlooked fathers’ experiences of caregiving and their understandings of father-child relationships, even in literature that claims to capture broader parental perspectives. As such, Ball and Daly (2012) maintain that fathers remain an “untapped resource” in family and kinship scholarship. The “mother-centred lens” through which families have been researched presents a “peripheral view” of fathers; the nearly exclusive focus on mothers and the maternal experience of caring for children infers that fathers remain largely uninvolved with their children, and are negligible and inept in their provision of care and nurturance (Ball & Daly, 2012). These ideas indirectly contribute to the view that mothering and fathering are distinct social roles that are not interchangeable (Doucet, 2006; Silverstein & Auerbach, 1999), that fathers are less competent in their ability to physically and emotionally care for their children, and that caregiving remains the province of women.
In refutation of this position, feminist fatherhood scholar Louise Silverstein (1996) posited that perceived deficiencies in paternal caregiving competency linger because of cultural expectations that link women and mothers with domestic care, and men and fathers with breadwinning. These assumptions are not only confining but also heavily reliant on heteronormative discourses. In fact, feminist research has demonstrated that when given social permission, men are capable of being involved in their children’s lives and providing them with adequate and necessary care. It affirms that children can be as attached to fathers as they are to mothers, and suggest that neither a female nor a male parent may be necessary for positive psychological, emotional, or sexual outcomes in children. Instead, feminist literatures have asserted that both make important contributions to children’s growth and development (Doucet, 2006; Silverstein, 1996; Silverstein & Auerbach, 1999).

The argument favouring equality in practices of motherhood and fatherhood has its benefits, namely how it makes visible the socially constructed nature of maleness/masculinity and femaleness/femininity, and the gendered nature of care. However, fatherhood scholar Andrea Doucet argued that scholars must also bear in mind that this “quality of equality . . . needs to be constantly scrutinized” (2006, p. 27). As Meehan and Sevenhuijsen stated, “the employment of equality as a concept and as a goal supposes a standard or a norm which, in practice, tends to be defined as what is characteristic of the most powerful groups in society” (1991, p. 38). Just as women entering the public sphere must continue to prove that they possess a level of rationality and competency that is equivalent to that of men, in the private sphere, women/mothers are upheld as setting the caregiving standard against which the care activities of men/fathers are
compared. Thus, to prove their worth as parents, fathers must essentially conform to a maternal “template” (Pleck, 2012).

Doucet (2006) highlighted the dangers of studying fathering through a mothering lens: the mothering template not only limits our understanding of what fathers do in relation to their children but also obscures how they conceptualize their roles and responsibilities. In her analysis of the narratives of 118 stay-at-home fathers, Doucet (2006) concluded that male primary caregivers embody the proof that involved fathers care and nurture in ways that resemble mothering. However, despite their high level of involvement in many areas of their children’s lives, the fathers interviewed simply “did not identify themselves as mothers or refer to the work they do as mothering” (p. 217). This diverse group of men experienced and articulated gender differences in two critical ways: first, they distinguished their style of parenting from women’s by emphasizing fun, playfulness, physical activity, sports, the outdoors, practicality, risk-taking, and independence in their interactions with children; second, though they recognized similarities between their care work and style to that of mothers, most fathers endorsed the idea that mothers and fathers have qualitatively different connections to their children and actively distinguish themselves and their work from the “mothering” classification.

More research needs to be done to explore the ways in which fathers subjectively experience and understand their caregiving, which can only be accomplished through speaking with fathers themselves. Thus, this study built on the work of Doucet and others in interviewing fathers about their caregiving experiences, and in attending to the ways in which they both liken and distinguish their care from that of mothers. Similarly, I interviewed daughters to examine
their understanding of their fathers’ care, noting the ways it is perceived as analogous or distinct to that of their mothers. These comparisons emerged organically in conversations with participants; the interview protocols (Appendix A) with the fathers and daughters show that I did not ask any specific questions requesting them to compare caregiving approaches used by parents based on their gender or sex.

### 2.2.3 Fathers in disability literature

Another important critique of the fatherhood literature includes its almost exclusive focus on families with “typically” developing children. There is little to no recognition of families with children living with chronic health conditions, physical differences, or intellectual disabilities (Beaton, Nicholas, McNeill, & Wenger, 2012). Due to ableism in society and the lack of adequate disability support systems, these families confront entirely different sets of challenges and pressures, which are rarely discussed in research on family caregiving processes (Katz, 2002; Pelchat, Lefebvre, & Levert, 2007; Vrijmoet-Wiersma, van Klink, Kolk, Koopman, Ball, & Egeler, 2008). In research investigating caretaking practices in families touched by disability, the same critical gap exists: mothers and their experiences remain central to our understanding of family life, while the accounts of fathers remain ignored even though they are thought to have qualitatively different experiences (Cashin, Small, & Solbert, 2008; McNeill, 2004; Nicholas, Gearing, McNeill, Fung, Lucchetta, & Selkirk, 2009).

Following a child’s diagnosis for instance, fathers are said to encounter different types of stress than mothers, and subsequently make use of different adjustment and coping strategies. As a result of gendered ideologies and regimes of care (Traustadottir, 1991), mothers are thought to
assume more responsibility for the overall daily care of their child (Hovey, 2005; Pelchat et al., 2007). Mothers are often the first to guide their child’s navigation of various systems (e.g. medical, educational), and the first to face the ablest barriers that their children may subsequently confront. Mothers play a vital role in securing services for their children and families, as well as in acquiring and translating disability diagnoses, treatment, and accommodation knowledge, not only to family members but also peers, educators, and even strangers (Traustadottir, 1991). For some disability scholars, mothers’ augmented responsibility for and involvement in the provision of both physical and emotional care work allows them to develop intimate understandings of the needs and interests of their disabled children, and to build closely attuned relationships with them (McKeever & Miller, 2004). This experience is upheld in the findings of Pileggi and colleagues’ (in press) study of the mother-daughter relationship when the daughter is living with a facial difference. The authors conceptualized the maternal relationship as a unique “liminal space,” wherein boundaries between self and other are permeable as a result of mothers’ provision of exquisitely attuned care. By way of this liminality, mothers are able to develop an embodied knowledge of their children.

This does not mean that fathers have no hand in providing physical and emotional care. In addition to occasionally playing the role of primary caregiver, research findings have suggested that fathers are active in maintaining the stability of the family, becoming a protector and a provider for their children, and acting as a source of strength and support for both their children and their partners (McNeill, 2004; Nicholas et al., 2009; Pelchat et al., 2007). Where mothers’ stress is usually centred on the high level of caregiving demands—and the physical-emotional burdens arising from these demands in a society that devalues care work and forces it
onto families—fathers’ stresses tend to centre on concerns about their relationship to their child and partner, about the appearance of familial normalcy, and about their ability to provide for their family financially (Pelchat et al., 2007). These issues are complicated in a social context where fathers’ performance of masculinity often interferes with their capacities to openly discuss such stressors in an effort to remain a source of familial strength, and their desire to seek support from family, friends, and other networks (Pelchat et al., 2007). Taken together, the burdens that fathers assume without much support can impact their subjective experiences of their child’s difference, and their relationship to the child.

Fathers also continue to be underrepresented in literature on facial differences in particular (Klein, Pope, & Tan, 2010). In keeping with the broader pattern in parenting and caregiving scholarship, mothers remain the primary “person of interest,” the main caregiver, and hence, the target of recruitment in most facial difference research. For example, in Tanner, Dechert, and Frieden’s study (1998) of parental coping and adaptation in reaction to a child’s facial hemangioma (a vascular condition causing discolouration of the face), “mothers only” comprised approximately 60% of the sample of parents, while “fathers only” comprised just over 4%, and mother-father pairs made up almost 37%. This pattern reflects the field’s historical and continued focus on attachment processes, and its sexist tendency to hold mothers’ responsible for issues related to self-esteem and social adjustment in children with facial difference (see Maris et al., 2000; Pope, 1999; Speltz et al., 1990; van Staden & Gerhardt, 1995).

In the research related to families and facial difference, only one study focused exclusively on fathers of children with facial differences. Interviewing nine fathers about their
perspectives on parenting. Klein, Pope, and Tan (2010) found that the majority (approximately 90%) felt optimistic about their child’s future potential for happiness and success. Despite this positive outlook, many fathers expressed ongoing concern about their child’s future, and identified the need to have a hand in supporting their child’s peer relationships and in verbally recognizing their child’s positive attributes. These results provided useful but limited insight into the father-child relationship when the child is living with a facial difference. As with the majority of literature on facial difference, the findings are reduced to percentages, with little discussion of what specific aspirations or concerns individual fathers have for their children and/or the activities fathers engage in with and for their children. Moreover, the authors did not differentiate between fathers’ concerns for or experiences of their relationships with sons versus daughters, or younger versus older children living with a facial difference. Lastly, they gave no attention to the ways that children and youth living with facial differences might experience and perceive their relationships with their fathers.

This discussion shows that the framing of fathers as distant from and incompetent in caregiving tasks is perpetuated in disability and facial difference literature. Just as critical feminist scholars have suggested that men are capable of providing adequate care to their non-disabled children when provided the opportunities to do so, it is likely that fathers are capable of guiding their disabled children through a variety of systems, securing necessary services, and participating in rewarding, yet sometimes fraught, identity and emotional care work. However, without making fathers more of a focus in the disability studies literature, scholarship cannot identify or theorize around these processes and dynamics. Thus, for as long as fathers remain
outside the realm of visibility in research, the implicit suggestion that they do not play an active role in the provision of care is reified.

Given this gap in empirical knowledge and understanding, this study focuses on fathers so as to disrupt the prevailing mother-centred lens in both the sociological and psychological literatures pertaining to facial difference. I made no hypothesis related to the ways that men and women enact motherhood and fatherhood in caring for a child with a disability, so as to avoid comparative debates in family scholarship. Instead, I explored fathers’ own experiences and understandings in caring for daughters living with a facial difference, as well as daughters’ experiences and understandings of this care. I sought to highlight, from the perspectives of both fathers and daughters, the various roles, responsibilities, and strategies that fathers assume in relation to their daughters’ adolescent development and health, and the ways these relational activities facilitate and/or encumber the personal growth of each individual, and their connection.

Although I did not draw comparisons between mothers and fathers myself, in their interviews fathers did compare themselves, implicitly and explicitly, to their female partners and other women in their lives when speaking about their care work. Daughters also identified differences and similarities between the care of their mothers and that of their fathers. Rather than ignore these comparisons, I attended to them by using these associations to analyze how participants conceptualize the caring role and parenting work of fathers in relationship to gender, and to deconstruct how participants strived to distinguish their fathers’ care work from, or liken it to the work they believe mothers do. Additional detail about participants, interview protocols, and analytic methods are provided in Chapter 3.
Chapter 3: Positionality and Methodology

Building on the objectives and theoretical underpinnings of the present project, and having developed a rationale for the study by identifying gaps in the literature, this chapter provides a step-by-step outline of how the research was organized and conducted. Specifically, it describes the individuals that decided to participate, how I recruited them, how I gathered data, and how it was analyzed. I also provide a reflection on ethical issues that arose in undertaking my project. However, prior to exploring the methods, and consistent with the project’s critical FDS lens, I position myself as a researcher vis-à-vis the project’s objectives and participants’ experiences (Rice, 2009).

3.1 Reflexive Statement

I have been highly involved in the facial difference community for well over a decade due to my mothers’ employment in the disability services and advocacy sector. Since childhood, I have frequently met and spoken with those who looked “different,” and I believe these experiences have fostered my valuing of individuality and human variation. They also promoted my acceptance of individuals with embodiments that differed from my own—a white, European, cisgender, heterosexual, non-disabled female. As I have aged, I have remained committed to and involved in AboutFace, a Toronto-based non-profit organization that supports individuals and families touched by facial difference. Thus, though I do not personal identify as living with a facial difference, through my almost 13 years of service I have developed a keen sensitivity and appreciation for the challenges and opportunities faced by those living with a difference and the manner in which families and individuals navigate said challenges and opportunities in their
everyday lives. While interacting with the community, I often find myself questioning how family units and individual members respond to a child’s difference, what factors impact their ability to create bonds, and how parents’ emotions and actions influence a child’s sense of self. These personal experiences have served as the basis for both my master’s and doctoral research projects.

As a result of my volunteer and scholarly work alongside people with facial differences and their families, I occupy a uniquely valuable position: these experiences have taught me to appreciate the positive aspects of living with a facial difference, and have helped me to gain insights often not reflected in the empirical literature. I have also engaged in discussions with community members about representations of people with facial differences and their families within the scholarly literature. Through these experiences and conversations, I have learned how to approach facial difference from a place of relational knowledge and insight, in a way that is both positive and respectful. However, as an “outsider” who does not live with a facial difference, I acknowledge that I cannot pretend to comprehend what such individuals encounter on a day-to-day basis.

In the same manner, I identify as a daughter to my own biological father: a European-white, cisgendered, able-bodied, upper-middle-class male in a heterosexual marital union. He has been ever present throughout my life, and we have shared what I consider to be a warm and affectionate relationship by way of his involvement, though there have been notable shifts in the ways we relate to one another as both he and I have grown older—namely a reduction in the amount of time we spend together and increased reservation in the way we communicate with
one another. I also have grown up in a homogeneous extended family context: all of the fathers surrounding me throughout my childhood and adolescence identified in ways similar to my father. Consequently, my understanding of fatherhood is consistent with the hegemonic ideal of fatherhood in contemporary Anglo-western society.

These lived experiences, juxtaposed with my commitment to and understanding of critical feminism, call me to acknowledge my privilege in relation to my participants; I recognize that my conceptualizations of “good” or “involved” fatherhood are far from representative of the larger population. Moreover, I have begun to acknowledge just how influential interlocking influences of class, race, ability, sexuality, and family composition can be in guiding how fatherhood is practised and perceived. To this end, I recognize that my lack of familiarity with diverse fatherhood routines and performances likely has influenced my analysis of father-daughter relationships. For example, I noticed a tendency within myself to interpret some participants’ unfamiliar relational conceptualizations or patterns as strange and even unhealthy, while construing the more familiar patterns as beneficial and adaptive. While these reactions may appear problematic, I believe that my awareness of them allowed me to better control their influence. Throughout the interview, transcription, analysis, and writing phases of the project, I did my best to note when participants’ experiences aligned or deviated from my own understandings of fatherhood, to avoid imbuing their narratives with my own judgements.

Given my position vis-à-vis disability and fatherhood, it is possible that I may be criticized for engaging in research with communities of which I am not a member. I believe, however, that researchers need not share in an identity to conduct research in a meaningful and
ethical way. I view my insider-outsider perspective on facial difference and my personal knowledge of fathers and daughters as advantageous to my work. My position heightens my awareness of language in both this project and others; I am better able to attend to how each word used (by myself, the wider society, or participants themselves) can uphold or deconstruct the deficit model of disability and/or valorize or disparage certain relational experiences. Bearing in mind my normative embodiment and privileged family composition, I strived to remain engaged with my participants as I conducted interviews and analyzed their words. I actively resisted assuming the role of expert in my relationship with them, and followed their lead by attending to salient experiences and insights without presupposition. Throughout data collection and analysis, I challenged myself to constantly reflect on how my background and current social location influenced what I emphasized in my research, how I asked questions, and the way I interpreted participants’ responses. Overall, I believe that situating myself in my research and engaging in reflexivity has made me a more responsible researcher, and this process has kept me open to the stories told to me, augmenting my ability to describe participants’ subjective experiences and meanings in a validating way.

3.2 Participant Description

To recruit, I invited daughters living with facial differences, aged 14–35, to participate in interviews. I also invited fathers of daughters within this specific age range to participate in interviews; however, there was no restriction on the fathers’ ages. In total, I recruited 10 daughters, aged 16–33, to participate in the study, as well as eight fathers ranging in age from 38–74, for a total of 18 participants. Amongst these 18 participants, I recruited seven father-
daughter pairs, six of whom were biologically related, with the seventh pair identifying as stepfather and stepdaughter (this young woman’s biological father was unable to participate in the study, but remained highly involved in her life). To make up the remaining four participants, I interviewed one father and three daughters as independents, without their corresponding daughter or father’s participation.

All fathers and daughters were living in Canada, with the exception of one father who was temporarily working in Mexico. Participants represented various geographical locations; fathers and daughters lived in various cities in Ontario, Manitoba, British Columbia, and New Brunswick, but had at other times in their lives lived in other countries such as Mexico, France, England, and the Philippines. All of the participants identified as Canadian, though some incorporated other racial and ethnic identities into their self-description: one father-daughter pair was Chinese-Canadian; another pair was Jewish-Canadian; and another pair identified as European and French-Canadian. Two fathers were immigrants: one immigrated to Canada from the Philippines before having his daughter, and another immigrated from England to Canada prior to meeting his wife and her daughter, who he step-parented. Two daughters also identified as racialized: one as a mixed-race Latin-Canadian and the other as Indigenous, living on a reserve in Manitoba. All daughters interviewed identified as female, and all fathers who participated identified as male.

All of the daughters self-identified as living with congenital facial differences, but no fathers identified as living with a facial difference themselves. Throughout the interview, a number of fathers and daughters identified as living with other physical or mental differences,
including depression, anxiety, substance abuse, dyslexia, diabetes, hydrocephalus (the accumulation of water in the brain causing a reduction in neurological functioning), Chiari malformation (a condition in which brain tissue extends into the spinal canal causing a variety of neurological deficiencies), and other syndrome-related developmental challenges. All participants, save one daughter, identified as heterosexual; the remaining daughter identified as bisexual, though was in a committed relationship with a male-identified individual. All fathers were in intact marital unions and lived with their children at present or previously, with the exception of one father who was never married to his daughter’s mother but lived in close proximity to his daughter. Two fathers were in a blended family structure, having been previously separated or divorced. One father had retired to a different province than his wife and daughter, but the family visited one another often. Two daughters had also formed their own nuclear families, and identified as being in heterosexual marital unions with biological children. One of these young women had a daughter with the same genetically linked facial difference as she had. Most of the fathers and daughters interviewed were of middle to upper class socioeconomic status, though this was not readily described as such but alluded to in a number of responses about career choices, living arrangements, and other lifestyle features. Many participants did not describe their religious affiliations.

I selected the age range for the young women participants for a number of reasons. Initially, I intended to speak with women ages 16–25, to cover a period of life that developmentalists have described as involving profound change and growth (Arnett, 2000; Steinberg & Sheffield-Morris, 2001). I assumed that by this age, they may have garnered a deeper and more reflexive understanding of their lives to date, including their embodiment,
relationships, and sexualities, and would be able to articulate their experiences and the impacts that these have had, both past and present. However, three months into recruitment, only four father-daughter pairs had taken part in an interview, although a number of interested community members had contacted me to express their willingness to participate, despite being outside the age-related inclusion boundary. In response, I sought and received approval to extend the age range to include all daughters age 14–35 and their fathers, which permitted me to recruit 10 additional participants.

The 20-year age range in the present study is quite different from the more restricted six-year window I imposed in my master’s project four years ago. To explore the mother-daughter relationship in 2014, I recruited young women between the ages of 13–19 and their mothers to participate in semi-structured interviews; however, the age of participants in that project served as a key limitation. While the young women in the upper end of the age bracket were able to provide rich narratives in response to interview questions, many of the younger girls, namely those aged 13–15, were less able to reflect on and articulate their understanding of the processes and relational dynamics I inquired about. They offered short responses, and their experiences were documented less frequently in my final report. According to the developmental literature, young people at the early stages of adolescence are less capable at articulating complex ideas because they are less cognitively advanced (Steinberg & Sheffield-Morris, 2001). From a critical perspective, though, these young people might have been too immersed in rapid bodily, social, and relational changes to be able to reflect deeply or frankly on the ways in which their experiences have influenced their personhood and interpersonal relationships. Though one father who participated in an interview was the parent of a 14-year-old girl, this young woman elected
not to participate herself. Thus, the youngest daughter represented in the sample was 16 years of age.

3.3 Participant Selection

I recruited all participants through AboutFace, a non-profit organization that provides support and information to the facial difference community. In their 25 years of service, it has amassed a large database of children, youths, and adults living with facial differences in North America. Consistent with the protocol from my master’s thesis project, a consultation was held with the Executive Director and Client Services Manager to discuss the purpose of the proposed project and address any ethical or procedural concerns. The AboutFace Board of Directors approved the project’s outline and methodology in a separate meeting.

Following project approval, I provided the Client Services Manager with a short email blurb (see Appendix B), summarizing the project and the participant inclusion criteria. Prior to distributing the email to potential participants, the Client Services Manager and the Communications and Database Manager met to compile a list of eligible participants from within their database. This list included daughters, mothers, and fathers registered as members of AboutFace whose ages fell within the original 16–25-year age range. The staff generated a new list of potential participants when I broadened the age range a few months into data collection. The distributed email clearly indicated that the project was not affiliated with AboutFace programming, and that the decision to participate in the study would not interfere in any way with the services and resources participants were receiving from the organization. The email also indicated that if participants were interested in they study, they were to contact me directly via
email to ensure their identities and participation were not involuntarily disclosed to the
AboutFace staff. While I generally adhered to this protocol, there were a few cases where
participants communicated with AboutFace staff about participating by email, and these emails
were forwarded to me. When this occurred, I responded to the potential participant directly and
removed the AboutFace staff member from the email chain. The recruitment blurb was also
published in the organization’s electronic newsletter, and posted on the organization’s Facebook
page, which resulted in cross-posting by similar organizations across the United States and
United Kingdom.

When potential participants made contact with me, I screened them using a few simple
questions to ensure they met the study criteria. In many cases only a daughter or father connected
with me about their interest in participating. When this occurred, I inquired as to whether their
daughter or father was willing to participate in an interview as well, and invited the other
individual to contact me if interested. In some cases, I received emails from mothers who
thought their partners or daughters would be interested in doing an interview, and in these cases I
followed up with the potential participants via email. I completed the screening process with
referred participants and verified that they were consenting of their own free will, without undue
influence from others. It was not necessary for both a father and their daughter to participate; I
welcomed interviews with individuals as requested.
Though I remained open to interviewing all interested members of the community, I also sought to represent a multitude of voices; hence I privileged those who came from diverse family structures and social locations in my recruitment. To ensure diversity, I created a recruitment matrix, or “intersectional tally,” based on some of my screening questions and information gleaned from previous interviews (Rice, Harrison, LaMarre, & Pendleton-Jimenez, 2016). This matrix documented a number of identity categories, including gender, age, class, dis/ability,
sexuality, race, Indigeneity, and family composition. I did not use this recruitment tool to identify and interview only individuals who identified with as many minoritized categories as possible, but instead to ensure that I heard from a variety of diversely located fathers and daughters—that not all participants conformed to the dominant, Anglo-western ideal of families (i.e., white, North American, middle-class, heterosexual, married males and females). Table 1 depicts a summarized version of this intersectionality matrix. I sent a letter of informed consent (Appendix C) detailing the study’s purpose, methods, and risks to all individuals who expressed interest in the study and met inclusion criteria. In my email and the consent form, I encouraged participants to contact me if they had any questions or concerns regarding the information described. I liaised with participants to set up an interview time via telephone, video technology, or in person. They were also instructed to sign and return their consent forms to me either via email or in person on the date of a scheduled interview.

3.4 Data Collection

The use of semi-structured interviews was a significant departure from my once-proposed focus group methodology; though focus groups are considered an interactive, safe, and time- and cost-efficient means of data collection (Krueger & Casey, 2000; Morgan, 1997; Vaughn, Shum, & Sinagub, 1996), many participants in my master’s thesis study were uncomfortable participating in a focus group due to the need to share personal information with others present. Scheduling issues also complicated my ability to meet with large groups of mothers and daughters at one time. Thus, the current project built off of this limitation and conducted solely semi-structured interviews to ensure participants’ maximal comfort and ease of scheduling.
Semi-structured interviews took place between December 2016 and April 2017. I conducted almost all of the interviews independently of each participant’s father or daughter, to ensure the interviewee could be as candid and open about their thoughts and experiences as possible. One father-daughter pair elected to be interviewed by telephone while together, so they could hear and respond to each other’s answers.

Interviews are widely considered the most familiar data collection tool and the most common qualitative method used in the social and health sciences (Briggs, 1986, as cited in Clarke & Braun, 2013). Considered a “professional conversation” (Kvale, 2007, as cited in Clarke & Braun, 2013), interviews are conducted with the intention of getting participants to openly discuss their personal feelings, experiences, and perspectives on specific, pre-determined topics in which they have a personal stake (Clarke & Braun, 2013; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Face-to-face interviews are considered the “gold standard” of this methodology (Novick, 2008); however, virtual interviews are now considered viable alternatives or extensions of in-person interviews (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004), as they allow researchers to broaden their scope of who can be interviewed, where, and when. This flexibility proved useful in the present study given the geographical location of many participants: all but two elected to use technology such as Skype, Zoom, or a telephone to conduct their interviews rather than meet in person. In total, I completed 13 of the 18 interviews over the phone and two using video technology. Given internet connectivity issues, one father participant was unable to complete his interview after commencing by video technology. He elected to email his remaining responses (to interview and follow-up questions) when signal strength improved.
According to qualitative researchers Victoria Clarke and Virginia Braun (2013), interviews have a number of unique strengths, including: that they provide rich and detailed data, that they give researchers flexibility in being able to ask impromptu questions, that they are accessible to diverse researchers and participants, and that they give researchers greater control over the data produced. Interviews are also thought to be ideal for sensitive issues and only require a small number of participants to produce sufficient data. In the case of this project, 18 interviews were conducted, which satisfied the requirement of 10–20 interviews for medium-sized inquiries. But there are limitations to the scope and application of qualitative interviews: they are one of the more time consuming data collection methods in terms of organization, conduction, and transcription; they may lack breadth because of the potentially small sample sizes that are used; they often result in a lack of anonymity, which may be off-putting for some participants; and finally, due to their inquisitive and power-imbalanced nature, they may be an invasive experience for participants, which can compromise researcher-participant rapport (Clarke & Braun, 2013). Still, given the experience- and perception-type research questions that I posed, interviews remained ideally suited for my project. On average, interviews lasted approximately one hour and 20 minutes; however, the range in interview length was substantial. The shortest interview, conducted with a young woman who lived with some unidentified developmental challenges, was 23 minutes in length, while the longest interview, conducted with a father-daughter pair at the same time, lasted 155 minutes.

Participants were specifically probed about their relationship with their father or daughter, fathers’ responsibilities within their family unit, as well as fathers’ role in daughters’ navigation of the social, medical, and media spheres. Certain questions prompted reflection on
changes in the relationship over time, moments of closeness and dissonance, and insights about the ways that facial difference has influenced them personally and in their relationship. As demonstrated in Appendix A, the interview guide remained almost identical for fathers and daughters. In general, I adhered to these questions throughout the interviews, though wording and order were varied to suit the individual needs of participants and their developing responses (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). I provided participants with the opportunity to discuss matters and experiences that were pertinent to them, even if they were not present within the interview guide. In many instances, I posed additional questions not listed in the protocol in direct response to participants’ narratives, in order to achieve greater detail, insight, or clarification.

To facilitate transcription, all interviews were audio-recorded. At the end of each interview, I offered all participants a gift card of their choice (Starbucks, Tim Hortons, or Indigo/Chapters) and thanked them for their time, willingness, and honesty. I purchased the requested gift cards online and sent them directly to each participant’s email. Each corporation sent email confirmations that recipients had opened their gift cards, but I also asked all participants to confirm their receipt of the gift card by email.

3.5 Data Analysis

Consistent with the analysis conducted in my master’s thesis project, I analyzed all father and daughter interviews using thematic analysis, one of the most widely used qualitative methods (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is beneficial for organizing a data set, describing it in detail, and identifying, analyzing, and reporting on patterns or themes that are present (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I selected constructivist thematic analysis over other qualitative approaches because it
values and explores the subjective experiences and meanings of participants, and goals that align
with the study’s epistemology and ontology (Smith et al., 1995). This approach acknowledges
that participants actively construct and interpret their realities by way of the discourses available
to them (Gergen, 1999; Taylor & Ussher, 2001). This style of thematic analysis concerns itself
with the way in which individuals are constituted by the social world, and how language is used
to construct our identities and the world around us. As such, constructionist thematic analysis
aligns well with the post-structuralist framework adopted in this study. Overall, I intended the
analysis to be more data-driven, or inductive, than theory-driven. Thus, in the results chapters
that follow, I identify and describe themes anchored in the data itself, and do not mould the data
to fit a pre-existing coding framework or analytic preconception (Patton, 1990). However, I do
recognize that, due to my engagement with the literature and my completion of a similar project,
my analytic interests have some influence on the data coding, as I attempt to bring my theoretical
frames and preconceived notions of participants’ experiences to bear (McLeod, 2001; Patton,
1990).

Although thematic analysis has only recently been recognized as a distinctive method
with clearly outlined techniques, its flexibility and accessibility made it particularly desirable.
According to Braun and Clarke (2006; 2013) thematic analysis is an “uncomplicated”
methodology that can help answer any type of research question, with any type of data set,
whether large and complex or small and straightforward. Perhaps most importantly, thematic
analysis is not a methodology bound to a certain theoretical perspective. Rather, it is an analytic
method that aligns with many frameworks ranging from essentialist to constructionist, including
the post-structuralist underpinnings of this study. Still, thematic analysis has been criticized by
some researchers for “lacking substance,” and for its potentially limited interpretive power, especially when used outside of an identified theoretical framework (Clarke & Braun, 2013).

Despite some of these weaknesses or limitations, I chose thematic analysis over the more theoretically rigid interpretive phenomenological analysis and grounded theory methodology for a number of reasons. Firstly, data analysis took place among a relatively large group of participants, and began primarily after the collection process was complete (Braun & Clarke, 2013). I did not use theoretical sampling to recruit additional participants during the data collection phase. Moreover, specific theoretical frameworks informed the development of the project, its research questions, and interview protocols. I also selected thematic analysis over discourse analysis, the method most often associated with post-structuralism, because it attends to the content and organization of text (including pitch, stanzas, pauses, emphasis, intonation, and word function) in an attempt to determine how linguistic concepts construct meaning (Gee, 2011; Gill, 2009).

I adhered closely to Braun and Clarke’s (2006) guidelines for performing thematic analysis. I anonymized and transcribed all recorded interviews soon after they took place, and familiarized myself with the data through active reading; I highlighted segments of interest, took notes, and generated initial codes. I then searched for themes by sorting the generated codes into clusters and exploring the relationships between them. Once these themes were mapped out in this way, they were reviewed and defined, or named accordingly. It is important to note that I approached the thematic analysis of the data set in a manner similar to that of Taylor and Ussher (2001), Locke (2015), Budds, Locke, and Burr (2013), and Gilbert, Ussher, and Perz (2013).
These scholars combined elements of Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis with post-structuralist theory and discourse analysis to not only identify themes within the subject positions that participants occupy and articulate but also to ascertain patterned effects of specific social discourses on constructing these positionalities. For example, Taylor and Ussher (2001) found that participants made sense of their sadomasochist behaviours by drawing on discourses of S&M as dissidence, escapist, transcendence, learned behaviour, pathology, and intra-psychic or explicable preferences (Gilbert, Ussher, and Perz 2013) found that various themes in participants’ narratives about sexuality post-cancer diagnosis grouped together to form three possible subject positions, including disembodied, re-embodied, and oscillating sexual subjectivity.

In the context of my study, I analyzed father and daughter data sets, both independently and together, to identify overlapping themes in participants’ narratives. In an effort to reconcile both the relational and post-structuralist tenets of my project, I separated smaller sub-themes into two broad categories, discursive and relational, and refer to these groupings throughout subsequent chapters. The discursive themes are patterns that signify the discourses that participants rely on in constructing their relationships and identities. These themes point to the implicit ideas, beliefs, and understandings about gender, difference, and caregiving that define fathers and daughters’ ways of being in the world. In general, these themes were more latent in nature; though they are rooted concretely in participants’ reflections, they speak to the underlying assumptions that guide fathers and daughters’ interactions (Boyatzis, 1998). Conversely, the relational themes are more semantic or overt in nature (Boyatzis, 1998). They summarize patterns in participants’ explicit descriptions of their behaviours, thoughts, and feelings in
relationship with their dyadic partner. Although I present relational and discursive themes as distinct categories, they do overlap and intersect in a number of ways, as will be made clear in the remaining sections of this dissertation.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

A number of ethical issues required my attention as I moved through participant recruitment, data collection, and analysis. First, I recognized that it was possible that participants could feel a potential invasion of privacy in being contacted through the AboutFace database. Moreover, they could have felt a sense of undue pressure or obligation to participate upon receiving the recruitment email from AboutFace. I reasoned that having the organization contact participants was likely less risky than contacting them myself, as members of the organization regularly receive contact about a variety of programs and services from the Client Services manager and other AboutFace staff. Furthermore, the decision to contact and share personal information with me remained solely with the participants. The recruitment email also emphasized that the decision to participate would not influence the services that members received through the organization.

I did not deceive participants at any point in this study; all participants were made aware of the study’s purpose upon recruitment and once again at the start of each interview. Participants were also reminded that they could stop the interview at any time, or refrain from answering any question they were uncomfortable with. I transferred all audio recordings and transcripts to a password-protected laptop within 24 hours of interview completion, and deleted the audio files from the recording device. To further protect participants’ identities, I elected to complete all
transcription myself. No participants elected to withdraw from the study, thus I was able to analyze all of the collected data. Once complete, I sent all participants their interview transcript and asked them to add, change, or remove anything they desired from the file using track changes or a different-coloured font so I could trace their edits. In accordance with ethics protocol, I stored all printed transcripts and analytic documents, including memos, thematic maps, and participant lists in a locked cabinet in my home or student office at the University of Guelph.

All names have been changed in the analysis and subsequent sections, and all identifying information has been removed from the transcripts. However, it remains possible that participants will be able to identify the quotations of their daughter or father based on their shared experiences. Though it may be difficult for participants to read their dyadic partner’s perceptions of these shared experiences, such recognition may also present an opportunity for enhanced understanding and appreciation of one another. This same risk was present in my master’s thesis project, and many of the women interviewed disclosed to me that they were grateful for the opportunity to hear their counterpart’s thoughts and emotions. I believe the same can be true of this project and analysis. These ethical dilemmas were outlined in an ethics application to the University of Guelph, and the project was approved in December of 2016 (see Appendix D).
Chapter 4: Discourses that Regulate the Father-Daughter Relationship

The results of my analysis are presented in two chapters. In this first chapter, I identify patterns in the discourses that framed the ways fathers and daughters experienced and understood their relationships. In the second chapter, I explore the father-daughter relationship further by analyzing what participants actually said about their relationships. To be clear, I present the discursive themes first because they inform the relational themes that follow. Without discerning the underlying assumptions that inform the way fathers and daughters understand themselves, and how they interact with one another, the themes I’ve highlighted may be misinterpreted or misconstrued as judgemental or arbitrary. Moreover, these results are presented as separate chapters because they emerge in accordance with two different epistemological and methodological frameworks. However, as my discussion will illustrate, it is my belief that the discursive and relational themes present in the data are interrelated.

As part of my post-structural thematic analysis, I identified three dominant discourses in the accounts of fathers and daughters: women as proficient carers, gendered silence in discussions of bodies and sexualities, and father knows best. Throughout the interviews, fathers and daughters were not always passive subjects of these discourses, but instead oscillated between resisting and reifying them in their relationships. In the sections that follow, each of these three discourses will be described in detail, and participants’ direct quotations will be presented to illustrate moments of both defiance and compliance.

4.1 “That Maternal Thing”: The Perception of Women as More Proficient Carers
When speaking of their relationships, families, and households, the vast majority of dyads alluded to the (re)production of gendered models of care, albeit periodically and in ambiguous ways. In some descriptions of care interactions, participants endorsed the idea that women were more natural and adept caregivers than men, or that femininity was synonymous with domesticity. In other utterances, such as when respondents spoke of their visions for the future, this sexist assumption was resisted. More specifically, although many of the men abided by strict gender roles in their marital relationships, the expectations they described for their daughters seemed to transcend gender stereotypes. Daughters, too, were aware of gender power structures in their parents’ relationships, but were keen to abandon these familiar divisions of labour in their own lives. Additionally, some dyads challenged the gendered discourse of care because their unconventional social contexts afforded them the opportunity to do so. These themes are explored in greater detail below.

With or without prompting, many of the father and daughter participants, especially those in families with intact heterosexual partnerships, described their family as “traditional.” In almost all of these cases, fathers were employed on a full-time basis outside of the home, while mothers did not work outside of the home or were engaged in part-time, flexible employment. Mothers were portrayed as performing most, if not all of the routine household duties and responsibilities, including cooking, cleaning, washing, and child minding. Conversely, fathers were described, and described themselves, as primarily responsible for the financial stability of the family and the maintenance of areas outside the home, including yard work, automobile mechanics, and general property maintenance. Abbey (33, white, part-time professional, mother, in heterosexual union) described her household in the following way:
It was very, a kind of 1950s household; my mom did work, but she stayed home and raised the kids, and my dad was out travelling and trying to build the business . . . he was responsible for bringing home the money and stuff like that. He never did anything inside the home as far as like, laundry or cooking, from what I saw. He mostly did a lot of the outside work like the gardening and was in charge of like, finding people to do home repairs and keeping of the maintenance of the cars and stuff like that. So, very typical male role, for sure.

Angelica (22, white, Jewish, heterosexual) spoke of similar patterns in her family life:

Not to be like, super critical of him, but he’s still . . . he works a lot. Um, my mom doesn’t work quite as much so he definitely . . . um, he works really hard ’cause he is like the primary source of income, so, yeah, so I would say like during the week, his role is strictly work and then he comes home and we hang out. But that’s pretty much it. That’s not to say he doesn’t do stuff, but my mom is definitely the one who does more of the cooking and the cleaning and taking care of the dog and so, those sorts of things.

Jacob (50s, white, Jewish, medical professional, in heterosexual union) described his family structure as traditional:

I would have to say, um, in some respects, traditional, in that I happen to be the . . . the major earner, so . . . and I tend to work a lot, so I think my role is pretty traditional in terms of working a fair amount and being the breadwinner. I’m very involved in the household, but . . . but, my wife does a lot of the you know, domestic stuff, in terms of you know, the cooking especially. I would say. . . shovelling comes to mind this time of
year. Definitely looking after the financial matters, like paying the bills and that stuff, looking after finances. Um, those are things that I’m often, you know, very often involved . . . responsible for.

Dylan (50s, white, self-employed, in heterosexual union) described his traditional household as a pattern he and his wife had grown into:

In the unit itself, with my wife working . . . you know, she cooks most of the meals, I try to help when she lets me. Yeah, that’s kind of . . . the split we’ve evolved to. So, I end up doing the outside, you know, the snow shovelling, the garbage, the lawn, the . . . you know, and I’m pretty handy around the house, you know, working and I won’t say construction, but that kind of stuff around the house. You know, plumbing and that kind of stuff. So, I tend to do that, and my wife does very little with that, and she does that rest of the stuff, she makes sure we’re fed and that sort of stuff.

Given these gendered divisions in household responsibilities and work schedules, daughters and fathers alike identified mothers as primary caregivers and homemakers, and acknowledged that fathers were less available on a routine basis because of their work schedules.

Interestingly, this division of labour spilled into other area of daughters’ lives, including their medical treatment and sociability. Although fathers were usually present for large-scale surgeries and some difficult social encounters, they relied on mothers to perform routine physical, emotional, and relational labour with their daughters in these contexts. In narratives of both fathers and daughters, it was often mothers who were charged with coordinating and providing medical care, even when it required extensive travel or time away from other children.
For example, Abbey remembered flying with her mother from Vancouver to Toronto to receive medical treatment, and being away from home for up to three months as she recovered from various surgeries in close proximity to her surgical team. Caroline (25, Filipino, heterosexual, young professional) remembered her mother staying overnight with her at the hospital as she was recovering from skull surgery. As a result of their availability, mothers also were more informed of and involved in daily happenings in their daughters’ lives, whether positive or negative. For instance, when recalling challenges faced in elementary school, Taylor (29, Latin-Canadian, bisexual, student) noted, “[My father] was definitely like . . . say the sort of day-to-day issues that would come up, right? Like, with bullies or whatever . . . he would know about it, but he wasn’t there to sort of witness it and handle it.” Abbey echoed Taylor’s thoughts, noting, “Maybe just . . . dealing with the stares and the questions from children and stuff like that, I don’t know, but I’m pretty sure my mom did most of the talking in that regard.”

Jacob drew on a specific example in his daughter’s life to convey his wife’s involvement:

There was an incident when she was young, I can’t remember how old . . . she was four or six, in that range . . . a comment was made by a kid at school and she was very upset and . . . it was definitely extremely you know, traumatic or upsetting for her . . . this happened at school, so I only heard about it coming home from work, and so [my wife] had already you know, had some interaction with her. [My wife] really, I’d have to say, took the lead on you know, dealing with it, so it wasn’t . . . I wasn’t really involved in those things.
Dylan described how his daughter relied on her mother for emotional and physical support as a young child, and continued to do so as an adolescent:

I just always put it down to that maternal thing. I just, I mean, something she’s done since she was little, you know? I guess Mom became nurse and doctor, too, you know, though the evolution . . . she hurts her finger, whether little or bad, when she’s upset, she tends to go have Mom look after it. Dad’s okay, but Dad’s not quite good enough.

Overall, mothers’ availability created relational patterns wherein they were more often involved in the celebration of their daughters’ successes and the resolution of their conflicts. Consequently, both daughters and fathers typically perceived mothers as being the more nurturing and accessible parent.

This does not mean that fathers are uninvolved in said activities. While mothers remain a central element in their daughters’ narratives, fathers are also active characters in their daughters’ lives, albeit in different ways. Due to mothers’ preoccupation with day-to-day caregiving, securing medical and social services, and mitigating social attitudes, the fathers and daughters interviewed described mother-daughter relationships as involving bickering, the butting of heads, and emotional volatility. Conversely, participants referred to father-daughter relationships as “friendly” and jovial, characterized by a certain easiness or light-heartedness not true of mother-daughter relationships. For example, both daughter and father participants described dads as contributing playfulness to the home and family, diffusing and/or offsetting the intensity that the mother-daughter conflict can sometimes create. Angelica revered her father as “the fun parent,” always willing to engage her in activities: “Our relationship is more funny, we talk about a lot of
humorous things . . . Mom was kind of a bit more strict and Dad was kind of just like, a big buddy.” Caroline responded: “I feel like me and my dad, we have similar ways of thinking. Like, whenever my mom says something or suggests something, we always agree or like go against my mom on something.”

Dylan saw himself as “the bastion of calm,” as his daughter and her mother “tend to, you know, go at it a little bit.” He hoped to:

be that, if you will, the refuge . . . over the years, she has matured and recognizes that, you know, Dad’s going to come at it with fresh eyes when he comes home. I cut her some slack in certain ways or well, sometimes I make her laugh. I tend to be the fun guy; I come home from work and we go out for a walk or we go play, or we go do stuff.

Piers (late 60s, white, UK-born Canadian immigrant, academic, in blended heterosexual union) recalled a similar pattern with his stepdaughter, which he felt brought them closer together during a challenging period of family blending:

I’ve always been second string, right? Which I’ve accepted. I would be used if she wanted, “What does he think?” I would be taken up as an ally if there was an opposition to something that her mother wanted, and that was nice. That’s always been nice. So, in that way, I was brought in, you know, progressively, as someone who counted.

As previously mentioned, fathers were, to varying degrees, involved in their daughters’ social and medical care, and their engagement in these arenas was described as level headed and
composed. This aspect of fathers’ care speaks to another discourse identified in participants’
interviews, which is explored in the next section of this chapter.

4.1.1 Rationalizing gendered caregiving. Though not a central element of all
participants’ narratives, almost half of the fathers interviewed noted that they maintained
traditional gender roles in their home to meet the needs of their family, not because they
endorsed sexist values. Many fathers stated that their daughters required round-the-clock care
and attention as infants, to ensure their survival. In accordance with neoliberal health policies
that make caregiving a private, family-centred responsibility rather than a public, governmental
obligation (Luxton, 2010), some fathers described the pressure to ensure that one parent was
constantly available to provide quality care to their daughters without jeopardizing the financial
stability of the family. As a result, many mothers of participants either elected to leave full-time
work or reduce their working hours while fathers remained in the paid workforce. Without being
probed, a few men described how this gendered division made “the most sense” because they
were further along in their careers and were being paid more than their female partners. Dylan
spoke at length about making these decisions when his daughter was born:

So because she had her skull reconstruction at 10 months and something else . . . a
number of surgeries after that, that involved both neurological and craniofacial stuff . . .
she also has a BAHA, a bone-anchored hearing aid, so that involved having some
surgeries to install that . . . so, because of that, we’ve had surgeries pretty regularly
through her . . . especially her early development, so we decided we could afford to have
my wife not work. I mean . . . yeah. It was a natural evolution of birth and the first few
years. Had I have seen a choice, you know, being done differently; had my wife been more of a . . . more of a . . . I’m going to use the term breadwinner, but you know if she had made more income, then it might have been, well, why don’t you work, and I’ll do this?

Although none of the daughters spoke of their family structure as an intentional decision, a few reflected on the important influence that employment and finances had on their fathers’ domestic involvement. Amelia (26, white, young professional, heterosexual, living with a neurological condition) described the financial risk involved in her father taking time off work:

When I was born . . . my dad owned his own business. So, basically, when my dad wasn’t at work, he didn’t get paid. So, there was a lot of times that my mom spent with me at the hospital, and my dad couldn’t because of . . . because of the financial aspect of things.

Both Cassie (16, Chinese, heterosexual, student) and Savannah (17, white, heterosexual, student) recognized that their mothers’ flexible or limited involvement in the paid workforce allowed them to provide ongoing care. Savannah reflected, "It was . . . my mom was a stay at home mom until . . . Grade uh . . . like, 4, yeah, 4 or 5? So . . . like, my dad worked and um, she came with me to most of my appointments.” Cassie echoed:

Well, my mom works less than my dad so, I guess in that way, if they were to work the same amount, they would do the same things but I guess that . . . ’cause my mom doesn’t work as much, she does more technically.
According to participants, mothers assumed the role of primary caregivers due more to economics than preconceived ideas about which parent could provide better care. With time, however, the tendency for mothers to forego employment and take on care work became a stable feature of the family’s functioning, so much so that it often was not discussed or questioned but assumed naturally, as new needs arose. When probed about the longevity of these caregiving patterns, daughters and fathers described feeling more comfortable with mothers being responsible for medical care and social guidance, because mothers had become so highly skilled and proficient in these activities.

4.1.2 Resisting gendered ideologies of care. In only a few interviews was it revealed that fathers were responsible for the lion’s share of domestic duties and caregiving. Rupert (60s, Caucasian, in blended heterosexual union), for example, became the primary provider for his daughter after the dissolution of this first marriage. “I basically raised her,” he said. “Her mother and I split when she was about five or six and I had full-time custody, and she’s always had contact with her mother, but I’ve had sort of the responsibility of raising her for those formative years.” Rupert continued to play an active role in providing care to his daughter and maintaining the household, even as he embarked on a new marital union with another woman and her children. Damian (70s, Filipino immigrant to Canada, in heterosexual union) was charged with care of the home and his daughter during the day, and worked full-time overnight: “Well, when she was small . . . like school-age, since my wife works during the day, I work midnight shifts . . . it’s always me who is there for her . . . I’m always there.” Finally, thanks to flexible employment in education, Andrew (60s, white, retired teacher, in heterosexual union) was able to participate more actively in domestic care than some of the other fathers:
[My wife and I] were both . . . teachers, schoolteachers, we both the same holidays; very similar hours. You know? Same days of the week, etcetera. So, that certainly allowed us to be as equal as we could be as parents. My wife and I had very, very . . . almost completely equal roles in raising the children.

Taylor recalled how her step-father’s job in academia allowed him to assume more responsibility at home, especially when her mother was working and studying to advance her career:

He was much more involved. Like, he’ll clean and do dishes and cook and whatever, and like, he would take care of us if my mom had to work or whatever, so he would like make sure we were fed or taken care of or what not. Um, and also was primary . . . money-maker once . . . because my mom was working as a manager at a warehouse when she met him and then she ended up going back to do her undergrad and eventually go on to do her Ph.D. as a mature student, and like, a lot of that was because he worked at [name of university].

Unlike the families described above, when economic/social conditions and employment opportunities allowed for or demanded that fathers involve themselves more regularly and intensely in their daughters’ care and household responsibilities, they did so, often without complaint. In so doing, familial structures became less demarcated along gendered lines. In these instances, fathers became familiar with, and skilled in, providing physical and emotional care, and their daughters grew comfortable with them doing so (albeit with limitations, discussed in the following sections). Thus, broader political and economic factors (e.g., government policy,
income stratification, conditions of work, etc.) altered the work lives of these families, permitting them to counteract the discourse of women as natural and more competent caregivers.

Daughters were also extremely aware of the gendered dynamics involved in their parents’ relationships. Having witnessed the impact of sexist ideologies on their own families, many daughters in traditionally structured families spoke openly about wanting to avoid reifying gender norms in their own relationships with men. Taylor criticized her father’s chauvinist behaviour by drawing a comparison between herself and her stepmother. “I said to him once . . . ‘Do you want me to act how you’re expecting your girlfriend to act? Because I wouldn’t want that. I wouldn’t be happy like that.’” Daughters in families where the parents were more adept at subverting gendered discourses of care praised their fathers for demonstrating that egalitarian relationships were achievable, and something to aspire to. Evelyn (33, white, in heterosexual union, mother, professional) explained, “I’ve never felt that I needed to fall in to, you know, a female gender role, wife, mother, whatever, like, the caregiver, the cook, whatever, all that business, obviously because he doesn’t do that.” Amelia also disclosed the difficulties she experienced in meeting and selecting a partner because of the fluid gender expectations her father instilled in her:

It’s a challenge to sort of get into relationships . . . the guys that I’ve gone out with seem to think that there is sort of a gender line, and that they should be mowing the grass and doing the plumbing and the electrical and all of that stuff, and that I should be cooking and cleaning and that’s really . . . I’m not comfortable with that.
Regardless of fathers sanctioning or opposing the discourse of gendered caregiving in their relationships, daughters used their families’ practices as fuel to transcend these social constructs and insist on more for themselves as women, wives, and mothers.

In the same vein, fathers, through expressing hope for their daughters’ futures, belied the notion that women are natural and more adept caregivers. Curiously, this pattern surfaced whether or not fathers abided by traditional gender roles in their own partnerships; certain expectations for their daughters contrasted significantly with patterns the fathers (re)produced with their own wives. Fathers did hope that their daughters would establish stable, intimate relationships and have children, but these aspirations came second to the educational, employment, and financial goals they envisioned for their girls. Overall, fathers were more intent on their daughters growing into happy, self-confident, and independent women than they were focused on their girls becoming wives and mothers. Damian commented, “I am looking at her to just be interested in just her career. A career woman.” Dylan echoed this, saying, “I’m going to say [I hope] that she finds herself and does what she wants to do, whatever that is . . . I’m hoping she does well . . . challenges herself, ’cause I think she’s got it in her to do that.”

Jacob spoke at length of his vision for his daughter’s future:

In terms of her future . . . I want her to be able to pursue her dreams both with regard to academics and non-academic. I want her to be successful, so she can be independent both financially and in terms of her personality. And, yeah, so I’d like to see her academically successful, have you know, a good job, that she is financially secure and confident. And
most importantly, you know, I want her to be confident in herself and her abilities to obtain you know, anything that she puts her mind to.

Piers set a similarly high bar for his stepdaughter:

My hopes for her future are as follows . . . that I may see her through to a fully independent adult life; that she gets a tenure-track position at a university in her chosen field; that she burns up the field of disability studies and becomes an international academic, celebrity, and political activist.

Lars (40s, white, employed in education, in heterosexual union) was particularly expansive in his hopes:

You know, for her future, I would like to . . . to see her embrace things that she didn’t think she was able to embrace . . . I’d really like to hope that none of the . . . none of the physical things become barriers to being successful. Um, so . . . you know, I think that’s going to say a lot in terms of finding personal happiness and not having any regrets.

Taylor recalled her father’s expression when referring to his aspirations for his two daughters.

“He’s like, ‘No, you’re different.’ He sees us as like, we’re supposed to do better or something.”

The profoundness of the fathers’ hopes was not lost on their daughters. Arielle (16, Indigenous, living on reserve, student) aspired to move away from her reserve community, attend university with a scholarship, and become a doctor. Angelica was in the midst of graduate school applications and was hoping to get into her top choice. Amelia had her sights set on meaningful full-time employment and bolstering her resume:
Because I’ve graduated now, I’d like to get a full-time job. That would be nice. You know, ultimately though, you know I want to get a job within sort of . . . the field of disability. I really want to able to . . . work within an organization and hold a position that . . . I would have the opportunity to really teach and educate others and even if it’s like, influencing programming, but just to really . . . show that you know, a label doesn’t mean everything and that a person isn’t a label and that they are so much more than that, and they are human beings like everyone else is. I’m trying to get in touch with U of T right now, to do some public speaking with their second-year students, medical students, to be able to talk about patients’ experience and the impact of labelling. And I’m also volunteering as a guest speaker in the neurosurgery transition clinic at [name of hospital], to really be able to do guest speaking and help the teens that are transitioning out of neuro to be able to get into the adult health care system and build these confident and educated people, and be prepared to advocate for themselves in that situation.

Caroline’s dreams involved corporate and educational success:

So, right now I have a good job. I have the job at [name of company]. I do want to see myself moving up in the company somehow, so whether it be like, a different role or like, a manager role of some sort. Um . . . that’s in the moment. Um, long-term goals . . . I see myself going to grad school. Um, I really do want to go to grad school either for education or social work and then I see myself in either of those professions. Yeah. Um . . . my ultimate dream though is to be in forensic science.
Although all participants had slightly different goals and dreams, daughters’ visions for their futures were also not limited to intimate relationships, homemaking, and motherhood, but extended into the realms of education, employment, personal development, and travel.

4.2 Father Knows Best: Teaching and Learning in the Father-Daughter Relationship

The second discursive theme in participants’ interviews was daughters’ reliance on their fathers’ opinions and experiences as a mechanism for learning about the world. I refer to this theme as the “father knows best” discourse, given its overlap with ideas of generations past that revered fathers as omnipresent educators. Within all of the interviews, participants identified and honoured the knowledge, expertise, instruction, and attitudes of their fathers. In various ways, fathers were instrumental in helping their daughters to set and achieve goals, succeed in educational and career-related endeavours, explore extra-curricular activities, and hone various skill sets. Some of this instruction related to the aforementioned theme of gender resistance, wherein fathers sought to expose their girls to experiences and communities not traditionally associated with femininity. Fathers likewise influenced daughters’ personal preferences, belief systems, and relationship choices. The authority of fathers also trickled into how their daughters approached facial-difference matters, including difficult social interactions and anxiety-inducing medical procedures.

Interestingly, fathers were not as attuned to the ways they had been affected by their daughters’ knowledge or expertise, and daughters often struggled to describe their impact on their fathers. As such, fathers and daughters spoke of their relationships in very rigid, top-down, or unidirectional ways, wherein fathers largely occupied the role of teacher while daughters were
regulated to the position of learner. Moreover, unlike the theme pertaining to gendered caregiving, the discourse of father knows best was not frequently undermined or resisted in participants’ narratives. In a few fleeting moments, daughters acknowledged the limitations of their father’s wisdom, particularly when it related to their bodies, thoughts, and feelings. Nevertheless, the young women generally endorsed their fathers’ position as a rational and intelligent person, and respected their fathers’ knowledge, experience, and support in developing their sense of self. The following section describes the clout of fathers in these realms of life.

4.2.1 Learning from fathers. In all interviews, participants described how the presence (or absence) of fathers and their fathers’ upbringing, teachings, and expectations influenced daughters’ morality, ambitions, values, and beliefs, as well as their perceptions of their body, gender, sexuality, and relationships (intimate or otherwise). Education was of particular emphasis for both sides. All of the men and young women interviewed discussed how fathers played a large role in affirming the importance of academic success. Just as Lillian (24, white, student, living with some cognitive impairments) and Cassie made reference to their dads being primarily involved in helping with homework, Caroline discussed how she preferred her father’s help when preparing assignments. “It’s always my dad [that I confide in] when it comes to essays and like, assignments,” she said. Taylor, too, spoke highly of both her biological father and stepfather’s involvement in her post-secondary and graduate school education. In recalling her father’s involvement, she noted:

He would like, empower us in other ways, especially with our education. He always really valued our education and like, encouraged us to . . . pursue whatever we wanted to
pursue just as long as we were working really hard at it, and would support us financially through that if we needed it, so that definitely empowered me as a young woman for sure.

Speaking of her stepfather, a retired university professor, she said:

He’s always been like a great editor. He opened my eyes up to different ways of thinking and analyzing, especially as I got further into my degree. It seemed like I was always . . . I would like send him my papers and he would like, edit them, give my critique, give me like . . . other resources; like, he’s been a huge resource for me for sure in my academic pursuits.

Likewise, Piers felt that education brought he and his daughter closer together:

While she went to school in France, she also took courses back home by correspondence from Ontario, and I had a lot to do with helping her with that . . . it was part of the way that we became . . . well, closer together. I would be the, probably the principal teacher at home . . . I think that’s uh, one way in which we . . . probably maybe a principal way in which I’ve been a feature in her life.

Many father-daughter pairs used education to facilitate regular interaction with one another. Though some fathers’ comments were sometimes harsh or critical, daughters viewed their fathers as being vital sources of feedback and key motivators in their endeavour for academic achievement.

For the majority of dyads, the fathers’ prioritization of education was intimately tied to their insistence on daughters securing independence and a stable lifestyle in the future. As
previously discussed, fathers anticipated that their girls would achieve great things as they aged, and part of ensuring this success was preparing them to both assert themselves and manage their finances. For instance, Damien explained how he “coaches” his daughter on how to invest her money. “I give her advice on where to park her money. Sometimes we go to the bank together just to see somebody and they would explain what I was already telling her.” Similarly, Paul (40s, Chinese-Canadian, in heterosexual union, private sector professional) described how he and his daughter “talk about life and what she wants to do . . . what her future holds for her and how . . . our main purpose is to prepare her for life, to be independent and do things on her own.” Rupert described how he allowed his daughter to exercise autonomy:

Well, in stores, so, for example, she wants to get a new cell phone, I mean, I used to go there and help in that transaction and I guess now, I take her . . . and then stand back and let her do the interaction. I’m sort of just there to make sure that no one is taking advantage of her financially, but she’s the one interacting and asking questions and checking out all of the features. You know, continuing to become more . . . self-reliant, I think. But she’s already a long way there, but continuing on that path. I think that’s the best way to put it.

Lars similarly wanted to honour and cultivate his daughter’s independence as she matured:

I do have a sense that she is every day, becoming more independent . . . as your child grows up, one of the things you do as a parent is you try to make, make little steps backwards in terms of being there, you know, their support, because ultimately, you want
them to be able to stand on their own two feet, and not only stand, but walk, and then jog, and run.

Finally, though her father lived out of province, Amelia discussed how focused he was on assuring she was financially self-sufficient:

He’s still very much focused on talking about goals and stuff, too . . . you know, I want to buy a house. I want to invest. I want to do like, financial things and sort of we talked about different financial investments and different ways that you can sort of grow and save your money to be able to be more financially sort of smarter, for the future, right?

Although it was mentioned only a few times by fathers and daughters, this encouraging of independence and preoccupation with security seemed to stem from fathers aspiring to protect their children from harm, especially in preparation for the day that they would no longer be alive to provide for them and their families.

Wrapped up in fostering their daughters’ independence, fathers aimed to ensure that their daughters acted in a moral, sound way; that they know who they are, and understand what they are capable of. In almost all of the interviews, fathers were referred to as moral compasses who underscored for their children the difference between right and wrong. For Arielle, the morality her father imparted focused on Indigenous cultural ideals and values. “He taught me a few things about our culture and the land—to always respect it. Like, me and my dad go hunting together and make sure we only catch the amount we need.” Abbey described how her father demanded that she and her siblings were “good people and always treated others with respect and believe that people are good.” Cassie recalled similar lessons from her father:
Again with the morals thing, it’s just like in general, what you should be as a person.
Like, how nice you should be, treat others the way you want to be treated. You don’t . . .
burn your bridges, you hold the door for people, you smile, you’re kind to everyone
because you never know what’s going to happen.

Regardless of whom their daughters interacted with or where an interaction took place, fathers
expected their daughters to embody respect for themselves and others.

Integral to daughters demonstrating self-respect was an appreciation of their physical selves, including their gender. Despite the silence around young women’s sexuality and developing bodies (discussed in the next section), the majority of daughters felt that their fathers had never directly acted or spoken in a way that undermined their feelings about their bodies or gender. Instead, a few fathers, like Piers, complimented their daughters on their physical appearance:

I’ve told her at times that I think she looks like, you know, a cracker jack, that she really looks something. ’Cause she will ask at times, you know? About her clothing, hairstyle, or . . . I’ve never hesitated to tell her that she looks just great. And I wasn’t faking it either.

More often, participants outlined the positive influence fathers had on these aspects through their open parenting style, and by encouraging health, strength, and activity rather than emphasizing clothing, hygiene, weight, height, or other aspects of physical appearance. For instance, Evelyn credited her father for her positive feelings about her gender and body:
I don’t think there’s anything specific that he’s really . . . done. I think with his like, gender roles and like feminism, it’s never been . . . like, he’s always made me feel like it doesn’t matter like, I don’t have to look like a woman and be thin and . . . have big boobs or whatever. Like, it did not matter at all.

Andrew spoke about his open and accepting approach to gender education:

We were never the kind of parents who would pressure, especially a girl, you know, into wearing super . . . whatever, appealing clothing and always being in the latest style and . . . ultra-feminine and those sorts of things. We just let her be herself.

Lars shared his logic around raising a daughter in an image-focused culture, stating:

When you’ve got a daughter . . . you have to somehow communicate that you have to take pride in your body. You’ve got to be strong. If you had to run for your life, in one minute straight, could you go like 30 seconds and then fall flat on your face because you just couldn’t do it? For me . . . if you strive to be that person who if you had to give it your all for one minute, swimming, save your life, running, save your life, climb that mountain, save your life . . . basically, it’s more about the survival mode than the aesthetic mode.

Though Lars’ comments potentially shed light on some of the fears fathers contend with around their daughters’ sexuality, he accentuated that encouraging physical activity was about promoting his daughter’s health and safety rather than her physical beauty, fitness, or body size.
Fathers also frequently exposed their daughters to communities and interests that were not always considered “traditionally feminine.” Savannah described her father as having “pushed” her to participate in physical activities, and to try various extreme sports such as snowboarding, wakeboarding, javelin, and mountain biking. Dylan hoped that encouraging his daughter’s participation in Girl Guides and Pathfinders would empower her as a young woman. Angelica credited her father with allowing her to participate heavily in hockey, which served as a key source of her gendered self-concept:

I guess through sports, he probably influenced my understanding that like, there aren’t really these gender roles, like, there may have used to be, or we kind of sometimes assume, I think he definitely taught me, or helped me learn that like, women can play sports and be strong, and be kind of . . . authoritative and not . . . not lose kind of their femininity.

Cassie recalled how her father allowed her to try karate when she was younger instead of “forcing [her] to take dance lessons or ballet lessons just cause [she was] a girl. He was just like, ‘You do whatever makes you happy.’” Amelia described how her father taught her to work with her hands, learning skilled trades and using power tools. In her opinion, “he didn’t really try and hold me back with the fact that, you know, you’re a female, you have to fit into a certain role. He just said, ‘here is everything and you can pick whatever you enjoy.’” Altogether, this exposure allowed the young women to understand gender, and femininity specifically, as something flexible and personal.
4.2.2 Passive and active teaching in the father-daughter relationship. All of the interviews highlighted the saliency of fathers’ teachings for their daughters: the lessons, insights, and self-knowledge they share and promote extend into many facets of the young women’s experiences. However, participating fathers did not have to be explicit or even verbal when communicating teachings to their daughters. In fact, they tended to root their education in daily modelling of certain behaviours, values, and beliefs. Dylan explained how this process worked in his relationship to his daughter:

I think an awful lot just came through demonstration, you know? Experiential . . . is that the right word for it? You know, living with us. I think that just the biggest thing to me is I believe, just role modelling. I hope that I’ve been a positive influence, a positive role model, like I said, about life and relationships and about those kinds of things.

Evelyn spoke similarly of her father:

Just like . . . the way that he lives his life . . . the charitable aspect of things, he always taught me by doing . . . and he didn’t even make a big deal, like it was just like, that’s the way it is; we give lots of money every year to all these different charities . . . like, he doesn’t give a shit about what society thinks about gender roles in the house . . . the way that he has lived his life has influenced me. It’s not that we ever discussed it, it’s just that that’s the way it always was for me, and I had a good role model to see like . . . the gender equality.

Jacob felt that in maintaining lifelong friendships he demonstrated the importance of loyalty to his daughter:
I think that I’m definitely . . . a good friend and loyal friend to people. And, I think she’s seen that I have a few really good friends that I have been friends with for maybe 45 years and uh, so, I think from that point of view there may be uh, there may be some influence . . . on her in terms of you know, the importance and the value of good friends and close friendships and loyalty.

For many pairs, fathers were able to capture their daughters’ attention and affect their worldview simply by “being the person they are.”

Related to this modelling, participants described how fathers taught their daughters certain skills in very “hands on” ways. Fathers encouraged their daughters to try new activities, and actively engaged them by participating in these same activities. Lars, for example, trained his daughter in a variety of sports, competed with her and her brother, and took part in their routine athletics, including daily jogs and bike rides. Amelia’s father encouraged her to use power tools, first teaching her their function and then working alongside her to complete various tasks, including chopping trees and home renovations. Jacob coached his daughter throughout her hockey career, even playing with her on a team when she became a young adult.

Direct conversations about topics like gender, sexuality, relationships, and the future were not popular among the dyads. Instead, communication was often rooted in examples and stories from the fathers’ youth. The majority of fathers shared personal anecdotes with their daughters, and spoke candidly about what they hoped they would learn from such experiences. Dylan used his high school, university, and career experiences to demonstrate to his young daughter effective ways of handling stress:
She’s started asking about some of that stuff . . . you know, even things about handling stress or handling life . . . we’ve talked about things I do, things I’ve done, or things I did when I was in high school or later on in college years . . . about handling stress and multiple priorities, multiple deliverables.

Lars used his childhood memories as a means of fostering his daughter’s independence:

I have talked to her about I think . . . when I was in high school, my parents moved to Barrie and . . . it was, back in the day, there was Grade 13, so I didn’t want to move and so I said if I was able to find somebody to live with, would they let me board. So, you know, that was a big turning point for me because as I look to her, seeking her independence, growing more independent each day, I sort of think back to . . . to how I was sort of thrust into independence, you know? . . . So, that’s something I think I try to share with the kids because again, it’s just trying to maybe impress upon them that, you know, you really can stand on our own two feet, you just have to believe in yourself.

A few of the fathers, like Rupert and Paul, refused to share their personal stories with their daughters because they did not feel representative of the contemporary society of which their girls were a part. Still, the majority of fathers used their memories as a go-to means of approaching a number of diverse aspects of daily life with their daughters.

4.2.3 Grappling with facial difference. A particularly compelling facet of the data set is the intersection of the father knows best discourse and daughters’ facial differences. In many ways, the teaching and learning patterns described above are reified in facial difference-specific contexts. As noted in the literature review, staring, taunting, invasive questions, unwanted
touching, and numerous medical procedures are common experiences in the lives of individuals living with facial difference. As such, fathers often drew on their rational, calm, and laid-back demeanours to calm their girls, and proposed a number of ways to navigate these events.

For example, although many learned of events long after the fact, fathers often minimized or underplayed uncomfortable and hurtful encounters with peers and strangers. Time and time again, fathers suggested that ignorant individuals were not worth their daughters’ time, and affirmed that these experiences should not be cause for rumination and concern. When speaking about her father’s response to her experiences being bullied, Arielle noted, “He says I’m beautiful and don’t let what those people think or say bother me.” Evelyn reflected on her father’s teachings, stating, “He taught me how to stand up for myself, and that it wasn’t a big deal; it doesn’t affect my life.” Similarly, Lillian’s father’s approach consisted of reiterating “Don’t worry bout what other people think of you and just be yourself,” while Amelia’s father concluded, “Anyone out there, they can think whatever they want. You just be who you are and that’s all you have to do.”

Savannah, considering her father’s influence on how she handles people’s opinions and responses, said:

He’s made me feel proud and strong in the sense that I shouldn’t be ashamed in any way for who I am. That everyone has like . . . flaws and insecurities. But honestly, like, you shouldn’t, you should not worry about those. Be proud of who you are, and um, if you feel insecure, like other people are worrying about theirs more than looking at yours. . . .
People will judge, people will comment, but . . . that shouldn’t affect your life. That’s what he keeps saying this whole time.

In almost all of the interviews, fathers encouraged their daughters to “let it go,” “move on,” or “laugh it off.” Repeatedly, fathers reinforced the common belief that those who enacted attitudinal violence were often insecure in their own embodiment, and that all members of society disliked something about their physical appearance.

Fathers, likewise, spoke at length about the ways they helped their daughter manage marginalizing social attitudes. Damian was reminded of his daughter’s early experiences in grade school:

She would come home and say, “They look at me differently. Like, something’s . . . not right in my face.” I said, “No, don’t worry about that, they probably see you as a . . . more beautiful than them. So, don’t worry about it.” I feel that I had to encourage her to . . . not, not mind those things. They just don’t know anything about disability and people. They have no experience about any of those kinds of disabilities, so just keep them out of your mind. Just look at yourself, you are beautiful.

Paul encouraged his daughter not to be concerned about others’ opinions. “You have to like yourself,” he said. “Present yourself in an open and honest fashion. I mean, people say things, don’t worry about what they say as long as you feel good about yourself.” In a similar vein, Jacob and Dylan revealed how they responded to specific instances of bullying or teasing:
There was an incident when she was very young, I can’t remember how old . . . if she was four or six, in that range . . . a comment was made by a kid at school and she was very upset by it . . . it was definitely extremely you know, traumatic or upsetting for her . . . I don’t even recall exactly what they said, or at all what they said, but uh, it was obviously extremely crushing for her. I was really trying to recognize . . . or trying to let her know that you know, this was a problem with someone else and that yes, she has a difference, but you know, this is something she’s unfortunately going to have to deal with, but wanting to really give her the tools to be able to deal with it. (Jacob)

I forget how I put it, but it was pretty much like, you were choosing to be upset about it. It was upsetting, but . . . if you want to be a little bit of a crab . . . that is a choice you make . . . you can whine and complain about what life gives you sometimes. I don’t want the facial difference ever to be a crutch. It is a challenge . . . but like it or not, it is your life, you know? (Dylan)

Throughout many of the interviews, hostile encounters with known and unknown persons abounded. Despite the form they took, fathers’ lessons and advice focused almost exclusively on what daughters themselves could do or control to mitigate their emotional responses, and focused less on altering the behaviour of those committing the transgressions.

Fathers imparted similar lessons when their daughters entered and interacted with the medical system. While fathers were not always involved in their daughters’ routine check-ups, appointments, or day-to-day recovery from surgeries, they recognized the fear and stress that
characterized these events. When sensing their daughters’ mounting anxiety, they worked to assure them that everything would go as planned. Caroline explained:

> My dad was more so, “Yeah, everything will be fine. Don’t worry, everything will be fine,” type thing. Whereas me, I was the one who was always asking the questions and everything. My dad’s just like, “Yeah, I trust the doctors, it will be fine.” And I was here being like, just crying my eyes out, being like, “What if this happens? What if this happens?”

Jacob actually described this rationality and calmness as being his “role” when dealing with the medical system:

> I’d say that I am often the voice of reason in the sense that I’m very . . . well, generally, a calm person who thinks things out and doesn’t get too riled up by things. She is a very emotional person and so is my wife, and they can get worked up and anxious about things and I’m often the one trying to bring some perspective.

Taylor described how learning about various medical procedures from her father kept her calm:

> He’s very good at helping me relax and like . . . I remember, too, especially when I was younger, and like, feeling nervous or like, really scared before surgeries, he was very good at helping to calm me down and explaining things to me in a way that I would understand. And like, also, being very honest about things.

Piers recalled a particularly stressful moment that his daughter experienced while in recovery:
There was a dramatic moment . . . one of the things that happens when she has this kind of surgery is that she comes out of surgery with her mouth wired shut so that her bones in her face sort of fix in the right position, and uh, she had a moment, or occasion where she got . . . phlegm or blood together in her mouth from the wound that had been caused by the surgery. I was very much sort of present and part of that experience, trying to comfort her and . . . assure her that she needn’t panic, that this would be dealt with . . . I remember trying to keep her calm, and suggesting to her that it wasn’t as bad, perhaps, as she was claiming it to be.

Even when describing upcoming reconstructive surgeries and treatments that his daughter would have to undergo, Paul said, “You know, like previously, I’m sure she’ll get through it. She’s not the type to complain about it, and uh . . . I think she’ll do fine.” While some fathers reflected on the challenges of repeatedly watching their daughters undergo surgeries, followed by difficult recovery periods, the majority of their narratives focused on assuaging their daughters’ anxieties and minimizing their distress.

Unlike the other more mundane or benign lessons that fathers imparted around relationships, gender, education, and self-reliance, the wisdom they conveyed in relation to negative social interactions and medicalization were explicit and overt. One can assume that, due to their normative embodiment, fathers had not experienced the same social and medical anxieties as their daughters, and thus could not simply model the calmness and rationality they wanted for their girls. Instead, they must actively engage their daughters in discussion around these ideas in the precise moments that they are taking place, be it soon after a snide comment.
has been made or in the midst of a surgical consultation. Rather than passively transmitting knowledge and self-assurance, fathers reactively offered support and guidance.

Moreover, when it came to navigating social and medical spaces, daughters did not always embrace their fathers’ strategies as readily as they did in other aspects of their lives. Many daughters did feel, however, that their father’s approaches were beneficial. For Evelyn, her dad’s reassurance helped her to feel less bothered by the opinions of others:

I think that’s what made me kind of . . . comfortable with myself, because they always made it seem like it wasn’t a big deal. Like, yeah, there’s shitty people in the world. You know? Like, that was kind of . . . if they were to have conversations, it would be like, yeah, those people are stupid. Like, who cares? They don’t mean anything. Like, you can still—it doesn’t affect your life. You’re healthy, you’re fine, it’s not a big deal. Um . . . and you just have to ignore people. And so they’ve always made it just like . . . not a big deal.

Savannah felt that her father’s encouragement and untroubled attitude allowed her to always be her authentic self:

I found that he’s pushed me in a good way to like open up about it. Um, if it wasn’t for him . . . like comforting me and just saying like, “It’s fine,” it’s just that I feel I would be more insecure about it . . . and like, hide it in a way that I would actually change as a person, like who I am.
Taylor’s biological father always encouraged her to be strong in the face of judgement, to not “let them see you cry”—a quality she felt had helped her in the long term, allowing her to retain a sense of power and control in such situations. “I learned that from my dad . . . and I appreciated that because it made me . . . at least come across that it didn’t affect me, even though it did, they didn’t know.” Still, Caroline and others implied that these tactics undermined the significance of their experiences or somehow made them worse. “It increased my anxiety,” she said. “You still have questions, right? You still have the anxiety. Your dad isn’t going through the surgery.” While daughters generally understood this advice to be well intentioned, some young women felt their fathers’ comments were flippant, and undermined the gravity of their feelings and experiences.

4.2.4 Learning from daughters. Although all participants could provide examples of how and what fathers taught their daughters, many struggled to articulate the ways daughters had influenced their fathers’ gender identity, morality, values, embodiment, relationships, or sexuality. When asked to reflect on this role reversal, fathers and daughters both retorted with requests for clarification, appeals to reflect and return to the topic of discussion at a later time, and suggestions that there was, in fact, minimal to no influence. Aside from a general admiration of the young women’s strength and resilience in the face of adversity, there was little to no discussion of how daughters’ modelled certain qualities or life lessons for their fathers.

By the same token, all daughters were asked to describe certain decisive or crucial moments in their lives, including but not limited to: an uncomfortable social interaction they experienced, a difficult encounter with the medical system, and a moment of particularly
upsetting contact with the media. Fathers, too, were asked to reflect on and recount these salient moments in their daughters’ lives. While daughters could conjure up a host of experiences, and eagerly described how these events made them feel, many were hard pressed to identify how their fathers were involved or how witnessing said moments made their fathers feel. Fathers, too, had a difficult time recounting specific examples of their daughters confronting societal ignorance or marginalization. The majority of men were quick to hypothesize how their daughters felt in those moments, but rarely described how they themselves felt about their daughters’ experiences. Interestingly, fathers were far better at recalling very early childhood experiences of their daughters facing marginalization, and describing their feelings in those moments. For example, in thinking back to his experiences taking his infant daughter out in public, Andrew described his anger in response to people’s ignorant stares and comments:

   It was very frustrating seeing it and hearing some of the absolutely stupid comments people made. I just . . . you just want to hit them, you know? [Laughter] Yeah. I . . . I very often just shut up. My wife was better at actually explaining to people sometimes, ’cause I just wanted to say, “Shut the blank-blank-blank up. And what is wrong with you? Don’t you have any manners?” But I just kept my mouth shut. I don’t know really. I just kept toughing it out, that’s all. Just kept trying to get through one thing and onto the next, sort of thing.

These memories were not situations that daughters themselves remembered or were aware of. And as they became adolescents and young adults, their fathers recalled less about responses to their facial differences. Still, though not a primary focus of fathers’ interviews, the profound
emotional impact of daughters’ lived experiences surfaced a number of times throughout the
interviews, with a few fathers expressing exasperation, frustration, and sadness upon sharing
these stories.

4.3 “Just Leave it at That”: Gendered Silence in the Father-Daughter Relationship

The final discourse that emerged in participants’ interviews was that of gendered silence. As the young women aged and their bodies developed sexual characteristics, a distinct shift materialized in their relationships and conversations with their fathers. For the majority of dyads, a general sense of discomfort shrouded certain topics, so much so that discussions about bodies and sexuality became attenuated. The gendered nature of this discourse is highlighted here; daughters relied and continue to rely on their mothers to fill this conversational gap and answer pertinent questions. This discourse differs from the two aforementioned themes in a few crucial ways. First, there was increased awareness of this gendered silence in the narratives of both fathers and daughters, and the evasion of certain conversations was intentional. Second, the presence of this discourse is not entirely rooted in what participants stated outright; rather, it unfolded in part through the content participants did not discuss. Bearing this in mind, examples of this gendered silence will be provided here where possible, but attention will also be afforded to what is absent from the interview data.

One of the most silencing subjects within the father-daughter relationships was a young woman’s menarche. In the majority of the dyads, fathers learned about their daughters’ first period from their wives; rarely did they hear about menarche from their daughters directly. Moreover, daughters rarely disclosed their menstruation to their fathers because they did not
want them to know it was “that time of the month,” and because it felt uncomfortable to speak with them about it. For example, Lillian said she never speaks of her period with her father because it is “personal,” and because “he’s a guy and he doesn’t really understand.” Angelica suggested that while her dad has “definitely heard” about her period, she “[doesn’t] talk to him as much as [her] mom.” If menstruation was disclosed to fathers, it often stemmed from inquiries about changes in their daughters’ moods or behaviours, and was responded to curtly, from fathers and daughters alike. As Rupert recalled, “If she’s not feeling well, I’ll say, ‘Oh, you’ve got a cold?’ And she’ll say, ‘No, it’s my time of the month.’ ‘Oh, okay. Just leave it at that.’” In these moments, any further conversation between the pair was generally suspended; fathers seemed unsure of what to say, and thus said nothing at all, or deferred to their wives. Cassie lamented about the first time she got her period, in the middle of swim class, with only her father in attendance:

I was already wearing my swimsuit ’cause I wore it there and then . . . it’s just like . . . yeah, I got it, and I’m just like, Okay, I guess I can’t go swimming. So then I just told him. I’m just like, “Dad, I got my period,” and he’s like, “Okay.” He was like, “Are you okay?” I’m just like, “Yes.” . . . And after, he just drove me home. He got out of the car first, he told my mom, and then my mom dealt with everything. . . . Like, he looked a little shocked ’cause like, I guess he didn’t realize I was that old . . . I guess he was like shocked and then he was like, “Oh, okay, I guess this is happening. Okay.”
Even when fathers suggested they were comfortable answering any questions their daughters could think of, periods remained off the table. Amelia described one such experience with her father:

My dad, he’s said to me a number of times, “You can come to me with any questions that you have. It doesn’t matter what it is, I will answer it to the best of my ability, and if I don’t know then I will do some research and I will get back to you, but I will make sure to tell you whatever sort of information that you ask or need to know.” But I think it was probably at the point where once I started my period, then my dad was like, “Well, yep, you go talk to your mother about that.” And it . . . it stayed sort of at that level.

Although I did not intentionally probe for these experiences, the discomfort involved in speaking about menstruation did surface in the narratives of many participants. Overall, young women spoke more openly about their period experiences than their fathers did. Meanwhile, when the topic of periods arose during interviews with fathers, they replied quickly and without much elaboration.

Reticence also cropped up around the subjects of puberty and bodies. As discussed previously, almost all participants described fathers being skilled at challenging and reframing gender norms for their girls, such that the young women did not feel limited or constrained by their female-coded bodies. However, fathers and daughters hardly conversed about the physicality of bodies, including breasts, genitals, body hair, weight, and shape. Only Amelia and Evelyn, when referring to their breasts, described how their fathers had assured them that the size of their chest was insignificant. None of the fathers interviewed explicitly discussed their
daughters’ bodies, aside from their facial difference. An important detail to note: this silence not only encapsulated young women’s bodies, but fathers’ bodies, too; there was little to no discussion of fathers’ experiences of puberty or other bodily changes.

The interview guide addressed young women’s emerging sexualities more directly than menstruation and puberty; however, fathers and daughters described conversations about desire, intimacy, sexual preferences, and actions as equally uncomfortable and awkward. Usually, participants addressed these topics in the context of philosophical and political conversations pertaining to same sex marriage and the growing awareness of non-binary sexualities. While many daughters believed their fathers knew of their sexuality— heterosexual or otherwise— almost none discussed their sexual history with their fathers. Arielle, Cassie, Savannah, and Caroline mentioned that it was far easier to ask their mothers, female relatives, friends, or even Google about sexual questions than it was their fathers. Amelia described how the simple act of watching a movie risked making her father uncomfortable:

If there’s a sex scene that comes up, he’s . . . he’s still uncomfortable with me being there just because of my . . . because he knows that, you know, I have had sex and he . . . he doesn’t want to think of me that way.

This pattern pertained not only to daughters in their teens and 20s, but for the two women in their 30s, who were married with children. Abbey, for instance, baulked at the idea of discussing sex with her father:
I definitely don’t talk to my dad about sex . . . like, obviously, I have a daughter, so I’ve done it at least once. But I’ve never . . . that’s never been an issue; not an issue, but a topic that I need to discuss . . . no way, we haven’t talked about it.

Evelyn, too, suggested that her sex life was and continues to be a restricted topic:

My sex life, I would not talk about that with him. Not really. I mean, he knows that I’ve had sex, ’cause I’ve got two kids. But I don’t think that it will ever get . . . and nor do I want it to, that’s not really something that I’d talk about anyways. He has no idea about any of my sexual life, or like, previous boyfriends or anything. Yeah, we’ve never discussed, I’ve never told him any deep relationship stuff, nothing, never.

Even when their sexual activity is made clear by the birth of children, women preferred to allow their fathers to assume or come to their own conclusions rather than discuss their behaviour.

Fathers did not seem troubled by their daughters’ silence. Though few directly admitted to being uneasy with the topic, they alluded to their discomfort in the interviews. Many quickly dismissed discussion about their daughters’ sexuality; they provided brief, repetitive responses that referred to “sex” as an elusive “that.” Jacob reflected, “She’s not very receptive to talk about that with me. I would say that we haven’t really talked about um . . . yeah, I would say we haven’t talked about that.” Piers said, “I don’t talk about . . . I don’t ask her or she doesn’t volunteer stuff about her intimate life. I don’t do that.” Even Dylan, whose daughter was just entering high school, was anticipating the anxiety that would characterize such conversations: “You know . . . anytime now, you know, in puberty, she’ll be starting all that, and even if I joked about that, it’s something she does not want to talk to me about.” Only Lars named specific
sexual acts in his interview, and although he described having elaborate conversations about sex with the high school students he taught, he refused to engage his daughter in comparable dialogue:

> As comfortable as I am talking about it, and I’ve talked to, I guess by now, thousands of students about that very topic over my career, I personally haven’t had that conversation with [her] very much at all, to any great depth. I think we’ve talked about subjects where, certain acts . . . I don’t know how graphic we want to use our conversation now, in terms of our words, but in terms of you know, all the sex or oral sex and what not. . . . Have we zeroed in on a specific conversation where we’ve had a little bit of a heart to heart about what that actually looks like? We haven’t, I haven’t done that.

This silence about sexual discussions extended beyond daughters’ preferences and behaviours. Dyads touched on daughters’ sexualities (albeit it scarcely); however, neither fathers nor daughters spoke about fathers’ sexualities. Fathers implied their heterosexuality in referencing their wives or female partners, and daughters often referred to their parents’ relationships serving as an important model of stable, loving relationships. But still, no explicit consideration of men’s sexual development, history, or experience ever took place for either group of interviewees.

To be clear, the disquiet that characterized some of the relationships was not the case for all relationships or situations. Some fathers and daughters (not necessarily dyadic pairs) suggested that they would be comfortable talking about sex, sexuality, and puberty with the other person, but this pattern seemed highly dependent on the social context in which these families were embedded. For instance, Paul, a father with a wife and two daughters, spoke of how
comfortable he had become discussing periods over the years, stating, “She knows I’m very open about female things . . . I mean, I go and buy feminine products for everybody in my family so I don’t have any reservations about being shy about it.” Cassie added, “He is really open about everything. Like, some guys, they’re just like, ‘Oh, I’m not going to buy you pads and tampons.’ But he’s fine. He asks me all the time . . . He’s not disturbed by anything.” Taylor and Angelica’s fathers were both practicing medical doctors, and their professional knowledge seemed to minimize any discomfort that existed around addressing questions related to sexual wellbeing. “I’m pretty sure if he wasn’t a doctor we would never talk about this stuff,” Angelica noted. She continued:

I was just . . . in Europe for a few months . . . and I had an issue with like, a UTI and then like, I had an STI scare, and so I talked to him about that aspect of my life for the first time. But, it was more so because I needed his medical advice.

Taylor similarly recounted:

I mean, my dad’s an obstetrician-gynaecologist, too, so sex talk was very medically oriented. All of us [her sisters], when we turned 16, he was like, “Do you need to go on the pill?” Like, we weren’t allowed to date until we were 16, and then it was like, you could have sex now.

Both girls mentioned that these conversations were made easier because of their father’s position; despite being their fathers, they assumed a very professional stance when engaging in such conversations, making the discussions more formal and detached than intimate or personal. Taylor added, “I think I . . . giving him that doctor hat made it easier for me to talk about because
it was just like, mechanical almost, you know? Or like, scientific. It wasn’t like, personal.”

Angelica echoed this sentiment:

I don’t think he ever struggled . . . when I have needed to talk to him about that sort of stuff, he’s very easy to talk about it, and I think he’s definitely 100 percent professional and it’s all about, “Well, what are your symptoms? And what was your history? And these are the medications you need.”

Still, this openness was not true of all sexuality-related topics. In fact, some of what Paul, Cassie, Angelica, and Taylor said contrasted largely with what was mentioned in other parts of their interviews (described earlier in this section). For instance, in almost the same breath as her comment about menstrual products, Cassie described the limits to what she would talk about with her father because of their differing genders. She stated, “I think he’s a man, first of all, and he’s my father, so I’m not gonna want to talk to him about some things and um . . . he might not understand.” Taylor, who appreciated a relatively open relationship with her father, noted:

I mean, I’m dating a guy and I live with him and he’s a cisgendered, straight guy, so I think now, [my dad] might think that it was like, a phase or something. I’ve never actually talked to him about this, but I would be interested to see what he would say my sexuality was right now, ’cause I feel like he might say I’m straight just because I am in a straight relationship I guess? But it’s not how I would necessarily identify . . . I mean like, with my dad, it was always very much about safe sex. I guess that’s interesting too, though, he would probably not know what safe sex between two women looks like.
Laughter] So, he probably would not have like, anything to say about that. Like, we never talked about that at all.

Curiously, however, some dyads hinted that maintaining this sexual silence was an intentional decision, aimed at reducing the other person’s discomfort rather than their own. Damian wanted to hang back and wait for his daughter to initiate sex talk:

She can talk to me about anything. I’m surprised that she hasn’t talked to me about boyfriends, girlfriends, or about sex. I could say anything about it, but I’m waiting for her to ask me. We haven’t talked about it; she has not approached me. And I don’t want that to start from me. I want her to start.

Piers maintained that he would never ask his daughter about sex or her sexuality “unless it came up in some way,” because it violated his parenting style. Caroline, likewise, hesitated because she did not want to upset her father. “I don’t talk about boys,” she said. “My dad . . . he just . . . he doesn’t hate the topic, he’s just not for it.” According to Amelia, it was important to “steer away from the things” that unsettled her father. “I’m very open when it comes to talking really about anything with my dad. But I know that he is not as open to some topics and watching some things. He still sees me as that little girl.” To protect participant confidentiality, father and daughter interviews are not linked in this analysis; however, it is critical to highlight that this desire to protect the other person was central for both members of certain dyads. This coincidence hints at a potential opportunity for fathers and daughters to overcome such silence in the future, though it remains untapped to this point.
As discussed in this chapter, numerous discourses operate in the father-daughter relationship, both within and outside of consciousness. In accordance with post-structuralist thought, the reliance on gendered care practices, knowledge regimes, and silence in both father and daughter narratives emanates from various historical ideas, attitudes, actions, beliefs, and practices that have been enhanced over time. These discourses have come to dominate the ways in which individuals understand themselves, their relationships, and the social world (Foucault, 1984). This is true of the fathers and daughters in this study: these three patterns have created and maintained specific perceptions and experiences within the father-daughter relationship. In turn, the relationships participants described work to bolster the veracity of these discourses. The origins of the three discourses described in this chapter are analyzed in the forthcoming discussion chapters, along with an analysis of the interplay between discourse and relational practices. However, to foreground this inquiry, it is critical to first explore the perceptions and experiences of the father-daughter relationship.
Chapter 5: Conceptualizations of the Father-Daughter Relationship

This second results chapter highlights the themes that surfaced in participants’ conceptualizations of their relationships. The depictions that fathers and daughters provided materialized in response to a number of interview questions, including a broad introductory question prompting participants to describe their current relationship, but also in response to additional unscripted questions that developed organically in conversation. This included questions about participants’ influence on one another, memories they have shared with and stories they have told one another, and descriptions of their pasts and their imaginings for the future. The descriptions of the father-daughter relationships were just as diverse as the men and women interviewed; dyads were of different ages, races, cultural backgrounds, sexual orientations, family structures, and geographical spaces, and this heterogeneity was reflected in the stories they told and the examples they drew on to construct their relationships. Nonetheless, upon closer examination, the relational conceptualizations of fathers and daughters seemed to coalesce around a central theme that I have titled precarious closeness.

As is illustrated in this chapter, precarious closeness was not a static relational space or status. Rather, just as participants’ narratives involved examples of reifying and resisting the aforementioned discourses, they also referenced conditions that facilitated and impeded this closeness—features I describe as “ancillary” themes. Here, I delineate precarious closeness as participants experienced it, and report on the provisions that enhance and subvert it using excerpts from fathers and daughters’ transcripts. In line with the feminist-disability perspective
that guides this study, I also explore whether facial difference was experienced or understood as a condition that promoted or thwarted closeness in the father-daughter relationship.

5.1 Precarious Closeness Amongst Fathers and Daughters

In the English language, the term “precarious” is imbued with various connotations, many of which are negative, including the following: hazardous, dangerous, unsafe, and perilous. While the term has not been readily taken up in the field of family studies, precarious is used widely in sociology, particularly as it relates to politics, immigration, and employment. In this literature, precarious denotes that which is contingent or insecure; something that is conditional, unstable, or temporary (Lewis, Dwyer, Hodkinson, & Waite, 2015). Butler (2004b) also referred to precarity in the current geopolitical world order that is marked by human violence and war, defining it as a state of extreme vulnerability—something that is “at risk.” Recently, the concept of precarity has even filtered into the arts; Curtin and Sanson (2016) referred to “precarious creativity” as that which is uncertain, capricious, and constantly undergoing change. In the context of this chapter, I use precariousness in a relational sense. Here, I suggest that the fathers and daughters interviewed experience closeness in their relationship as fragile and tentative, perhaps even insecure or delicate, because closeness was not a stable condition; dyads are not always in a state of intimacy and familiarity. Instead, they described their relationships as shifting and changing, in a constant state of flux, their affinity for one another dependent upon certain circumstances or events both within and beyond their control.

Many times throughout their interviews, fathers and daughters described their relationships as loving, warm, affectionate, open, respecting, friendly, approachable, receptive,
and honest. Each of these descriptors illustrated a positive and intimate bond. Fourteen of the 18 participants stated explicitly that they considered their relationship to be “close.” However, just as openly as participants discussed their intimacy, they also conveyed occasional frustrations, disappointments, anger, detachment, and reservations with and about their relationships. For example, Angelica suggested that she and her father “definitely butt heads a lot,” while Evelyn described her father by stating, “He can be a little uptight.” Amelia spoke at length about the hardships that plagued her relationship with her father almost two years ago:

I mean, I love my dad with all my heart and I’d do anything for him, and you know, it was . . . I think probably a year ago, or like, a year and a half ago, two years ago, during my senior years, that might have been a little challenging for me to say that, just because there was a lot of anger sort of present in our relationship.

Recounting his relationship with his daughter, Jacob explained, “I would say she can be moody and easily irritated. And is at times, can be curt or uh, aloof . . . frankly, um, rude at times and very bossy and that creates a lot of tension.” Piers recalled there being “quite a bit of distance” between he and his stepdaughter as their family navigated the blending process. “There was a bit of reluctance to certainly treat me in any kind of filial way.” He also noted:

I worry a bit when we don’t hear from her regularly . . . she can be um, guarded and satisfied with giving you an answer to the question, how are you doing? “Fine,” kind of thing, when you know that’s not really how it is. So, that can be frustrating.

For many participants, these issues were short-lived; for others, like Angelica, Abbey, Arielle, and Jacob, these challenges created longer phases of distance and detachment.
Still, when considering where a relationship had been in the past, and imagining what it could be in the future, daughters and fathers communicated a desire to become closer to or maintain a close relationship with the other person. Caroline and Cassie aspired to preserve their open and honest relationships with their fathers, while Arielle hoped that hers would improve. Andrew expressed desire that his daughter and her family would move closer to him, in the hopes that he could spend more time with her and her children. According to Abbey, there was a profound shift in the relationship with her father when her daughter was born, and the closeness she began to experience eroded some of the anger and resentment that had been present in their relationship previously. As such, she focused on maintaining a better rapport with her father:

I hope that our relationship stays the same, or if not, does get stronger. I don’t know how, or what that looks like. I just hope we grow stronger or he grows closer to self and [my] daughter . . . I want [their] relationship to grow, and hopefully in turn, our relationship will grow because of that.

Angelica, who also experienced some dissonance with her father since moving back into her parents’ home, wanted to reconcile their differences and get back to the positive place they once occupied:

I get frustrated with him a lot. I really do think that’s just being back at home, because it wasn’t really an issue for us when I was away at school. But, as much as I can appreciate him and can talk to him, I just find that we . . . I get frustrated with him a lot . . . I need my space. So, I hope that we get back to a place where I enjoy his company all the time, not just when I feel like it. I hope to talk more . . . I know that I can talk to him about
anything but I still don’t talk to him about everything, so it would be nice to get to a place where you spend more time together and talk more together and . . . it just sort of feels natural.

Finally, Taylor hoped to continue bridging the gap between her and both her biological father and stepfather, without compromising the close relationship she had with each. Recognizing the uniqueness of these two relationships, she described that ameliorating the two relationships depended upon different processes. For her biological father she noted:

I want to like, just continue being close and like, hopefully get closer in terms of like . . . being able to open up more about the way I’ve experienced my facial difference. Like, speak about it more on an emotional level than necessarily like, a medical level.

As for her stepfather, she remarked:

Just trying to like, let my guard down to let us be closer and not feel like I’m disowning my dad by doing that or something, you know? Which is so . . . I get conflicted by [it] sometimes, even though I know it’s not true . . . I can put a wall up without even realizing it because of that.

Even if participants were in a good place in their relationship, each identified things that they thought would be helpful in cultivating closeness; in some instances, fathers and daughters spoke of efforts they felt the other person needed to make, while others reflected on more personal endeavours.
No participant directly acknowledged their relationship as being risky or unsafe, as the standard dictionary definition of precarious implies. It is possible that discussing their relationships publicly could put both fathers and daughters in precarious positions where admitting difficulties, distance, disappointment, or disapproval might hurt or harm one of the parties involved, further damaging an already delicate bond. Awareness of this risk could support the overwhelming focus on closeness—how desirable it is, how it can be maintained or should be pursued—in participants’ narratives. Conceptualizing their relationship as close may allow fathers and daughters to mitigate the possibility that their bond is read by their relational other and by society as lacking or abnormal.

5.2 Facilitating Closeness

As evidenced above, the experience of closeness in the father-daughter relationship is, at best, transient. Even in the closest relationships, participants encountered problems. Moreover, the state of being close was found to not be a natural phenomenon; father and daughter participants did not simply exist with one another in an affectionate way. Instead, closeness was a way of being in a relationship that was facilitated by a variety of social conditions. These included: physical closeness with one another, shared interests, open communication, and mothers’ mediation. However, this list is far from exhaustive. Indeed, there are a host of other conditions that fathers and daughters felt were important to enhancing the closeness in their relationship, but these tended to be unique qualities. In theory, too, certain conditions were not touched upon by any of the 18 participants included in the study, thus opening up potential areas for future investigation. The four themes indicated above will be examined in more depth here.
5.2.1 Physical proximity, shared activities, and communication. Firstly, almost all of the fathers and daughters acknowledged that their ability to be physically near the other person and share in an experience with them bolstered their sense of emotional closeness. For example, Caroline described that the best thing about her relationship with her father was that “he always takes time out of his day to spend time with me, even just for an hour at dinner.” She also mentioned some of her favourite moments with her father, including watching TV at night: “I’ll rest on his lap sometimes. I feel like that’s when we feel like, really close.” Joining each other for a movie or television show was an extremely common experience among participants, and was highly revered as being enjoyable and intimate. In addition to always “pulling her chair closer” at dinner, Damian’s daughter enjoyed jumping into bed with her parents at the end of the day: “She will ask, ‘Can I sleep here?’ And she will stay there for a while, and eventually go to her room.” Though his daughter was now into her 20s, these moments were particularly special for Damian. Jacob described an almost identical pattern with his daughter, who was also in her 20s. “Sometimes, I might be in bed at night, and [my wife] is sleeping,” he stated. “[She] might come in and snuggle, watch something on the computer. So, there’s a definite closeness at that time, for sure.”

Amelia was reminded of a moment she and her father shared while watching the film

*Meet Joe Black:*

Watching that move, it centred a lot around that sort of father-daughter relationship and it’s . . . a sappy movie that my dad does not watch at all, at least with me. The last time I was there with him, we were able to sit down and watch that movie, and you know, there
were certain parts when he reached over and just grabbed my hand, and was like, yeah, this is us. This is us. And it’s just how our relationship gets stronger, I guess.

Woven throughout these anecdotes is a fondness for physical touch and time alone. While many participants interacted with one another on a regular basis, these quiet moments allowed fathers and daughters to focus their exclusive attention on one another for extended periods of time. Many pairs did not even require dialogue, but happily shared in silence with one another. Additionally, although their sense of closeness did not always rely on physical contact, a number of fathers and daughters reflected on the joy and comfort associated with physically interacting with the other person.

Other dyads found closeness in carrying on certain traditions or jointly participating in hobbies or activities. Lillian delighted in accompanying her father on business trips because it was “uninterrupted time” together. Arielle appreciated summers spent camping on the lake with her father. Similarly, Dylan and his daughter have honoured a tradition initially encouraged by his wife:

We usually have one or two father-daughter weekends a year. We usually will go to the cottage, and there’s a couple of traditional things we do: go up to the same restaurant . . . a Star Wars marathon or a Hobbit marathon over a number of nights or whatever, sometimes over the weekend.

Angelica described hockey and sports as a driving force in creating and maintaining closeness with her father:
I’m huge into sports and so . . . whether it’s the sports I play or sports that I watch, that’s a huge, huge thing that we talk about. . . . Watching sports, playing sports, we do a fair bit of that together. He was the trainer for our team . . . I was playing competitively, sometimes four or five times a week, and he was driving me to every day, every practice.

We spent a lot of time together through hockey.

Savannah also learned to relate to her father through sports:

We do stuff together. Like, throughout my childhood, we would go do activities like throw a football around, or go kick a soccer ball and just share stuff with each other. He’s gotten me into a lot of the sports I do. He practices with me, and we chat every day.

Physical activity was central to Rupert’s relationship with his daughter, too:

At one point, she was in competitive swimming . . . and I was the swim coach for her and others on the team in the Special Olympics. So, that was a lot of fun, you know, a fun activity that we would do together. Currently, she and I have a GoodLife membership and occasionally we will go to the gym together.

Even mundane and low-key activities proved enjoyable for some daughters and fathers. Cassie, for instance, relished being dropped off at school:

He drives me to school, every day since elementary school . . . it’s like my favourite part of the day. We drive to school, we listen to the talk radio . . . and I don’t know, it’s just like our time together. We just listen to the news and we laugh about stuff, you know, we just talk about things.
Andrew, now a grandfather, spoke of a number of activities he once shared exclusively with his daughter, “like trying food and interesting beers,” and those he now gets to share with her and her children including “going to museums, going to parks and going for walks.” While none of these activities were particularly extravagant, they were described as enjoyable and intimacy building, sparking laughter and inviting open communication. In these spaces, fathers and daughters were more comfortable sharing stories with and asking questions of one another because they were more private, and ideas flowed more freely. Most often, conversations would begin around something simple and benign, but being together in an easy and familiar space prompted an evolution of dialogue to include more difficult or heavy topics, such as friends, school, conflicts, goals, and/or politics.

This dialogue, however, was not always rooted in physical proximity. Many participants described attempting to engage the other in regular communication using various technologies when they could not physically be together. Some fathers and daughters who lived apart from one another, like Arielle, Andrew and Evelyn, relied heavily on Facebook and FaceTime to interact. Rupert, who travelled regularly for business preferred Skype to see and speak with his daughter while on the road. Other participants, like Angelica, Jacob, Caroline and Amelia, enjoyed connecting via text message when they could not speak with one another live. Thus, while physical closeness went a long way toward forging closeness between fathers and daughters, participants circumvented distance and kept their lines of communication open through various technologies, allowing them to sustain a certain level of intimacy with one another.
Participants also indirectly indicated the importance of the closeness they maintained with their father or daughter when recalling “old times” or “early years,” when they were able to spend more time together and engage in shared activities or hobbies. As daughters aged, and the demands of school, careers, and adult life intensified, the amount of time fathers and daughters were able to spend together waned, leading to shifts in their relationship. The shift also stemmed from fathers’ advancing ages, and the abatement of their ability to engage in sports and other physical activities. In the 18 months since her father retired and moved out of province, Amelia yearned to be able to “just sit down and play a board game, you know, the quiet activities, just to have him there because [she doesn’t] get that anymore.” Taylor acknowledged her father’s advancing age as a barrier to the physical activity they once enjoyed, noting, “he really likes to go biking, we always used to go biking together. Sometimes we still do, but it’s harder.”

Caroline, too, spoke to the shift in activities she partakes in with her father, who used to enjoy biking, playing sports in the backyard, and going on long hikes. Now in his 70s, her father is less able to enjoy these things for prolonged periods of time, and so they rarely participate in them together.

Jacob reflected on how his relationships with his daughter had changed since she stopped playing hockey:

I think we’re probably not as close as we were when she was in high school simply because she played hockey and I was the one who always took her there, helped out with the team, and so, we were quite close, especially at that time just by virtue of spending a lot of time together.
Though these shifts did not always unsettle the closeness that fathers and daughters experienced, some participants noted that this lack of physical engagement shifted the ways in which they got close to one another; however, for some pairs this shift was more conflicted. This pattern will be discussed as a factor that complicates closeness in the section that follows.

5.2.2 Mothers as arbitrators in father-daughter relationships. The presence and involvement of mothers, especially in the case of families led by intact, heterosexual couples, also facilitated closeness between fathers and daughters. Here, mothers occupied the position of mediator and knowledge broker, doing a substantial amount of liaising between fathers and daughters. Some participants described how mothers encouraged them to engage with the other person. For example, Dylan described his father-daughter weekend traditions as something that his wife “pushed for.” Taylor also explained that although she doesn’t often seek out her stepfather when calling her mother’s home, her mother will often hand over the receiver and say, “Here’s [dad].”

Mothers also assisted in providing fathers with an awareness of their daughters’ thoughts, feelings, preferences, and activities. Though daughters were unlikely to directly disclose certain things to their fathers, men were often made aware of certain circumstances, situations, conflicts, and developments in their daughters’ lives due to their partner sharing with them. Lars appreciated his wife’s divulgence and found her knowledge helpful in understanding his teenage daughter. He actively sought out his wife to keep “up to speed with the Coles Notes version” of his daughter’s life. Piers acknowledged that he played “second string” to his daughter’s mother:
You could construct the relationship among the three of us, partly in this way, everything
goes from [her] to her mom, and then might go to me. Nothing comes to me really . . .
nothing of a personal sort of sort comes to me directly from her. It goes through her mom.

Abbey recalled, “I would never run to him if I had a problem or question. I would always go to
my mom and then she would kind of fill in what the kids were up to to my dad.” For some young
women, like Savannah and Taylor, their mothers’ sharing made space for further discussions with
their fathers. Savannah stated, “Usually if I tell my mom something, the next day my dad will
know anyways. So, then I’ll have a conversation with him about that, like, eventually we will
talk about it.” Taylor spoke of how her stepfather was brought into conversations wherein he
offered his advice:

As I get older, I wouldn’t like necessarily seek [him] out for personal advice . . . I would
go to my mom and she would probably talk to him about it. Like, I know that my mom
would tell him whatever issues I was having, and that never bothered me, but I wouldn’t
go directly to him. But knowing that he knew and he would sometimes be like, come to
me and say like, “Your mom told me about this, I’m here . . .” Like, he was always very
supportive and there for me. It was nice; it made me feel safe. Sometimes, I’d feel like a
bit bothered that my mom told him, but then I would get over it and would be glad in the
end.

To be clear, daughters and fathers were equally aware of this information relay, and appreciated
or relied on it to enhance their feelings of closeness. However, almost none of the participants
spoke of fathers’ thoughts, feelings, and experiences being shared with daughters through
mothers, suggesting that the transmission of knowledge in families is predominantly unidirectional.

5.3 Complicating Closeness

Just as there existed conditions and spaces that enhanced closeness between fathers and daughters, there were experiences that complicated this closeness. These included: daughters asserting their independence, incongruence between fathers’ expectations for their daughters and daughters’ own ambitions, fathers’ un-involvement, and young women’s sexual development. These conditions sometimes caused frustration, anger, and arguments in the relationship. In certain instances, fathers and daughters became stand-offish with one another as a result of these conditions, and the open communication and intimacy that they otherwise experienced dissolved. Dyads became less likely to share life details and stories with one another, and even avoided participating in some of their shared activities, thus becoming less familiar and/or comfortable with one another. The first three of these four conditions will be explored in more depth in this section. However, given the lengthy discussion of gendered silence in Chapter 4, the third condition will not be investigated in much depth. Instead, a short summary of the effect of this silence on father-daughter closeness will be presented.

5.3.1 Asserting independence. As highlighted previously, young women’s development, though normal and welcome, sometimes leads to distance between fathers and daughters. With age, young women’s identities, including their desires, preferences, and interests, become increasingly apparent to themselves and others. In many of the dyads interviewed, this self-
exploration and knowledge led daughters to move away from activities and spaces that once forged closeness with their fathers.

For Savannah, high school and maturity brought about a change in the way she and her father would relate to one another, and decreased the time she would spend with her father. When probed about how she understood the shift in their relationship, she replied:

I feel like when I was younger, it was more about the learning experience. Like, getting into more things and trying this and trying that. And now that I’m older, I know what things are. Does that make sense? Like, I know what things are so I’m open to the [experience], but it’s not as much of a learning experience. When I was younger, we had more time to try new things and I was still learning, and now that I have matured more . . . I’m older, I might go hang out with friends . . . I feel like we’ve lost a bit of time there.

Arielle echoed this change in her interview, stating, “Ever since I’ve gotten older, it’s been more difficult to see him. I don’t have much time on my schedule for that stuff anymore, like sports.”

Amelia mentioned that her graduation and moving away from home demonstrated to her father that she could care for herself:

I did my undergrad at [name of university], so I had to leave the house, so moving out . . . and sort of being on my own and seeing how successful I was doing that, and making my own friends and having my own independence and sort of starting a new life, I think that was another huge sort of step . . . just with him sort of seeing me in a different way than his child that still lived at home and needed protection.
Across almost all of the interviews with daughters, the sense of gaining and asserting independence was welcomed, even though it sometimes came at the expense of time and communication with their fathers.

Fathers, too, were able to identify a shift in their daughters’ behaviour as they aged—specifically that they preferred being alone more than when they were younger, and were quieter than they used to be as children. Rupert noted that his daughter was “not as dependent on [him] as she was when she was smaller.” Jacob said, “Sometimes, if I try and be with her, you know, go watch television with her, she wants to be alone.” Lars, too, noticed an increased silence in the car rides he and his daughter shared: “There’s lots of small talk but not as much as I’d like sometimes. I think sometimes she plugs her ear buds in and listens to her music.” For some fathers, this separation was stressful or disappointing. Consequently, they would make attempts to regain or retain closeness and proximity with their daughters by inserting themselves into situations. On occasion, these efforts were met with acceptance and patience by daughters, while other times, they were met with increased conflict and tension. Some fathers learned to respect the boundaries that their daughters were trying to erect and instead waited to be approached. This theme was particularly interesting given the emphasis fathers placed on instilling independence in their girls, as discussed in the previous chapter. Jacob spoke directly to this contradiction:

We really tried from an early stage to make [her] feel you know, confident about herself and to stand up for herself, and in the sort of . . . joking way, we might have created a monster because she’s really . . . from a young age, she’s really argumentative and hard to deal with at times. Those types of things have been hard for me to deal with because it’s
created at times a hostile or adversarial relationship. I think in a way, it’s had a negative
effect in some aspects of our relationship, just by creating tension.

Although fathers aimed to raise strong, independent women, they seemed unsettled and
disgruntled when this same quality caused their daughters to stray from them and their
relationship.

5.3.2 Dissonance in expectations. Related to daughters asserting their independence,
some dyads grew apart as young women’s visions for their own lives and futures were at odds
with their fathers’ expectations of them. For both members of the dyad, these moments brought
about intense frustration: daughters described the frustration of being told what to do, or in not
being respected; fathers described the irritation associated with not being listened to. Although
fathers’ efforts were often focused on doing what was best for their daughters and ensuring their
girls became productive, well-adjusted, responsible members of society, daughters looked to be
more carefree. They were keen to express themselves and live their lives in ways that were
personally meaningful, even if that meant going against their fathers’ wishes. The frictions that
participants described applied to many areas of daily life: some centred on the more benign
maintenance of personal space, recreational activities, and social life, while others fixated on
work ethic, values, family planning, and health care decisions.

Abbey spoke at length about the conflicts that surfaced repeatedly in her relationship with
her father. Some of these stemmed from working with him in the family company. “My
standards were set so much higher than other people in the same level as I was because I was the
daughter and he expected so much more.” She also described how her father disagreed with the way she and her husband chose to spend their money:

He’s very . . . frugal, and so whenever my husband and I spend a lot of money on savings like, car repairs or a new car, it’s a very touchy subject because he feels he can always get it a lot cheaper. So, I don’t bring up anything to do with cars or mechanics. Only if I were getting a really good deal, and then I tiptoe around the situation, and then I kind of fill him in. I’ll run it by my mom first, and then let him know, and then usually it’s okay.

Finally, and perhaps most damaging to their relationship, Abbey recounted how disappointed her father had been when she became pregnant:

When I did get pregnant, he wasn’t happy about it because he didn’t want another . . . he felt it wasn’t fair to have a child on purpose with a syndrome, with a deformity, even though she wasn’t on purpose, she was an accident, but that’s beside the point. So, I think he had a really hard time understanding why I would want to do that after seeing what my mom went through with me and all my trips to Toronto. So, during my pregnancy, we hardly, we didn’t really talk about me being pregnant or anything like that, or what the outcome would be.

Despite significant improvements in her relationship with her father since the birth of her daughter, Abbey was affected so severely by her father’s disappointment that she refuses to discuss future plans for children with him.
Taylor had a similar experience in her early 20s, when she decided to refuse a specific cosmetic medical procedure that her biological father felt strongly about:

I’m sure you know this, with Crouzon’s syndrome, or with other facial differences, there’s like a trajectory of surgeries, right? And some of them are necessary; some of them become like, purely cosmetic, right? So, I got to the point where what I had left was cosmetic surgery, and I was on the path, of like, getting everything done, so I had like my cheek implants made and all this stuff. But then I was coming into critical disability studies, and I was like, starting to question all of these sorts of dynamics and then I ended up deciding against pursuing more surgery. So, I basically had the cheek implants, nose job, and eye lift left, and I said, “I’m done, like, I’m fine.” And that became a big issue with my dad. It was like a fight, and that was one of our biggest issues to date. Like, we ended up not speaking for like, six months, ’cause it was too messy and loaded. I wouldn’t bring that up with him again, just to avoid the hurt, I guess, but also the conflict. I was always a very good kid, did what I was supposed to do, especially in the hospital setting. Like, I was like, the very good patient, I didn’t cause trouble and fuss, I didn’t even really cry; just kind of like, took it. So, this was like first time where I was like, “I’m not going to do this,” and just disregarded what the experts were telling me.

Like with Abbey, any future discussion of medical treatment remains off the table for Taylor and her father.
Amelia suggested that most of the conflict with her father stemmed from his tendency to overprotect. Although in her mid-20s, she felt he struggled to let her make her own decisions about her care, and still saw her as a young girl who needed safeguarding:

It’s sort of frustrating though sometimes, too, when he treats me that way. As a little girl, I don’t know why, I think I have a magnet in my head because I had balls that hit me in the head all the time. So, he was very protective when it comes to like, “Okay, make sure that you’re wearing a helmet.” Like, I’m going to aerial yoga this week, and he’s like, “Should I get you a helmet? This is your first time trying it and I don’t want you falling.” So, it’s frustrating that way because he still sees me as this breakable person; he sees me as a lot weaker than I am.

This pattern continued to influence their relationship, even after her father moved out of province. Recognizing her father’s tendencies, Amelia started keeping her activities secret from her father, to avoid causing him stress and having to explain herself.

Caroline felt most conflicted when it came to explaining her social life and the generational and cultural differences to her father:

My generation is different from his generation. I want to do things that this generation finds okay but theirs doesn’t. For example, going out to bars or clubs till like midnight, they don’t do that in the Philippines. Back in the day, they had to be home by 10. I think that’s where [our relationship] is kind of like, broken, I guess? Whenever he has to adapt to the society, or like whenever I mention something that this generation does that he doesn’t agree with, that’s where we feel a little distant or indifferent.
Heated arguments would start when she felt unable to explain herself and her decisions. As a result of her father’s “old school” nature, Caroline felt she was better able to address her social plans with her mother, as she was more understanding and supportive of her self-exploration.

Damian disliked that his daughter did not share in his valuing of order and tidiness. He felt he needed to keep on her about the state of her room. “Her clothes are all over the place: on the chair, on the sofa, on the bed. I’m a very neat person, so I keep telling her, ‘You should emulate neatness.’” Paul was similarly annoyed by his daughter’s laissez-faire attitude toward school work: “The most challenging thing is probably getting [her] to do things I want . . . in terms of like, most kids . . . study harder, prioritize, plan.” Lars and Dylan were most disappointed when their daughters underperformed or did not apply themselves, physically and mentally. “I push [her] hard,” Lars said. “What I find challenging is if I don’t think she is putting out physically enough in her sport. I’m not yelling at her, but I’m really trying to like, ‘C’mon, I’ve seen you, you can do this.’” Dylan echoed:

There’s been a little bit where she’s you know, riding bikes and that, and it’s just . . . I find it frustrating when I believe she can do it and she just gives up too easily. She’s not trying enough . . . that’s probably my biggest frustration with her. It’s like, “Oh, c’mon. . . . Just stop, you can do this.” I find that with school, too. I think she is smarter than she knows. I mean, she’s in Grade 8 and I think she’s a solid B. I think she could at least be an A minus, if not an A ’cause I think she knows it. She doesn’t check her work. She doesn’t go through some of the stuff, I find. I find it kind of frustrating ’cause I know what’s in her.
Across almost all of the interviews, fathers made attempts to nudge their girls toward realizing their potential, albeit sometimes abrasively. However, some of the fathers’ narratives suggested that they hoped or expected their girls would unequivocally agree with their opinions, be more like them, or exemplify the characteristics, passions, and values they deemed important. Some even reflected that this was easier to achieve when their girls were younger. Nonetheless, when daughters forged their own paths and ignored or outright rejected their fathers’ advice, tension and conflict often resulted, stifling communication and intimacy.

5.3.3 Fathers’ un-involvement. Participants in this study were of different ages and came from different family structures, cultural backgrounds, and socioeconomic statuses, all of which impacted the way individual families functioned and the relationships forged within. Although almost none of the fathers explicitly described themselves as “uninvolved” in their interviews, a number of the daughters felt that some of the disaffection they experienced in relationship with their father was rooted in his physical and emotional distance, as well as his decreased participation, particularly in their early childhood and adolescence. Amelia’s father had retired to a remote area out of province, significantly reducing the time they were able to spend together. Though she respected her father’s decision and tried to maintain communication with him, she described this living arrangement as “really hard” and “limiting,” because he couldn’t “be there to sort of give [her] a hand when [she was] frustrated or anything.” Abbey felt the relationship with her father was different than the “friend” relationship she maintained with her mother because he was absent for most of her early life. “When I was younger especially,” she said, “he was away a lot for business, so we weren’t that close.” Her father’s long hours
away from home and frequent travel meant that he missed out on many aspects of her life and key relationship-building activities:

It’s funny, we haven’t actually done a lot together ever; we never really had a lot of one-on-one time. I felt comforted and I felt protected by him, but I was never close with him because he was never around for long stretches. If we were to actually try to be friends, it would be awkward.

Both Taylor and Angelica reflected on their fathers’ work schedules as a force that hindered their closeness. Taylor’s relationship was complicated further by the separation of her parents, and her father’s move back to Mexico: “With my dad, a lot of feelings of, not being abandoned but like, his absence was very noticeable for me. And I, I always understood that he was working, but I still was like saddened or disappointed by that.” According to Angelica:

I think the most challenging would be just that, um, since I was little, he’s always worked a lot. So, while I know that I can talk to him about anything, I think we definitely haven’t spent as much time together, especially growing up, as I would have liked. And so, I think that’s definitely had an influence on our current relationship now, where like, I don’t feel like I spend very much time with him, because I grew up not spending that much time with him.

Angelica’s father also maintained very close, social relationships with his colleagues, which she felt contributed further to their emotional distance:
He has a very social life. He spends a lot of time with his friends and colleagues, so I would just say like, when he’s been spending a lot of time with his friends or a lot of time at work . . . not that I resent him, but I definitely sometimes feel distant from him when he isn’t spending a lot of time at home.

Arielle, meanwhile, felt that the hardest aspect of her relationship with her father was that they didn’t live in the same home, even though they resided in the same community. Seeing him twice a week made her feel isolated from her father, and different from her half-siblings who live with him. She also felt that his drinking led him to act oddly, and that this behaviour kept her from feeling close to him.

It was made clear through daughters’ narratives that their fathers’ un-involved was not necessarily intentional or malevolent, rather an unfortunate by-product of their employment, family situation, mental health, or age. Still, for each of these young women, the pattern of emotional distance from their fathers, established early in their lives, carried forward and permeated the conceptualization of their current relationship. It was as if once the boundary between a father and daughter had been erected, it remained difficult to overcome entirely. Thus, even though each of these young women conceptualized their relationship with their father as close, open, warm, affectionate, and essential, it was not as close as they knew it could be.

5.3.4 Sexual silence. The presence of sexual and gendered silence in the father-daughter relationship was explored in detail in Chapter 4. Participants almost never approached one another about bodies, puberty, or sexuality because it was awkward, essentially closing off otherwise active lines of communication. Occasionally, a daughter’s sexual development (and the
discomfort that enveloped it) even led to a discontinuation of certain physical activities in which dyads jointly participated. Altogether, this inhibition led fathers and daughters to feel distant from each other, created a substantial gap in their understanding of one another, and left them struggling to relate.

5.4 The Relationship Between Facilitating and Complicating Conditions

Organizing this chapter and participants’ narratives according to the numerous and rather ordinary conditions that facilitated or impeded the closeness between fathers and daughters is helpful in demonstrating just how precarious this relationship can be. However, categorizing these relational themes as either facilitating or complicating conditions creates the illusion of a static dichotomy wherein certain elements of the relationship can only strengthen or destabilize the relationship. To clarify, this is not the case. In fact, these features or arrangements are by no means mutually exclusive; they influence the relationship in ways that are not wholly positive or negative. Throughout participants’ interviews, many of these conditions were described as producing different effects for different people at different times.

For example, while many fathers and daughters interpreted the actions of mothers as beneficial and supportive, there were a few occasions where the relationship between mother and daughter was thought to restrict or inhibit the closeness that fathers and daughters were able to achieve. Despite the obvious respect Piers had for his wife and the work she did with their daughter, he commented, “I don’t want to impose myself, and so, at times, I experience it as a frustration that my relationship is always in a way indirect or secondary.” He expressed a desire
to eliminate the need for his wife to serve as arbitrator, and to establish a truly dyadic relationship with his daughter rather than a triadic one.

Similarly, some participants, like Angelica, felt there was a limit to the amount of physical closeness she and her father could share before she became frustrated and closed off. Moving back in with her parents after having lived on her own, in other cities and countries, put a significant strain on her relationship with her father, as indicated earlier in the chapter. Moreover, daughters’ independence did present a challenge for many fathers, but was viewed positively by women like Evelyn, who made the decision to move out of her family home a number of times. For her, the decision to move in with friends in her early 20s, against her parents’ wishes, helped her mature faster and pushed her outside her previous pattern of hostility toward “being a normal human being.” This, she felt, was when the relationship with her father started to really become close.

These examples highlight how the same condition or process can elicit immensely different influences on the father-daughter relationship. Whether it was proximity, shared activities, mothers’ actions, or independence that brought fathers and daughters closer together or drove them apart depended on the individual, their personality characteristics, preferences, and life history, as well as their subjective understanding of how a relationship should look and feel. Thus, even if this facilitating/complicating framework is suitable for establishing the flexible, shifting conceptualizations of the father-daughter relationship described by participants in this study, there exists no reliable way to predict how any specific person or dyad would respond to these conditions.
5.5 Facial Difference as a Benign Relational Condition

Lastly, given the focus of the overall study, it is critical to attend to the unexpected influence of facial difference in participants’ conceptualizations of their relationships. Facial difference did not emerge as promoting or threatening father-daughter closeness. Instead, references to the influence it had on their relationships were mixed both within and across participants’ narratives. At some points in certain interviews, facial difference was described as having had no impact on the way fathers or daughters interacted. For example, Caroline flatly denied that it had any bearing on how she acted or spoke with her father, while Angelica suggested that it “wasn’t even really a topic between me and my dad.” Comparing her own relationship to other father-daughter pairs, Arielle stated, “I am different but I think we’ve been just like, as any other person, like children with their father.” Similarly, Abbey reflected that her father “never treated [her] differently.” She said, “He’s never treated me like I was the special one just because I had this difference. I was never treated like I had a facial difference or that anything was wrong with me.” Cassie, too, believed her facial difference made no unique contributions to her relationship with her father:

I don’t think it makes it stronger or weaker, I think it’s just something that happened, and it’s just now . . . it’s part of it . . . he is a great father, but I think he would have been great either way, whether or not I had a facial difference or whether or not I had like four toes and a tail or whatever.

She even went so far as to suggest that her father’s treatment of her was no different than the care and relationship he provided her sister, who lived without a facial difference.
Interestingly, some fathers and daughters suggested that facial difference did have an effect on their relationship, but struggled to articulate what that influence was. Rupert initially hinted that facial difference had an influence on his parenting style, but later recanted, noting that his level of concern or awareness was no different than any other parent:

I was a little more sensitive to you know, how she was being treated. Although, all kids these days . . . you know, if I think about that, I think any parent is always cognizant about whether their child is being bullied, or you know, being picked on. If it’s not a facial difference, it’s something else, it’s the way they dress, it’s their body style, it’s their weight, it’s their name, it’s the colour of their hair. I mean, there’s no end to what children can be subjected to. So, to tell you the truth, I honestly don’t think that a facial difference is any bigger of an issue than some other parents have if their child is a little more overweight than other kids, or isn’t as proficient in school as other kids.

Amelia and Jacob both implied that facial difference made their father-daughter bonds stronger, but did not go into very much detail as to how or why this was the case.

I think it’s made my dad and I closer. I don’t think we would have had as strong of a relationship as we do if I didn’t have a facial difference . . . ultimately, it sort of strengthened the way we’ve been able to . . . have our relationship because you know, we support each other. (Amelia)

I’ve lived with her for this for, you know, since she was born and I think there is probably an aspect of, you know, closeness than may have generated . . . that may have come out of it because, you know, just as a parent, being there for her. (Jacob)
Here, there was a broad indication that his daughter’s facial difference was somewhat of a shared experience. But despite probing, Jacob did not describe this closeness in more detail.

Only a select few participants eloquently expressed the influence facial difference had on their relationship. Andrew spoke of an overarching unification of the whole family as he, his wife, and their son had to confront difficult questions, offensive remarks, staring, hospital stays, and recovery periods alongside his daughter. Angelica felt that her father’s medical expertise was helpful when she had to go in for surgery. “It probably brought us a bit closer together just because the recovery is extremely difficult,” she said. “As a doctor, I really relied on him so, we were really close during those times.” Finally, Piers offered a very comparative analysis of his relationship with his stepdaughter and those he maintained with his other four children:

I am inclined to be more demonstrative with [her] than I believe I am with her sister and with my own children, none of whom have a facial difference. I am more hands-on, if you like. I praise her more readily, encourage her more often, overlook her faults more easily. She affects me more deeply.

He felt he had been more lenient with his daughter given some of the challenges she faced both socially and medically. Notably, when participants spoke of the influence facial difference had on their relationships, much of their discussion focused on examples from infancy and early childhood, and not adolescence or young adulthood. For instance, Paul felt that his increased involvement in “hugging, and taking care . . . and putting to bed and feeding [his daughter]” when she first came home from the hospital was an opportunity not always afforded to dads of “normal” kids, though it offered him an enhanced feeling of togetherness with his baby.
Overall, formulating a response to this question proved difficult for many participants as they could not envision what their life or relationship would look like if the facial difference were eliminated from the equation. Dylan spoke to this teasing apart:

I can’t step enough outside. Just having talked to parents over the years . . . to know whether I am more protective, less protective because of the facial difference? I don’t know. It is what it is.

Jacob echoed this:

It’s really hard to separate the two in terms of how much my relationship with her is based on the facial difference; how it affected our relationship. It’s hard to know whether it’s had a big . . . whether it’s had a major influence, a minor influence.

It was particularly difficult for dyads to critically assess the influence that facial difference had on their relationship because it was not possible to imagine the relationship without it. Simply put, fathers and daughters only understood each other and their relationship with facial difference being a feature of their reality. This indivisibility may be unique to having a sample comprised entirely of women living with congenital facial differences. It is possible that different patterns and perspectives could emerge if young women living with acquired differences had come forward to be interviewed in this study.

Still, the limited dialogue around the influence of facial difference on a relationship stands in stark contrast to the lengthy responses from fathers and daughters about how facial difference had influenced them as individuals. Though this analysis lies outside the confines of
this particular study, every single daughter described facial difference as having had a profound
effect on them, for better and for worse. Some spoke of ways it enhanced their self-confidence,
their sense of empathy, awareness of their social surroundings, and belonging to a community
through their involvement with AboutFace. Others spoke of ways in which facial difference had,
on occasion, made them angry, made them subject to bullying, compromised their sociability,
and made them critical of the media’s representation of women. Fathers, too, described their
daughter’s facial difference as a driving force in their development of empathy, social awareness,
defensiveness, versatility, and resiliency. Surely, facial difference could have an indirect effect on
the father-daughter relationship as these personal characteristics came to bear; however,
participants did not attend to this pattern in any of the interviews.

I am hesitant, though, to theorize that participants’ elision of facial difference in their
interviews is indicative of its inconsequentiality in their lives and relationships. While it may be
ture that facial difference is not a particularly salient aspect of the father-daughter relationship for
this group of participants, it may also be that it is an exceptionally loaded feature of their
relationships with one another. Thus the topic remains uncomfortable and neglected by both
fathers and daughters. Future research should work to more clearly examine this influence.
Chapter 6: The Interplay of Discourse, Relationality, and Bodily Difference

The objectives of this project included learning how young women and fathers construct their understanding of themselves in their relationship with one another. The research questions I sought to answer were: a) How do young women and fathers understand their relationship with one another? b) How does the father-daughter relationship contribute to the identity and subjectivity of both parties? c) How are gendered models of care (re)produced and subverted in the relationships? The discursive and relational themes that I identified in the narratives of all participants help inform our understanding of the father-daughter relationship when a young woman is living with a facial difference. However, I decided to analyze these motifs concurrently, given that they are highly interdependent and intertwined in their influence on the relationship of interest. By understanding how certain discourses guide the father-daughter relationship we are able to formulate a more complete response to the research objectives and questions.

To this end, this discussion chapter is divided into two sections. The first section unpacks the contingent nature of discourse and relationality by highlighting how this relationship manifests in the lives of fathers and daughters. In so doing, it will also explore the origins of the discourses themselves, making use of relevant literatures including masculinity studies, scholarship on care work, social policy, economics, and family studies. The second part of this chapter will revisit the original research objectives and questions, and critically explore how this contingency informs a broader understanding of the father-daughter relationship, with special attention to the status of gender and facial difference in the lives of participants.
6.1 Discourse and Relationality as Co-Informing

As a reminder, the three discourses upon which fathers and daughters in this study drew in their relationships included: mothers as natural and adept caregivers, fathers knowing best, and sexual silence. From a post-structuralist perspective, these discourses emerged from certain social ideas, attitudes, beliefs, and practices, and construct subjects and the worlds in which they are embedded (Foucault, 1972). Each of the three discourses identified had a central role in the precarious closeness that the participants experienced. Specifically, these discourses established some of the conditions that both facilitated and complicated the closeness about which participants spoke. The transient relationship between fathers and daughters, in turn, can be understood as an example of the attitudes, beliefs, and practices that define these discourses in the first place. Thus, father-daughter relationality is simultaneously informed by and informing discourses of gender, bodies, families, and care. This idea will be explored more thoroughly in the subsections below.

6.1.1 Caregiving as a social, political, and economic decision. As demonstrated in Chapter 4, fathers and daughters expressed the belief, directly and indirectly, that women were more natural and adept caregivers than men. This was made clear in the traditional structuring of many of the families, with women often engaging in part-time or flexible employment, and maintaining responsibility for household duties. It was also present in the gendered divisions of medical, social, and emotional care provided to their daughters. Consistent with other literature, the tremendous involvement of mothers in caregiving had a positive effect on how comfortable the young women were in being around, communicating, and sharing with their mothers (Pileggi
et al., in press). Bearing witness to the interactions between mothers and daughters, fathers trusted and relied on their wives to get close to their daughters in ways they felt personally unable to do. Therefore, by way of daughters and fathers’ increased confidence in their relational work, mothers were inserted into the father-daughter relationship as a vital third party, culminating in mothers’ acting as arbitrators or knowledge brokers for their daughters, as discussed in Chapter 5. Although few participants spoke of this explicitly, it is possible that with time, the indirect communication through mothers becomes a more deeply entrenched pattern, such that fathers and daughters become less interested, willing, or certain in communicating with one another directly. Consequently, mothers are constructed as the person better able to connect with their daughters, and are subsequently relied on to provide emotionally laden aspects of care. Altogether, these arrangements serve to reinforce the original discourse that women are more proficient at providing care.

The reliance on mothers to provide care influences fathers’ perceptions regarding their own familial roles. If mothers are naturally “better” at maintaining the household and raising healthy, well-adjusted children, then fathers might feel as though they are necessarily lacking in comparison. This sense of personal deficiency may motivate some fathers to abstain from becoming highly involved in caregiving. Additionally, and as described by fathers in this study, there is a sense that someone has to oversee the financial stability of the family, to ensure that mothers are able to continue fulfilling the unique parenting demands of raising a child with health needs. Thus, fathers are essentially required to be less occupied by childcare in order to simultaneously make space for mothers to do what they need to do, and ensure their family’s economic prosperity. As a result of these intersecting injunctions, fathers can become less
acquainted with and less skilled at providing both physical and emotional care, while the proficiency of mothers increases through experience. This tendency might also manifest in conflict between fathers and their daughters, who perceive them as being uninvolved or absent, as described by a few young women in this study. Altogether, these conditions allow mothers and daughters to become increasingly close to, dependent upon, and familiar with one another, and therein (re)construct motherhood as a natural female ability.

This cycle of discourse and relationality can be interpreted as a demonstration of the enduring pattern of inequality between men and women (Sutherland, LaMarre, Rice, Hardt, & Le Couteur, 2017). Many scholars believe that the very fact that heterosexual couples continue to perform gender roles and stratify their relationships in traditional ways indicates the persistence of a modern, new, neo, softer, or ambivalent form of sexism (Boeri, Del Boca, & Pissarides, 2005; Gerson, 2010; Gill, 2011; Glick & Fiske, 2011; Kan & Gershuny, 2010; Knudson-Martin & Mahone, 2009; Tougas, Brown, Beaton, & Joly, 1995). These sexist patterns are far more socially and politically determined than they are intentional endorsements of out-dated ideologies.

Following the collapse of the welfare state, neoliberalism emerged in the 1980s as the dominant political paradigm of the developed West (Zuege, Konings, Leys, & Panitch, 2004), shifting social and political values toward privatization, competition, individualization, and decentralization (Steger & Roy, 2012), and authorizing the alleviation of economic burdens on the public (Treloar & Funk, 2008). As a result of this ideological about-face, the policy of familialism rose in popularity, assigning the emotional, economic, and physical burdens of
caregiving to individual families rather than making these a priority of the state. In accordance with this principle, families are expected to make autonomous and reliable choices about who will provide care in their unit and how this care will be provided (Treolar & Funk, 2008; Ursel, 1992). This includes determining who gets to participate in the paid and unpaid labour force, when they participate, and how. These shifts have coincided with the abandonment of state-funded residential institutionalization arrangements of the 19th century, and the trend toward home care for children and adults living with mental and bodily difference (Harbour & Maulik, 2010; Mansell & Beadle-Brown, 2010). As a result, parents now take up the heavy financial and social responsibility associated with providing care for children with disabilities (Doucet, Pooran, Briggs, Lee, & Stapleton, 2015). However, because women have been (and continue to be) socialized to be carers and hone their caregiving skills (Armstrong & Armstrong, 2002; Corman & Luxton, 2007; Dempsey, 1997), they are constructed as the individuals best suited to provide care, and are consistently called upon to bear responsibility for the health and wellbeing of children (Bittman, 2002; Kubik, 2004; Traustadottir, 1991). With time, this discourse has become so ingrained that women and men who challenge said cultural prescriptions by enacting different models of care continue to be judged as deviant or anomalous (Armstrong & Armstrong, 2002; Doucet, 2012).

The construction of women is further complicated by the contrasting economic opportunities offered to both men and women. Though women are expected to assume primary caregiving roles in the private sphere, this work continues to be afforded little economic value (Bjørnholt & McKay, 2014); the monetary value of unpaid labour is estimated at over 16 trillion dollars, with 11 trillion produced by women alone (Corman & Luxton, 2007; Waring, 1988).
Moreover, in the public sphere, a gender wage gap persists, with male workers continuing to earn more than women for equal work (Armstrong & Armstrong, 2002). This economic inequality intensifies the precariousness of women’s work, increasing the likelihood that they will take on part-time, temporary, and sporadic employment, or leave the labour force altogether to provide care (Armstrong & Armstrong, 2002; Corman & Luxton, 2007; Hakim, 2006; Phillips & Imhoff, 1997). Contrary to this, men are more likely to be criticized as flippant about their employment if they forego paid work to attend to domestic responsibilities, because paid work continues to be synonymous with masculinity and male legitimacy (Brandth & Kvande, 1998; Coltrane, 1996; Doucet & Merla, 2007; Fox, 2001; Smith, 1998; Townsend, 2002). In the current socio-political climate of “new” and “involved” fatherhood, men are caught between being recognized as a “good” dad and a “good” man because they are not actively encouraged to assume caregiving roles (Charlesworth et al., 2011). Even in a Canadian context, where paternity leave policies have been praised for valuing gender equality, men often feel limited in their ability to access these programs (Doucet & Merla, 2007; Kaufman, Lyonette, & Crompton, 2010).

As discussed in Chapter 4, it is only in families that are subject to more flexible social and economic conditions that fathers (and mothers) may be emancipated from highly gendered and politicized ways of being to explore other relational patterns. I consciously describe these conditions as flexible rather than privileged because they are not always associated with positions of power and affluence. For instance, while Piers’ tenured employment in academia is perceived as prestigious and allowed him to participate actively in his daughter’s care, Andrew was able to achieve enhanced gender parity though his employment as a primary and secondary school teacher, a career imbued with less prominent status. Shorter workdays and extended
holidays allowed him more time at home with both of his children when they were young. Similarly, both fathers working as medical professionals identified as upper-middle class, but their family structures were among the most traditional in structure, with women performing almost all of the domestic and caregiving activities. This contrasted sharply with Damian, who has worked nights since his daughter’s birth, an employment structure considered both precarious and detrimental to mental and physical wellbeing (Costa, 1996). By way of his schedule, however, he has been able to actively participate in his daughter’s social and medical care. In my opinion, the flexibility of these jobs does not stem entirely from the existence of strong unions or explicit corporate commitments to gender equity and care work, although these structures and policies are immensely beneficial. The advantages lie in the “non-standard” or “alternative” nature of these positions (Kalleberg, 2000). Each of these men was employed in a context that deviated from “standard” arrangements that expect individuals to work a full 40-hour week at their employer’s place of business (Kalleberg, 2000; Vosko, 2007). While sociological research views some of these atypical arrangements as “perilous” (Kahne, 1992), in the context of this study, non-standard employment consistently provided men the time and space to participate more fully in caregiving, thereby stretching the rigid gender models of care. Thus, I propose that in the context of gendered care, precarious employment creates an opportunity for less-precarious father-daughter relationships to be established.

Based on these findings, it can be argued that most of the families in this study effectively (re)produced gendered models of care in their families not primarily for ideological reasons, but rather due to neoliberal market pressures and policies. The decisions to buttress or endorse male breadwinner/female caregiver structures were not made according to cultural or personal values
and norms. Instead, the resulting arrangements were determined by what made the most sense in the social context within which they, their partners, and their daughters were embedded. Parents and families are compelled to act in specific ways by the economic and social climate in which they are situated. It is not that fathers do not want to participate more actively or readily in caring for their daughters (and other children), or that they are less competent than mothers at doing so. It is what they feel they have to do in order for their families to thrive. The findings of this study therefore support the concept of a new sexism, one that is not ideologically driven but market (Sutherland et al., 2017). Given that only a few fathers were able to speak candidly about their experiences, this market-based sexism may operate more covertly and subtly than other, older forms of sexism. However, regardless of their transparency, these economically driven rationalizations create space for fathers and daughters to endorse and enjoy gender ideologies of care in their families.

6.1.2 Fatherhood as a masculine performance. In addition to their reliance on and reproduction of gendered care ideologies, participants described fathers as rational, logical, and intelligent individuals, instrumental in informing young women’s sense of self, body, and gender through hands-on exposure, modelling of certain values, and storytelling. Specifically, through their teachings, fathers focused heavily on ensuring their daughters’ physical health, safety, responsibility, and independence. Men acting as teachers maintains both order and closeness in the relationship. By sharing their experiences, hobbies, expectations, and opinions, fathers in this study were able to forge close bonds with their girls, and establish themselves as vital sources of knowledge. Daughters’ acceptance of their fathers’ lessons and pursuit of their advice in turn validated the men’s expertise and position, rigidifying the discourse that father knows best. By
the same token, however, ruptures in the unidirectional transfer of knowledge undermined fathers’ positions and compromised closeness in the dyad. As discussed in Chapter 5, fathers are particularly challenged when daughters start making their own decisions and asserting their independence, because their expertise is overlooked or altogether ignored. Daughters evading certain topics of conversation and keeping dissenting opinions to themselves subsequently avoids the conflict that tends to ensue. Though this sidestepping can be interpreted as a form of resisting the discourse of father knows best, it may also create a cycle in which fathers’ opinions and expectations remain unchallenged, therein rigidifying the discourse that masculine knowledge is legitimate, essential, and deserving of respect.

Additionally, fathers in this study have had a hand in helping their daughters navigate social and medical experiences in analytical and shrewd ways. Although many fathers were unable to personally involve themselves in their daughters’ social development and medicalization (due to the social and economic divisions of care described above), daughters described them as consistently offering solutions that demonstrated composure, rationality, and indifference when confronted by attitudinal violence, including ignorant questions and comments, staring, forceful touching, and belittling language. As with other lessons that fathers imparted on a routine basis, some daughters valued these solutions and tried to enact them whenever possible, reifying the father knows best discourse. Others, however, felt this level-headed approach was overly simplistic and undermined the gravity of these experiences, but rarely expressed this opinion to their fathers directly, leaving men’s expertise undisputed.
The father knows best discourse and associated relationship patterns are directly related to how masculinity is understood in contemporary Anglo-western culture (Marsiglio & Pleck, 2005; Hodgins, 2011; Johnson, 2005). According to Atkinson (2011), masculinity is the linguistic catch all for the quality of being a man: the way he lives, acts, functions, and represents “manliness.” It is rooted in particularly physical, intellectual, emotional, and social proficiencies. While a full philosophical summary of the origins and theories of masculinity is beyond the scope of this thesis, the concept has been studied widely across many disciplines including biology, evolution, psychology, sociology, and political science. For post-structuralists, however, masculinity is not an innate essence of the body or a political status; it can only be understood as a social and cultural process (Lupton & Barclay, 1997). It is a dynamic “project of the self,” or a series of ever-changing practices and techniques including bodily care, communication, thinking, and demeanour that are created and maintained in the context of various institutions such as the family, work, education, economics, and governmental policy (Butler, 1990; Connell, 1993; Felluga, 2011; Lupton & Barclay, 1997; Probyn, 1993). To post-structural theorists, there is no fundamental thing that constitutes masculinity, rather there exists only socially and discursively constructed notions of what it is believed to be—what it is supposed to look like, or how those who possess it are supposed to act (Barrett, 2005; Foucault, 1984; Davies, 2000). Through daily practices within cultural contexts and societies, these beliefs and understandings of masculinity (or any other human trait) are upheld and further entrenched by normalizing certain ways of being and marginalizing others (Reeser, 2010; Weedon, 2004).

The centrality of masculinity is evident in the research findings and theories that have characterized fatherhood research. For example, the “types” of fathers that preceded the new and
involved father model included: the moral father who embodied religious virtue and oversaw the
integrity of their children, the breadwinning father responsible for the financial security of their
families, and the gender-role father who imparted on his children what it meant to be a man. All
were premised on the masculine ideal of their time—strong, independent, authoritarian
providers, in charge of their wives and children (Lamb, 1995; 2000; May & Strikwerda, 1996;
Pleck, 1984). Though the more modern “involved” father model diverges slightly from these
historical motifs, the values of independence and authoritarianism are still involved in what is
considered “appropriate” behaviour for men as fathers (Coltrane, 2007; Doucet, 2006; Lupton &
Barclay, 1997).

Overwhelmingly, the literature suggests that while fathers spend more time with their
children, they tend to approach and interact with them in fun and physical ways, including play,
activity, the outdoors, and sports, which are testament to the primacy of male bodies and their
seemingly inherent strength and physical capabilities (Brandth & Kvande, 1998; Coltrane, 1996;
Doucet, 2006; Lamb, 1981, 1995; Parke, 1996; Plantin et al., 2003; Pruett, 2000; Yogman et al.,
1988). Fathers are also said to encourage emotional stoutness, independence, education, active
learning, and risk-taking in their care work, aligning with the perception of the normative male
subject as knowledgeable and rational (Connell, 1996; Doucet, 2006; May & Strikwerda, 1996;
Pedersen, 2012; Seidler, 1997). Lastly, fathers are considered adept at doing care rather than
being carers—many perceive fathers’ relationships with their children as possessing a vocation-
like quality in that they are able to maintain a better sense of bodily and emotional separateness
from their children. Arguably, this characteristic stems from the ideal masculine self as logical,
separate, objective, and independent (Chodorow, 1978; Ehrensaft, 1995; Pedersen, 2012). This
tendency manifests in fathers using solution-focused strategies when their child’s physical and emotional safety is threatened (Doucet, 2006). In short, the hegemonic masculine form in contemporary Anglo-western society embodies self-control, independence, confidence, rationality, capability, success, reliability, and strength, and distances itself from the opposing feminine values of emotionality, relationality, and interdependence (Atkinson, 2011; Doucet, 2006).

When considering the results of the current study, the hegemonic ideals of masculinity appeared to have been internalized by fathers and reproduced in their caregiving; many of the same themes cited in the fatherhood literature to date were spoken to in fathers and daughters’ narratives. Thus, consistent with this study’s post-structuralist framework, this group of fathers can be understood as performing hegemonic masculinity in relationship with their daughters; however, while the fathers’ methods may be criticized for being overly prescriptive, aloof, or analytical, they cannot be understood without attending to the saliency of masculine discourses in the lives of men. Alternatively, though some may interpret the fathers’ behaviours as “tough love,” the very rational connections they maintained with their children can be theorized as masculine means of nurturing and protecting. As Doucet (2006) explained, caring involves elements of both “holding on” and “letting go,” and by way of their socialization, fathers may be particularly skilled at the latter. Furthermore, the behaviour that men exhibit in response to emotionally charged situations like bullying and medicalization may arise as a means of supporting their female partners and daughters who are, by way of their gendered embodiment, permitted to display distress more openly. Just as discourses of women as carers infiltrate early socialization, the proliferation of the ideal masculine man imbues every critical site of learning
for young men, including families, peer groups, and classrooms (Martin, 2003; Goldshmidt & Weller, 2000; Pleck, 1995; Pruett, 1995; West & Zimmerman, 1987, 2009). Consequently, it can be concluded that these fathers did not always intend to be instructional, rational, or dismissive in their relationships, but rather were unable to enact different ways of being because there were no other discourses available to them that simultaneously allowed them to care in more affective ways while remaining “legitimate,” masculine men.

6.1.3 Discomfort with daughter’s bodies and sexualities. Finally, unlike the other discourses identified in Chapter 4, the enacting of sexual silence did little to promote or maintain closeness between fathers and daughters in this study. Instead, this discourse served as one of the most prominent barriers to the intimacy that dyads shared.

By evading conversations related to gender, sexuality, and puberty, the unfamiliarity and discomfort that constitutes these topics is only intensified. Moreover, the uncertainty regarding daughters’ changing or menstruating bodies can lead to tangible changes in the relationship, including reducing the amount of time dyads spend engaging in certain activities, specifically those with a physical component. In sensing their fathers’ discomfort, daughters also become less willing and likely to approach them. With a reduction in time and shared enterprise, one of the most important conditions in facilitating father-daughter closeness is abolished, and opportunities for communication are further stifled. Altogether, subscribing to sexual silence only begets more sexual silence: the more bodies, puberty, and sexuality are avoided, the wider the chasm between men and their daughters becomes, making it increasingly difficult to overcome in future interactions.
Upon closer examination, it is not unusual that silence about sexuality and bodies can characterize father-daughter interactions, given the way women, their bodies, and their sexual development have been conceptualized, looked at, misconstrued, or altogether ignored in previous literatures, including writings in biology, psychology, and philosophy. Historically, bodies have been polarized such that men’s are privileged and women’s are suppressed, objectified, and alienated (Grosz, 1994). The oppositional pairing of male and female has become synonymous with the dichotomy of mind and body, so much so that men are associated with the rational, reliable, contained mind while women are linked to the uncontainable, disruptive, and “leaky” body (Grosz, 1994; Shildrick, 1997).

In medical, religious, and philosophical writings, male bodies were considered the “original” and therefore superior human form, while women’s bodies were deemed an imperfect and poorly understood copy (Lacquer, 1990). At one point in time, vaginas, ovaries, and uteruses were depicted as possessing sinister powers, including teeth and horns (Rice, 2014), and women were considered ruled by their bodies, especially their mysterious and threatening reproductive capacities. Because of this bodily obscurity, women assumed a secondary position in society; their unstable bodily characteristics were used to explain or justify their unequal social positions, inferior mental abilities, and diminished economic potential (Fausto-Sterling, 2000; Grosz, 1994; Rice, 2014). Women and their bodies thus required management, repression, and protection, particularly from those individuals—namely men—who embodied the invulnerability, autonomy, and control so often valorized in Western culture (Zitzelberger, 2010).
These out-dated yet constraining views of the female body continue to circulate in Western culture, and shape contemporary perceptions and understandings of women. While boys and men’s bodies are viewed as unidimensionally powerful, strong, and capable, women’s bodies and their biological functions are persistently viewed as vital, but messy and scary. According to Driscoll (2002) and Erchull and colleagues (2002), the majority of attention centred on women’s bodies continues to spotlight their mystifying and intimidating physiology. Puberty and its associated processes drudge up the same feelings of uncontrollability (Ehrenrich & English, 2005; Peterson, 2008), and evoke the same twisted feelings of enthusiasm and unease, wonder and terror in both young girls and the wider culture (Rice, 2014). From a Western-centric, developmental perspective, puberty is an unstable time of physical, psychological, and emotional changes associated with becoming an adult. From a social constructionist perspective, however, the meaning ascribed to women’s developing bodies remains central to this transition: because Western culture demarcates the female body as different or other, the process of transitioning from an androgynous body to one read as female is similarly imbued with a negative connotation, and experienced by young women as difficult and troublesome (Rice, 2014).

Moreover, the anxieties that manifest in adults caring for young women, especially mothers and fathers, are a sign of fear that girls’ bodies are “transgressing” the innocence of androgynous childhood, and their unease in confronting the issues of sexuality and reproduction before either they or their child is prepared to do so (Lee, 2009; Mazzarella, 2008). Budding breasts disrupt the child/woman, innocence/sexuality, and nurturance/pleasure boundaries, and are considered a visible example of a woman’s “leakiness” (Young, 1990; Martin, 1996). Similarly, menstruation is considered shameful, physically limiting, unclean, and in need of
concealment (Allen et al., 2011; Brumberg, 1997; Costos et al., 2002; From & Emihovich, 1998; Houppert, 1999; King, Ussher, & Perz, 2014; Kissling, 2006; Maravan et al., 2006).

This anxiety is particularly salient for fathers, whose relationships to their daughters’ emergent sexualities are complex and fraught. Not only do fathers lack accurate knowledge about puberty and menstruation (Tampax Report, 1981; White, 2013), but also their daughters’ puberty can signal to them that their daughters are, in fact, sexual beings, which brings about discomfort (Heisler, 2005; Hutchinson & Cederbaum, 2011). As Kirkman and colleagues (2002) stated, puberty often signals the encroachment of sex into what was once an uncomplicated and harmless relationship, and makes fathers vulnerable to the incest taboo. Regardless of how fathers attempt to approach sexual conversations with their daughters, there is an inherent “risk” posed to daughters by fathers’ heterosexuality and male sex drive. Thus, there exists no “safe” way for fathers to engage their daughters in sexual conversations; all of these interactions are tinged with suspicion, moralization, judgement, and fear that parent-child boundaries will somehow be violated. According to research, daughters are sensitive to the implications of these taboos: one study found that only 20% of daughters will discuss sex and sexuality-related topics with their fathers (DiIorio, Kelley, & Hockenberry-Eaton, 1999), while others indicated that young women either actively withdraw from their fathers during puberty and adolescence, or experience their fathers’ responses as avoidance (Costos et al., 2002; Koff & Rierdan, 1995).

Thus, just as fathers are subject to reifying discourses of caregiving and masculinity in their relationships with their daughters, they are also complicit in constructing daughters’ bodies as sites of silence. As the persistent mythical perceptions of women’s sexual development
overlap with the social objectionability of father-daughter dyads engaging in sexual dialogue, gender, puberty, and sex become massive minefields in the father-daughter relationship. All of these topics are highly volatile subject matter, and it may feel as though both daughters and fathers have few safe places to step within issue of bodies, sexuality, and facial difference. Daughters and fathers are equally uncertain about how to approach one another as both are vulnerable to judgement and ridicule if this barrier is somehow traversed: daughters for their leaky and unruly bodies, and fathers for their inexperience or deviant sexualities. Rather than risk a misstep and unexpected eruption, it may be easier for fathers and daughters to disengage from one another in these moments, allow mothers to navigate this territory, and discover other ways to relate to one another that do not pose the same threat. To be clear, this discussion is not intended to suggest that the fathers in this study were in any way sexual perpetrators, rather it highlights how limiting social discourses about bodies and sexuality can be in allowing fathers and daughters to explore these topics with one another in pure and healthy ways. This conclusion is supported by the numerous participants who suggested that they would be comfortable approaching these loaded topics with the other person, if they felt the other was willing to reciprocally engage in a secure and easy fashion. This hesitancy indicates a longing or aspiring to be comfortable that is not yet fully formed in either daughters or fathers, but also not fully supported on a larger social level. Therefore, bridging the sexuality and gender gap in father-daughter relationships is entirely possible, but dependent on the subversion of a number of persistent discourses.

6.2 The Impact of Gender and Facial Difference on the Father-Daughter Relationship
Bringing together these discussions, it becomes clear that gender is a central principle in fathers and daughters’ understanding of themselves and their relationships. The belief that mothers are proficient carers, that fathers know best, and that bodies are silencing are all underpinned by social, political, and economic constructions of the gender binary. Moreover, they not only contribute to the precarious closeness experienced by dyads in this study, but also overlap and intersect in various ways that rigidify these relational patterns even further. For example, it is possible that in order to avoid compromising their positions as masculine, rational, knowledge holders, fathers are unwilling to engage in conversations about women’s bodies. Consequently, the discourse of gendered silence is not only reified, but mothers are called in to fill the gaps that fathers create with these silences. In turn, women are perceived as intuitively

![Figure 1. Visual depiction of the interplay between discourse and relationality in the father-daughter relationship](image-url)
“better” at relating to and caring for their daughters. And as women are constructed as more natural and proficient caregivers, fathers are less willing to engage with their daughters in intimate ways, and to invert the unidirectional, or top-down, way of relating to them, thus upholding their position as teacher rather than learner. These interactions are summarized in Figure 1.

Gender, in fact, seemed even more central to participants’ construction and conceptualization of their relationship than facial difference—an unexpected but critical finding. Unlike gender, facial difference rarely surfaced in interviews unless intentionally interrogated, and was not described as a condition that either facilitated or complicated closeness between fathers and daughters. Instead, it was described as something that simply existed within the relationship. Fathers and daughters seemed more uncomfortable talking about sex and bodies than bodily difference, and appeared more attuned to the way gender scaffolded their relationships. As surprising as this finding appears, it is logical given all of the daughters interviewed were born with congenital differences. Although their bodies may be constructed as different from a social perspective, they are personally and relationally experienced as normative; the embodied being that entered the world is the being that the fathers and daughters know intimately. Thus, one can contend that gender is such a prominent feature in guiding human interaction that it can eclipse bodily difference. In so doing, it makes the similarities between fathers and their daughters who live with facial difference, or are “normatively embodied,” more significant than the differences. The ideas that women are adept carers and fathers know best, as well as the silence that characterizes body and sex talk, are not unique to families touched by facial difference but are defining features of many families in psychological
and sociological literature. In fact, by delving into the analysis of participants’ narratives, I was able to identify patterns and discourses that have guided or informed how my own father and I approach, relate to, and communicate with one another.

Still, it would be naive to altogether ignore the impact of facial difference on the father-daughter relationship. Many would argue that the unique events and interactions involved in living with or caring for a child with a physical difference thrust families into roles, systems, and encounters that other families are unlikely to experience. Based on the narratives of fathers and daughters, I propose that facial difference offers an opportunity to resist or soften the rigid gendered discourses and interactions described above. This analysis is consistent with Doucet’s (2006) proposal that certain social contexts, including caring for a child with health needs, allow a nuancing of gender-bifurcated models of care. Fathers in this study spoke about the desire and need to cuddle, hold, and comfort their daughter because of their physical needs, including feeding, sleeping, administering medication, and pain management. Moreover, the care that facial difference occasionally demanded of parents, particularly intense hospitalization and surgical recovery, sometimes meant that fathers had to provide more intensive and vigilant care for their daughters. A few dyads even disclosed that facial difference made fathers more forgiving, gentle, and affectionate. Additionally, intimately listening to daughters’ experiences of marginalization and medicalization provided fathers a chance to learn from their daughters, rather than teach or imbue them with coveted knowledge and power. Though not explicitly discussed by fathers or daughters in this study, lengthy recoveries that permit limited physical activity may present an opportunity for dyads to learn to subvert masculine ways of being in relationships and engage with each other in new ways. The discussion of pain, sensation,
wounds, and scars might initiate conversations about bodies, thereby enhancing comfort with other body-related topics.

Altogether, these possibilities subvert the overlapping discourses that suggest masculinity is rooted in separateness, that mothers are more adept at caring, and that bodies are silencing. Beyond simply destabilizing bodily boundaries as suggested by Lewiecki-Wilson and Cellio (2011) and Goodley and Runswick-Cole (2015), bodily difference might also offer the space to reconstitute socially constructed gender boundaries. In essence, facial difference has the potential to re-shape or reassemble the overlapping circles in Figure 1, and free up space for fathers and daughters to move beyond precarious closeness and relate to each other in new ways. However, these interactions are fleeting at best. In an attempt to balance being a good father with being a compliant, knowledgeable, rational man, fathers seem to stretch—but not entirely rupture—the hegemonic discourses of gender, bodies, and care. They can and do, from time to time, push the limits of their conditions in relationship with their daughters, but are often quick to recoil and acquiesce to the rigid boundaries, and perform fatherhood in hegemonic ways. This rebounding indicates that although bodily difference can be used as a launch pad for revisioning family relationships, the social, political, and economic forces that constrain families are extremely robust and resistant to change.

As a result, even if fathers and daughters desire to be consistently close to one another, as many participants described in their interviews, the rigid gendered social, political, and economic forces independently and collectively act on the individuals and relationship in such a way that both parties are called upon to take up certain, limited ways of being. Although literature
positions father-daughter relationships as complicated, fraught, imperfect, and distant, it can be argued that these patterns do not emerge freely through the impetus of either party. Instead, fathers and daughters do the best they can in the social context in which they exist, while hegemonic understandings of men, women, and bodies create little space for alternative ways of being in a relationship. In this way, our gendered, neoliberal structures and institutions are not yet able to support men in actually performing fatherhood the way we expect them to. The family unit remains so highly overdetermined by the concept of gender that relationships are constrained to essentially reproduce the same patterns generation after generation; it is an institution that has become so synonymous with the concept of husband-wife-children that it becomes almost impossible to envision other possibilities for caring for and being with one another.

Despite this bleak outlook, fathers and daughters still attempt to resist such discourses and bring these possibilities to bear in their relationships. In a testament to both their awareness of and animosity toward the social forces that limit them, men actively work at undermining gender roles with their daughters. By exploring education, developing career aspirations, exposing their daughters to stereotypically masculine communities and activities, and fostering independence, fathers aspire to provide their girls with the opportunities to transcend these constraining patterns of performing gender in ways they were personally unable to realize in their own lives. Although this strategy for achieving gender emancipation is considered overstated and oversimplified by a number of feminist scholars who suggest that the transformation requires a complete amendment to our language and institutions (Baker, 2010; McRobbie, 2007; Jaques & Radtke, 2012; Rice, 2014), fathers’ actions can be interpreted as an
attempt to break with traditionally sexist ways of organizing society and relationships. Regardless of how strongly external forces may thwart their small acts of rebellion, fathers want to believe that radically different futures are possible for their daughters and aim to facilitate them. This individual recognition and endeavouring to impede the reproduction of the same is a critical first step, however small, in systemically revisioning not only the father-daughter relationship but also the entire institution of the family as currently conceptualized in Anglo-western society.

The resistance of gendered discourses can also be interpreted as fathers imagining disabled futures for their daughters, as per Kafer’s (2013) theory of crip time. In hoping their girls will eventually achieve accolades associated with the dominant narratives of perfectibility and progress, and supporting their daughters in these efforts, fathers validate—for themselves and their children—the existence of a meaningful, successful, and exciting future for individuals embodying bodily difference and disability. Effectively, through their relationships, fathers open up possibilities for their daughters’ futures, so as to establish a better present. Indeed, one may argue that the visions fathers have for their daughters are not disability-specific but rely more explicitly on discourses of gender, making them inconsistent with Kafer’s philosophy. However, I counter this critique by asserting that fathers’ drawing on the most idealized life for a woman in contemporary Anglo-western society (i.e., educated, self-sufficient, financially stable, well-rounded) only substantiates Kafer’s claim that disability futures remain under-theorized; there are exponentially more examples of gendered futures in the present day than there are examples of disabled futures. Without access to narratives about what a disabled future looks like, fathers may be unable to thoroughly articulate what they want for their disabled child. Therefore, by
bringing images of pleasant, successful, and valuable disabled futures into focus, fathers (and mothers) can better envision what their disabled children can become, and structure their relationships in such a way that these imaginings are realized.

Until contemporary Anglo-western society abandons the masculinist and ableist ideologies that structure it, it remains categorically unfair to judge fathers for failing to attain a standard they have not been prepared to actualize. Just as disability has been historically framed as an idiosyncratic problem requiring private and personal resolution (Garland-Thompson, 1995), the “new” model of responsible, accessible, engaging, and intimate father-child relationships is promulgated as a requirement individuals must achieve on their own. In our individualistic, neoliberal society, it is easier to suggest that fathers are biologically incapable of providing valuable care or are uninvolved, that father-daughter relationships are naturally more complicated than mother-daughter relationships, and that the condition of bodily difference compromises individuals and families’ functioning and quality of life than it is to acknowledge society’s shortcomings in generating and disseminating accurate knowledge, and providing sufficient economic and political support.
Chapter 7: Revisioning Father-Daughter Relationships

A number of conclusions arise from the above discussion of the findings, namely that the political, economic, educational, and scholarly conceptualizations of fatherhood and gender need to be overhauled so that the constraining, dominant discourses described here may be deconstructed and new, generative relational patterns can emerge. In this chapter, I analyze these implications and put forth a number of potentially helpful strategies for revisioning the father-daughter relationship, and the wider institution of the family. These include: assigning value to domestic care work and paternity leave, dispelling myths about women’s bodies, studying gender (e.g., masculinity/femininity, motherhood/fatherhood) in post-structuralist ways, and constructing bodily difference as an opportunity for learning. Each of these approaches will be described in more detail below. Following this, I will review the strengths and limitations of the present study, and conclude with suggestions for future research initiatives.

7.1 Honouring Mothers and Making Room for Fathers

As highlighted in Chapter 6, the current neoliberal, Anglo-western social and political climate necessitates that families perform gender in ways that reproduce gender roles, respectively relegating mothers and fathers to the positions of involved caregivers and uninvolved breadwinners. Although the current expectation is that fathers be responsible for, engaged with, and accessible to their children under the new fatherhood model, the institutions in which men and women are embedded do not always create the conditions for these relationships to emerge. If this is to remain an expectation, the discourse around fathers, work, and caregiving
needs to be revisited. Relatedly, the value of domestic work needs to be reinforced, and institutions need to establish and revise policies that support these types of involvement.

In the early 2000s, Canada ranked 10th of 177 counties in measures of gender-related development, with maternal employment rates equating to 83% of the male employment rate (Doucet & Merla, 2007; Statistics Canada, 2002). Despite steady increases in the number of primary caregiving fathers, and corresponding decreases in the number of stay-at-home mothers, fathers still only make up 10% of primary caregiving parents (Doucet & Merla, 2007), in part due to gendered ideologies of care and the association between masculinity and paid work (Miller, 2011). Though Canada has made attempts to further balance the female and male parent employment rate through their paternal leave policies, a resolution has not yet come into focus. Currently, 17 of the 52 weeks of paid parental leave are reserved exclusively for mothers, while either fathers or mothers can claim the remaining 35 weeks. Quebec is the only Canadian province to exclusively devote five of the 52 weeks to fathers—no other region reserves paid leave for fathers alone (Doucet & Tremblay, 2006). On a global scale, this places Canada behind more than 75% of OECD countries, all of who offer at least a few paid days leave for fathers after the birth of a child. As a result of the dearth in federal social policy, only 10% of eligible fathers make use of paternity leave (OECD, 2016).

Surely, this lack of dedicated time with children in their early infancy leads to the unending cycle of mothers becoming increasingly familiar with their children and skilled in their care while fathers become less so, making them less likely to engage in care later on in their child’s life. As this study demonstrates, this gap can widen due to the extraordinary care required
when a child is living with a bodily difference and/or disability. Consistent with the findings of
the present study, we want fathers to feel they are able to be present with their children if and
when they want to be, rather than being limited or constrained in their choices. Thus, enhancing
Canadian paternal leave could be a way to increase fathers’ involvement with their children in
more meaningful ways. Moreover, fathers must be encouraged to actually take paternity leave. In
addition to simpler solutions, such as increased campaigning to bolster awareness about paternal
leave, policy makers could strive to reduce the 15% wage gap between men and women’s pay. In
doing so, fathers may feel less constrained to provide for their partners and children, and the
financial stability of a family unit would not be compromised if women chose to forego
maternity leave in favour of paid employment.

Williams (2010) also believes that in addition to public supports, including affordable
child care and parental leave, worker’s rights must be respected to support family life. This
includes the incorporation of mandated vacation time, and the right to request a flexible work
schedule. Currently, there exists no legal mechanism for employers to request flexible working
hours in Canada; instead, an employee’s right to this accommodation is considered a privilege,
and depends on the personal judgement of superiors and the culture of the organization
(MacNaull, 2016a). Though there are many ways to facilitate a more standardized and flexible
working environment for employees, including modifications to where, when and how work is
done, the implementation of a national flexible work policy is considered complex precisely
because there is no one standardized solution that meets the needs of all employees and
workplaces (MacNaull, 2016b). Still, as was reflected in The Vanier Institute of the Family’s
benchmark initiative, Flex at Work, the offering of flexible work arrangements from Canadian
employers should be regarded as mandatory, and a critical way to attract and retain dedicated and
diligent employees. In response to calls from scholars, policy makers and family services, Prime
Minister Justin Trudeau prioritized flexible work arrangements in his government, and called on
various ministers to collaborate with one another to bring about more generous and flexible leave
for working caregivers (Government of Canada, 2016). Taken together, these platforms may
afford fathers the social permission to participate in and become skilled in care work, thereby
constructing themselves as competent parents.

7.2 Increasing Comfort with Women’s Bodies

Given that the issue of bodies—especially sex, sexuality, puberty, and menstruation—
seems to establish a relational barrier between fathers and daughters, opening up conversations
about them may serve to ease anxiety and promote enhanced intimacy. To do so, accurate
knowledge that disrupts dominant narratives about women’s bodies must be delivered early in
children’s education and incorporated into the socialization of young men. Although more
research is needed to fully understand how boys and young men learn about female bodies, a
number of findings suggest that school-based sex education programs are relatively ineffective
because they are gender segregated, with men exclusively teaching boys and women teaching
girls. Complicating matters further, instructors rarely broach female-specific topics in boys-only
health classes, and when young men do pose questions about female reproduction and sexuality,
they are often met with ambiguous, erroneous, or indirect responses (Chang et al., 2012;
Lovering, 1995). Within the home, fathers do sometimes address sexuality-related content with
their sons, but rarely broach female-specific topics such as menstruation, puberty, and sexual
health (Allen et al., 2011; Lovering, 1995). Without filling in these gaps, boys retain less
accurate information about women’s bodies, become increasingly uncomfortable with discussing menstruation, puberty, and sexuality, and perpetuate erroneous discourses about these phenomena (Erchull & Richmond, 2015; Chang et al., 2012; Kalman, 2003; Marvan & Bejarano, 2005; Marvan et al., 2006). Should these young men become fathers, they not only lack the appropriate knowledge to meaningfully engage with or discuss women’s bodies (with their daughters or sons), but also the skill to do so in open, honest, and sensitive ways. For as long as this silence is maintained, it will be constructed as “normal” or appropriate, thereby castigating fathers who attend to these topics as peculiar and perverse.

Thus, if we alter the way young people, including boys, are educated, we create the opportunity for people to possess the personal resources to productively encounter women’s bodies and discuss sexual development. By scaffolding early, honest, and integrated discussion with family members, teachers, and peers, young men and women can move forward with accurate knowledge and comfort that allows them to appropriately educate the next generation of young people. Specifically, this may create the space for fathers to be more active in educating, supporting, and helping daughters as they begin to physically develop. This may facilitate rather than complicate closeness in these times of change—a consequence that fulfills the tenets of feminist relational theory, and allows young women to cultivate their agency and resistance to negative messages of their femininity or bodily difference (Gilligan, 1982; Pileggi & Rice, 2014).
7.3 Developing Post-Structural Understandings of Fatherhood

In analyzing the above findings, it becomes clear just how ubiquitous and inundating discourses of fatherhood have become in Anglo-western society. Even when their child’s health offers opportunities to relate in alternative and more progressive ways, the pressure to conform to the hegemonic idea of what a father should be is so salient that gendered patterns are reproduced. However, if research were to continue into conceptualizing fatherhood (and motherhood) as a social construction in the same way it has begun to understand gender—as an “entrepreneurial activity” that shapes an individual’s life rather than an assumed or conferred position based on one’s sex and the birth or proximity of a child (Marsiglio & Pleck, 2005; Lupton & Barclay, 1997; Miller, 2011)—who we see as fathers, what we expect of them, and what we assume they should do may change. If fatherhood is more extensively explored and written about as a performance continuously put on and cast off through accepted social, bodily, communicative, and thinking practices (Butler, 1990), we may become more aware of the contextualized and idiosyncratic nature of fatherhood, thereby undoing any claim that certain individuals are more or less adept at a specific mode of caregiving based on their traits or characteristics—namely their subscription to masculinity or femininity.

The pervasiveness of the singularity of fatherhood is highly dependent upon the language used to refer to it. Research should emphasize that the gendered signification of the term father is by no means natural or etymological, but cultural. Moreover, scholarship can trivialize the opposing nature of terms such as mother and father, and encourage thinking beyond these labels as mutually exclusive or disparate poles on the same spectrum of parenthood (Lupton & Barclay,
1997) so as to unsettle the debate regarding differences between the two (Doucet, 2006).

Furthermore, many of the terms referring to fatherhood, motherhood, and parenting are rarely pluralized. This is interesting given a recent surge in the acceptance that masculinity and gender are not stable or unified categories (Butler, 1990, 1993, 2004a; Connell, 1995, 2005). Just as masculinities exists in “innumerable variations” across time, space, and culture, there should be an acknowledgement of a diverse, equally valued range of fatherhoods and “fatherings” (or motherhoods and “motherings”)—language that more fully corresponds to the multidimensionality of the phenomenon. Such an interpretive, open way of talking about these constructs highlights the true complexity of parenting or caregiving in society, better allowing for and representing the diverse experiences of fathers and mothers. By way of this language, researchers would be allowed to attend to the intersectionality of gender, ethnicity, immigration, socioeconomic status, sexuality, and dis/ability in care work, which previously resided outside the boundaries of what was considered “involved fatherhood.”

Therefore, it is critical that feminist post-structural scholarship in the coming years examines the important role of discourse and language in the way fatherhood, and consequently motherhood, are understood and studied. Future scholarship must resist the empirical need to be prescriptive and instructional in its communication of research findings, so as to avoid the creation of new, but similarly marginalizing, exclusionary discourses and labels that might influence and constrain fathers. Instead, the goal should be simply highlighting and lending voice to subjective, contextualized, temporally limited experiences, enactments of, and references to fathering that resist or defy current discourses, to underscore their constructed nature.
7.4 Presenting Difference as a Possibility

Lastly, the findings present an opportunity for support and information networks like AboutFace to support fathers (and daughters) who are touched by facial difference in a number of ways. By understanding the relational dynamics that exist between fathers and daughters, including the conditions that both facilitate and complicate closeness within the dyad, these organizations can revise their existing resources to better reflect and address the experiences of men and young women. As done in this study, similarities between fathers within and outside the facial difference community can be highlighted in order to normalize and validate the relational experiences of fathers and daughters. Doing so may help families understand their own precarious closeness as a condition brought about by gender rather than non-normative embodiment.

At the same time, and perhaps more importantly, these community organizations can honour the difference that facial difference makes in a positive way. Consistent with a contributitional and feminist disability studies perspective, facial difference can be revisioned by these networks as an exciting opportunity for fathers to engage with their girls in non-hegemonic and personally meaningful ways. By honing in on the narratives of the fathers and daughters in this study, organizations can hopefully call on fathers to: affectively attend to their daughters’ experiences of medicalization, social marginalization, and bodily difference; assume the position of learner; and not shy away from providing physical and emotional care. Moreover, by creating and supporting communities of men who collectively enact fatherhood in these alternative ways, organizations like AboutFace can showcase the tangible, relational benefits of this new
performance of fatherhood, and implore other fathers to do the same. With enough attention, fatherhood can effectively be re-imagined as a construct, and communities of difference can be re-visited as sources of critical social knowledge and sites of change.

7.5 Limitations of the Project

Although there are a number of social and political implications to the findings from this study, the methods through which they were garnered are not without limitation. Given the nature of the project, there were constraints related to the way participants were recruited, the diversity of the fathers and daughters who participated, and the nature of the selected methodology. Each of these limitations will be described below, with an emphasis on how they may be addressed in future research endeavours.

To begin, the sampling method in this study was one of convenience. Thanks to my work with AboutFace and my connection to the community, recruitment through this organization was a straightforward way of accessing fathers and daughters living with facial difference. However, given AboutFace’s position as a national support and information network for individuals and families, community members are connected to various resources, support services, and programs that may help parents and children navigate some of the challenging terrain associated with living with or caring for a child with facial difference, including social interactions, medicalization, the education system, engaging with the media, and life transitions. Therefore, the fathers and daughters who elected to participate in the study were already connected to a supportive and well-equipped group of people, and had been for many years, often since early in their daughters’ infancy or even prior to their birth. As with the mother-daughter study conducted
a few years ago (Pileggi & Rice, 2014), a number of fathers and daughters made reference to the important role AboutFace played in their lives, and their ongoing connection to that community.

It is possible that the closeness participants described, as well as their generally positive reflections on father-daughter relationships, was influenced or facilitated by their community access, and was not particularly representative of all father-daughter relationships. Narratives from individuals outside of AboutFace, or other communities like it, may not be as affirmative or assured as those in the present study. While the findings of the study highlight the potential benefits of individuals having access to well-developed and difference-positive spaces, stories from beyond the community are vital if we are to capture a more complete and accurate picture of father-daughter relationships. As such, recruiting participants from other organizations or institutions such as medical clinics, hospitals, community centres, and through other recruitment initiatives such as flyers, posters, and print and electronic advertisements, may lead to a more diverse sample in the future. Consequently, different stories and conceptualizations of the father-daughter relationship, bodily difference, and gender may emerge. This analysis may provide researchers, clinicians, policy makers, and educators with enhanced insight into the functioning of familial relationships in the absence of supportive communities, and perhaps build an even stronger case for the widespread implementation of accessible communities like AboutFace.

Related to the community-based sample is the limitation of selection bias. In using email recruitment, participants were able to self-select into the study. As a result, it is possible that participants’ reflections provide an unbalanced assessment of father-daughter relationships, because only those who considered their relationships to be relatively intimate, strong, and
unfazed by facial difference volunteered to complete an interview. Although recruitment documents were linguistically open and did not target only “positive” or “close” father-daughter pairs, it’s possible the call for participants was more attractive or appealing to those comfortable talking about their relationship because of their comfort in their relationship. Those with potentially more complicated, distant, or restricted relationships may not have desired to participate for fear of exposing this perception to themselves, their relational counterpart, the researcher, or readers of the final report.

Moreover, because of the way certain families or fathers are positioned in Anglo-western society, participant diversity may have been compromised in the current study. While the study did include a few father-daughter pairs who were diverse in age, sexuality, culture, ability, living arrangements, and socioeconomic status, many others may not have felt validated in their eligibility to participate and therefore did not respond to recruitment calls. Certainly, future research on facial difference and the family could build on these findings by specifically (and even exclusively) recruiting families who identify in diverse ways, including those who are members of racialized, non-binary, or members of the LGBTQ community. By endorsing diversity in our understanding of families and their relationships in future scholarship, we welcome even more willingness, opinions, and insights from the communities we hope to study. Accordingly, we are better able to attend to and illustrate the multiplicity of human relationships.

One specific element of diversity that was not achieved in the present study was the type of facial difference. More specifically, all 10 daughters interviewed were living with congenital differences; no one with an acquired facial difference responded to the recruitment email. As
previously described, daughter’s bodies were experienced by many dyads in this study as normative because their embodiment was as it had been since birth. Of course, the conceptualization and influence of facial difference may be entirely different when a daughter acquires a facial difference and the family is forced to navigate her transition from a normative body to one read as non-normative. These stories must be captured as they can provide a more complete understanding of the influence of bodily difference on individuals and families.

Contrarily, as a result of efforts made to boost recruitment, there existed a lot of diversity in the ages and life experiences of the fathers and daughters interviewed. This led to varied reflections on a number of age-related processes and transitions in participants’ narratives: while all participants could speak to daughters’ early infancy and childhood, younger father-daughter pairs were more adept at speaking about experiences in high school, with peer groups, and with extracurricular activities, while older pairs spoke at length about issues of employment, daughters leaving the family home, dating, marriage, and having children. Taken together, these narratives create a broad picture of the father-daughter relationship over many years. However, it remains difficult to perform any age-related analyses of the discursive or relational themes. Future research could isolate a specific age group for fathers or daughters, and explore their experiences in more depth.

Finally, there were some limitations inherent in the study’s methodology, namely the use of semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis. Though participants were all sent the interview protocols prior to their scheduled interviews, many had a difficult time responding to the questions in the moment, which led to some gaps in the data. One father even noted that he
felt natural observation would have led to an enhanced or more inclusive view of his relationship with his daughter than his answers could provide. This perspective led me to consider other methods that may be better suited to attend to the complex, pre-discursive, or emergent elements of relationship, gender, and embodiment that I identified. More specifically, rather than simply ascribing to familiar, “traditional” research methods, perhaps the same variety advocated for in our understanding of fatherhood should be respected and demonstrated in the study of it. While I tried to encourage diverse recruitment through my open-language email, it may have been beneficial to pilot a focus group and collaboratively develop research objectives, interview questions, and methods. Even more so, we, as feminist scholars, should consider the possibility of developing new methods that are better suited to explore the pluralism of the various phenomena we study, including fatherhood and bodily difference, to more wholly capture the diverse ways people reflect on and express their experiences, including writing and art. To this end, future studies of families and facial differences could experiment with methods such as unstructured interviews, narrative storytelling, digital storytelling, artistic performance, poetry, or blog analyses that allow participants to reflect on their experiences in unique and personally meaningful ways. While perhaps not generalizable, these methods of inquiry are certainly generative, which may prove more valuable.

7.6 Conclusion

Still, despite these limitations, the current study of daughters living with facial differences and their fathers was an important one to undertake as it simultaneously addresses substantial gaps in research on not only fatherhood and facial difference, but in gender and
family research as a whole. It is the first project in these realms to investigate these relationships from a critical, feminist, and post-structural perspective, using qualitative methods that respect and value individuals’ subjective experiences of living with or raising a child with a facial difference. Accordingly, the results from this study can be used to ameliorate our understanding of difference and disability, and the influence it has on familial relationships. They also shed light on certain analogous and unique ways that individuals undertake and experience fathering or fatherhood.

Unlike many of the previous investigations of families touched by facial difference, the results illustrate that the complex relational dynamics or specific models of care proliferated in previous literature are not inherent to having a child with a difference or disability. Instead, they stem from the gendered, neoliberal, and ableist social, political, and economic discourses that circulate in Anglo-western society. Therefore, the study supports the claim that fathers are by no means “deficient mothers” or incapable of building relationships with their daughters, but that they are competent and willing to care for their children, and desire to maintain affective and meaningful relationships when the environment is structured in a way that permits them to do so. Moreover, the study highlights that, contrary to other scholarly findings, facial differences do not undermine the quality of life or relationships of fathers and daughters, but rather offer opportunities (however fleeting) to rethink or reengage with the other. By undertaking and continuing critical feminist, post-structural, and contributitional scholarship like this in the future, academics can influence policy and decision makers to work toward the long-term success and stability of all families and individuals, including those living with facial, mental, or bodily difference.
References


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Appendix A: Interview Protocols for Fathers & Daughters

Daughter Interview

1. Please briefly describe your current relationship with your father.
   a. What would you consider some of the best things about your relationship?
   b. What would you consider some of the challenging things about your relationship?
2. In what ways, if any, do you feel your relationship with your father has changed over time?
3. How would you describe your dad’s role within your family?
4. Can you recall and describe any specific stories that your father has shared with you about their own childhood, adolescence or young adulthood?
   a. Why is this story meaningful to you?
5. In what ways do you feel you are similar to your father?
   a. How are you different than your father?
6. In what ways, if any, do you believe your facial difference has influenced you as a person?
7. In what ways, if any, do you believe your facial difference has influenced your father or your relationship with your father?
8. Please describe an example or instance in which your father was involved in:
   a. An uncomfortable social interaction you may have had
   b. An encounter within the medical system
   c. Discussing or engaging with different medias
      i. What happened?
      ii. How did it make your feel?
9. In what ways do you feel your father has influenced your morals, values, or personality?
10. In what ways do you feel your father has influenced the way you feel about your body?
11. In what ways do you feel your father has influenced the way you feel about dating and intimate relationships?
12. In what ways do you feel your father has influenced your identity as a woman?
13. What are your hopes for your future?
14. What are you hopes for the future of your relationship with your father?
15. Is there anything else you would like to share or discuss about your father or your relationship with your father that I have not mentioned?
Father Interview

1. Please briefly describe your current relationship with your daughter.
   a. What would you consider some of the best things about your relationship?
   b. What would you consider some of the challenging things about your relationship?
2. In what ways, if any, do you feel your relationship with your daughter has changed over time?
3. How would you describe your role within your family?
4. Can you recall and describe any specific stories that you have shared with your daughter about your own childhood, adolescence or young adulthood?
   a. Why is this story meaningful to you?
   b. What do you hope your daughter learns or takes away from these stories?
5. In what ways do you feel you are similar to your daughter?
   a. How are you different than your daughter?
6. In what ways, if any, do you believe your daughter’s facial difference has influenced you as a person?
   a. How has it influenced your role or identity as a father?
7. In what ways, if any, do you believe your daughter’s facial difference has influenced your relationship with your daughter?
8. Please describe an example or instance in which your daughter experienced:
   a. An uncomfortable social interaction
   b. An encounter within the medical system
   c. Something in the media that interested or upset her
      i. What happened?
      ii. What did you do or how did you respond?
      iii. How did it make you feel?
9. In what ways do you feel your daughter has influenced your morals, values, or personality?
   a. How do you think you have influenced her morals, values or personality?
10. In what ways do you feel you have influenced the way your daughter feels about her body?
11. In what ways do you feel you have influenced the way your daughter feels about dating and intimate relationships?
12. In what ways do you feel you have influenced your daughter’s identity as a woman?
   a. In what ways do you feel your relationship with your daughter has influenced your own gendered identity?
13. What are your hopes for your future?
14. What are your hopes for your daughter’s future?
15. What are you hopes for the future of your relationship with your daughter?
16. Is there anything else you would like to share or discuss about your daughter or your relationship with your daughter that I have not mentioned?
Appendix B: Recruitment Email

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH STUDY ON FACIAL DIFFERENCE & THE FATHER-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIP

My name is Victoria Pileggi and I am a third year Doctoral student at the University of Guelph in the Family Relationships and Human Development program. As part of my studies, I am conducting a research study under the supervision of Dr. Carla Rice. The proposed project, looks to fill in some of the gaps in the existing literature on facial difference, and present an alternative means of understanding facial difference and fatherhood. Specifically, the project aims to explore the father-daughter relationship when the daughter is living with a facial difference.

The specific objectives of the project include: exploring how fathers and daughters understand their relationship with one another, and the influence their relationship has had on their own identities. The study looks to use one-on-one interviews to collect data to ensure that the individual voices of participants are heard and respected, and uncover the complex, often misrepresented, experiences of living with a facial difference or raising a child with a facial difference, particularly daughters.

If you are a young woman living with a facial difference (age 14-35) or are a father of a daughter with a facial difference in this age range who is or is not personally living with a facial difference, I would like to invite you to participate in the study. Interviews will take place at a time and place that is convenient for you, and can be performed over telephone or Skype if you prefer.

For more information regarding the study or if you would like to participate in the study, please contact me, Victoria Pileggi, at vpileggi@uoguelph.ca.
Appendix C: Consent form for All Participants

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Victoria Pileggi and Dr. Carla Rice, from the Department of Family Relations and Human Nutrition at the University of Guelph. This study is being undertaken as a dissertation, in fulfillment of the requirements for completion of a Doctorate of Philosophy degree in Family Relations and Human Development.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact the student investigator Victoria Pileggi at (416) 801-9693 or vpileggi@uoguelph.ca. Alternatively, you can contact the investigator’s supervisor, Dr. Carla Rice at carlar@uoguelph.ca.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to understand the father-daughter relationship when the daughter is living with a facial difference from the perspectives of both daughters and fathers. It aims to explore how fathers and daughters understand and experience their relationship with one another and the influence that their relationship has had on their developing identities.

PROCEDURES

If you choose to volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to participate in a one-on-one interview. One-on-one interviews can be conducted at a time and place that is convenient for you, or can be done via Skype or the telephone if you prefer. During the course of the interview, you will be asked to respond to a series of predetermined questions. In total, the expected time commitment required by you to participate in the interview is approximately an hour. The expected completion date of the project is December 31, 2017. Should you desire to be informed of the results of this study, please contact the researcher by email and a copy of the final paper will be emailed to you.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

Minimal psychological risk is possible due to the nature of the questions within the study. Participants may be upset or made uncomfortable by the questions regarding their relationship with their father or daughter and their experiences living with or raising a child with a facial difference. The potential psychological risks however are no different than those that may be encountered on a daily basis. Minimal social risk is also possible, as the participants will be disclosing personal information with others present, and they may therefore feel a possible loss or invasion of privacy and be reluctant to answer questions.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY
There are no direct benefits to the participants themselves, but they may gain a deeper understanding of their relationship and the ways in which their experiences have shaped their identity as a woman and father. It may also serve to advance the literature on facial differences by valuing the subjective experiences of the individuals, using qualitative methods and using critical feminist and disability frameworks that do not endorse the medical, deficit model of disability which has informed the majority of prior research.

**PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION**

While there is no monetary payment for participation within this study, all participants will be compensated with a gift card to Tim Horton’s or Chapters Indigo as a token of appreciation for their time and commitment.

**CONFIDENTIALITY**

Every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality of any identifying information that is obtained in connection with this study. This study is being conducted in partial fulfillment of the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Family Relations and Human Development at the University of Guelph. All participants will be referred to by an alias in the final report to protect their identities. Direct quotations from the interviews may be used within the final dissertation report, however, all names and potentially identifying information will be changed. For transcription purposes, one-on-one interviews will be audio recorded to ensure reliable transcription. Recordings will be transferred to an encrypted laptop and deleted from the recorder within 24 hours of interview completion. Participants have the right to review their transcript upon request.

Any printed documentation or files with identifying information will be kept in a locked cabinet at the University of Guelph and shredded upon completion and submission of the dissertation for graduation. The electronic copies of the transcripts will be kept on the encrypted laptop for possible future use in additional studies or publications. If the project is submitted for publication, all participants will be notified via email, and transcripts will be kept until the final dissertation is accepted.

**PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. Should you elect to withdraw, your recording and responses will be deleted, and there will be no record of you having participated. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don’t want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise that warrant doing so.

**RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**
You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact:

Director, Research Ethics  Telephone: (519) 824-4120, ext. 56606
University of Guelph  E-mail: sauld@uoguelph.ca
437 University Centre  Fax: (519) 821-5236
Guelph, ON  N1G 2W1

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT/LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

I have read the information provided for the study as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

_________________________________________
Name of Participant (please print)

_________________________________________
Signature of Participant       Date

SIGNATURE OF WITNESS

_________________________________________
Name of Witness (please print)

_________________________________________
Signature of Witness       Date
# Appendix D: REB Approval Certificate

**UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH**

**RESEARCH ETHICS BOARDS**

**Certification of Ethical Acceptability of Research Involving Human Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>APPROVAL PERIOD:</th>
<th>December 5, 2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>December 5, 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:</td>
<td>Rice, Carla (<a href="mailto:carla@uoguelph.ca">carla@uoguelph.ca</a>)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEPARTMENT:</td>
<td>Family Relations &amp; Applied Nutrition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPONSOR(S):</td>
<td>SSHRC Scholarships</td>
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<tr>
<td>TITLE OF PROJECT:</td>
<td>“Her father has played such an important role in all of it” - Exploring daughters’ relationships with their fathers when living with a facial difference</td>
</tr>
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The members of the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board have examined the protocol which describes the participation of the human participants in the above-named research project and considers the procedures, as described by the applicant, to conform to the University’s ethical standards and the Tri-Council Policy Statement, 2nd Edition.

The REB requires that researchers:
- Adhere to the protocol as last reviewed and approved by the REB.
- Receive approval from the REE for any modifications before they can be implemented.
- Report any change in the source of funding.
- Report unexpected events or incidental findings to the REB as soon as possible with an indication of how these events affect the safety of participants, and the continuation of the protocol.
- Are responsible for ascertaining and complying with all applicable legal and regulatory requirements with respect to consent and the protection of privacy of participants in the jurisdiction of the research project.

The Principal Investigator must:
- Ensure that the ethical guidelines and approvals of facilities or institutions involved in the research are obtained and filed with the REE prior to the initiation of any research protocols.
- Submit a Status Report to the REB upon completion of the project. If the research is a multi-year project, a status report must be submitted annually prior to the expiry date. Failure to submit an annual status report will lead to your study being suspended and potentially terminated.

The approval for this protocol lapsed on the EXPIRY DATE, or the term of your appointment or employment at the University of Guelph whichever comes first.

Signature: [Signature]

Date: December 5, 2016

Chair, Research Ethics Board-General

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