

FAMILY TRANSITIONS: AMBIGUOUS LOSS AND SELF-DETERMINATION
AMONG TRANSGENDER YOUTH

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
BY

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

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May 2016

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to the Blank family and Dr. Pauline Boss for their support with the Lucile Garley Blank Fellowship. I have had the pleasure of meeting the Blank family and hearing about the wonderful legacy of their mother and I feel honored to be a part of it. Also, I would like to acknowledge Kathleen Hull. Thank you for your patience and assistance during this process. Finally, this project would not have been possible with the assistance and support of my co-chairs Sharon and Jenifer. Sharon, thank you for your intuition and connecting me with Jenifer. Your insight genuinely changed the trajectory of my life. Jenifer, no words can express the how you've helped me grow as a scholar and person. With your support I've achieved bigger goals than I ever thought possible.

DEDICATION

To Quay,

*Thank you for loving me
Thank you for being there
Thank you for loving me*

ABSTRACT

This study explored transgender youth's parent-child relationships to examine youth's experiences of ambiguous loss and their agency in response to the perception of family boundary ambiguity. Researchers collected interview data from 90 transgender-identified youth and young adults, in 10 cities, across three countries. In semi-structured interviews, researchers asked participants to describe their current and past family relationships. This study used ethnographic content analysis to systematically code and analyze data.

Data showed that the majority of transgender youth experienced some form of ambiguous loss because of changes in the family due to conflict surrounding childhood gender nonconformity and trans* identity disclosure, which negatively affected parent-child relationships. Data also showed that trans* youth employed agency as a means to navigate the stressors associated with family changes, conflict, and boundary ambiguity. The youth's stories revealed that their sense of agency was central in their reflections about parent-child relationships overtime.

Keywords: adaptation, ambiguous loss, gender-variance, family conflict, parent-child relationships, self-determination, transgender youth

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Culturally pervasive beliefs about gender norms play an important role in parents' reactions to trans*¹ and gender-variant youth. Cisnormativity is a cultural belief system that perpetuates the notion that there are only two sex categories, and that those categories determine gender identity and expression (Bauer et al., 2009). Due to cisnormativity, transgender youth may fear family rejection and negotiate feelings of uncertainty as a result of parents' difficulties adjusting to gender transition and gender nonconformity. Trans* youth may question their relationships with parents, and whether they remain a member of the family.

Previous research has found that parents reactions to gender-variant behaviors are varied (Grossman, D'Augelli, Howell, & Hubbard, 2005; Ryan, Huebner, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2009). Some studies have documented family acceptance of trans* youth (Ehrensaft, 2013; Ryan et al. 2010), while the majority of research has focused on families' ambivalent and negative reactions and feelings associated with trans-identifying family members (Koken, Bimbi, & Parsons, 2009; Norwood, 2013a; Wahlig, 2014). Researchers have demonstrated that trans* youth experience inconsistent caregiving from parents (Grossman & D'Augelli, 2006; Koken et al., 2009), and have found that greater gender nonconformity was associated with an increased likelihood of verbal and physical

¹ For the purpose of this paper, the terms trans* and gender nonconforming are meant to be inclusive of the spectrum of individuals whose assigned sex at birth does not align with their internalized sense of gender identity and individuals who do not conform to societal norms surrounding gender (see Bockting, 2014, for a comprehensive review of trans*-related terminology).

abuse from parents (Grossman et al., 2005). Furthermore, scholars have found that families have described feelings of loss, grief, and anger associated with their transgender family member (Ellis & Eriksen, 2002; Norwood, 2010; Rosenfeld & Emetson, 1998), noting that families were experiencing a sense of ambiguous loss (Norwood, 2010, 2012, 2013; Ritenour, 2014; Wahlig, 2014).

Currently, no studies address experiences of ambiguous loss among trans* youth, or how trans* youth responded to their parents' reactions, representing two major gaps in the literature. This study addresses these gaps by synthesizing Boss and Greenberg's (1984) concept of family boundary ambiguity, Boss' (1991) ambiguous loss theory, and Ryan and Deci's (2000b) self-determination theory to create a framework to begin analyzing trans* youth's resiliency in response to stress associated with parental reactions to gender-variance.

The theoretical construction of family boundary ambiguity and ambiguous loss has roots in family stress theory and draws from Hill's (1958) ABC-X model of family stress. Boss (1991) theorized that ambiguous loss represented the stressor event (A-factor) and family boundary ambiguity represented the perception of that event (C-factor). According to Hill (1958) family resources represented the B-factor and the degree that families experienced crisis represented the X-factor. Hill (1958) theorized that adjustment to a stressor (Factor-A) was a function of resources (Factor- B) and families' perception of the stressor event (Factor- C), which produced an experience of crisis or adaptation (Factor-X). Hill's (1958) ABC-X is an important theoretical underpinning for the framing of this study (*see figure 1*).

This work assumed that parental reactions and changes related to gender-variance represented a significant stressor for trans* youth. Moreover, this work assumed that when youth perceived their parents' reactions as negative, neutral, or ambivalent they experienced family boundary ambiguity. Boss and Greenberg (1984) theorized that boundary ambiguity was a lack of clarity about who is and who is not in the family. With this framework in mind, parental reactions to their youth's gender-variance left youth feeling uncertain about acceptance in the family system, relationships with family members, and possibilities to explore and develop an authentic trans* identity. This study sought to also explore how transgender youth enacted agency in response to ambiguous loss as a stressor event.

The ABC-X model is a family theory that speaks primarily to family resources, resiliency, and adaptation, therefore, in order to examine trans* youth's individual agency in the context of ambiguous loss this work applied self-determination theory (SDT). In this study, self-determination theory framed how youth reacted to parental responses to gender-variance and feelings of boundary ambiguity.

Self-determination theory is a framework concerned with human motivation, innate psychological needs, and the role of interpersonal relationships in supporting or thwarting personal growth and well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). Ryan and Deci (2000) applied self-determination theory to understand intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, psychological needs, and the impact social context has on fulfilling or inhibiting personal well-being (e.g. La Guardia & Patrick, 2008; Legate, Ryan and Weinstein, 2012; Van Petegem, Soenens, Vansteenkiste, & Beyers, 2015; Weinstein et al. 2012; Yarnell & Neff, 2012). Therefore, this work assumed that when parents attempted to control their

youth's gender-variance they created a social context that derailed trans* youth's sense of autonomy and connectedness to their parents. When youth perceived their parents' responses as rejection of their authentic gender identity youth reacted to preserve their trans* identity, their connectedness to the family of origin or both their authentic gender expression and family relatedness.

In this study, ambiguous loss theory framed an analysis of family relationships to uncover narratives about ambiguity and uncertainty. Then, self-determination theory framed an analysis of how transgender youth responded to varied parental reactions and feelings of ambiguous loss. Synthesizing ambiguous loss and self-determination perspectives created a framework to view how trans* youth navigated family boundary ambiguity and ambiguous loss with regard to their personal motivation and psychological needs.

Researchers used ethnographic content analysis to examine trans* youth's retrospective stories about their family relationships. Interviewers collected data from 90 transgender identified young people, in 10 cities across three countries (U.S., Canada, & Ireland). The U.S. sample was ethnically diverse, contributing to academic needs and knowledge production on cultural competence, social justice, and visibility of transpersons. In semi-structured interviews, researchers asked participants to reflect on their relationships with parents or guardians.

Consistent with previous literature, findings revealed that trans* youth experienced a variety of parental reactions to gender-variance (Ehrensaft, 2011; Grossman et al., 2005; Ryan, Russell, Huebner, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2010). Additionally, all participants described a process of change as families adjusted to childhood gender

nonconformity and disclosure of a trans* identity. Finally, findings also showed that trans* youth's perceptions of stress associated with family change and parental reactions influenced how they reacted to it, which was inextricably linked to parent-child relationship outcomes over time. The following research questions guided this project:

1. What are trans* youth's experiences with ambiguous loss and family boundary ambiguity?
2. How do trans* youth navigate feelings associated with ambiguous loss and family boundary ambiguity?

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Literature

The majority of current literature pertaining to trans* youth and their family relationships draws on research concerning stress and risk associated with emerging marginalized sexual and gender minority statuses (Burgess, 2000; Coker, Austin, & Schuster, 2009; Grossman, D'Augelli, & Salter, 2006; Grossman & D'Augelli, 2006; Meyer, 2010; Ryan & Rivers, 2003). While contemporary literature is moving toward acknowledging the gains and losses that are experienced within families that have transpersons as family members, the breadth of previous literature primarily focuses on documenting the trajectories of young adults' sense of gender-variance and gender identity development throughout young adulthood (Grossman & D'Augelli, 2006; Mallon & DeCrescenzo, 2006; Saewyc, 2011; Stieglitz, 2010).

Currently, scholars are beginning to address major gaps in the literature concerning transitioning among family systems after trans* family members disclose their transgender identity (Ehrensaft, 2011; Hines, 2006; Kivalanka, Weiner, & Mahan, 2014). Additionally, scholars are making connections between loss, grief, and a sense of ambiguous loss among family members of transpersons to spearhead family therapeutic practices (Lev, 2004; Norwood, 2013a; Zamboni, 2006). Finally, personal (DiFulvio, 2014; Grossman, D'Augelli, & Frank, 2011; McDermott, Roen, & Scourfield, 2008; Singh, Hays, & Watson, 2011) and family resilience (Meadow, 2011; Rahilly, 2015) are emerging research areas where scholars are reporting positive and accepting responses among transpersons from their families of origin.

Unfortunately, within the family discipline, a limited amount of literature offers empirical trans* specific research (Greytak, Kosciw, & Diaz, 2009; Grossman et al., 2006; Grossman & D'Augelli, 2007; Lombardi, Wilchins, Priesing, & Malouf, 2001), with much of the nuanced transgender experiences extrapolated from lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) specific data (Cochran, Stewart, Ginzler, & Cauce, 2002; Keuroghlian, Shtasel, & Bassuk, 2014). A major gap in the field is an understanding of what trans* youth's experiences are regarding parents' reactions to gender-variance. Most studies address how family members responded to gender-variant youth (Ehrensaft, 2011; Meadow, 2011; Norwood, 2013a; Rahilly, 2013; Wahlig, 2014). However, very few studies have addressed family processes from trans* youth's perspectives (e.g. Kivalanka et al., 2014), particularly experiences with ambiguous loss and self-determination.

This study addressed these gaps in the literature through examining trans* youth's experiences with ambiguous loss due changes in the parent-child relationships. Previous literature regarding trans* youth predominantly focused on family reactions to trans* youth, yielding a scholarship base that over-represents negative consequences faced by LGBTQ youth from family rejection. This study examined a broader range of family reactions to trans* youth, as well as youth responses to parents. In some cases it was necessary to extrapolate findings from studies of other marginalized populations when trans* specific research was not available (Bauer et al., 2009).

This literature review will discuss published information pertaining to development of gender-variance, disclosure to parents and family members, parents' reactions to gender-variance, LGBTQ persons' experiences with ambiguous loss, and LGB persons' and young adults' self-determination. This study discusses previous

literature findings in relation to how they are applied to trans* youth's interpersonal relationship processes.

Gender Variance, Gender Identity Development and Disclosure

Gender identity development research is moving towards documenting the variability among transgender youth (Menvielle, 2009), while also attending to an essentialist approach, which expresses gender-variance as present for some children when they are born and persistent through adulthood (de Vries, Kreukels, Steensma, & McGuire, 2014; Steensma et al., 2013). De Vries et al. (2014) suggested that a biopsychosocial perspective best accounts for the interplay between biological, sociological, and psychological factors that influence normative and variant gender development. Steensma et al. (2013) offer a critical distinction between gender nonconforming youth who *are* the other gender, as youth who persisted in their gender dysphoria and would typically go on to transition, while gender nonconforming youth who *want to be* the other gender as youth that eventually desisted in their gender dysphoria (Cohen-Kettenis & Pfafflin, 2003; Ehrensaft, 2014).

Additional literature marks gender development trajectories of gender nonconformity, offering insight into timing of identity formation (Cohen-Kettenis & Klink, 2015; Steensma et al., 2013) and disclosure to family members (Grossman et al., 2005). Cohen-Kettenis and Klink (2015) explain one's awareness of gender and sex evolves gradually in childhood, whereby children develop a sophisticated understanding of gender. They say most often children will identify with their assigned gender at birth, however, early in life some children may experience incongruity between their assigned gender at birth and their experienced gender. These children identify as the other gender,

show behaviors and preferences aligned with the gender they were *not* assigned at birth, and sometimes dislike their physical characteristics (Cohen-Kettenis & Klink, 2015). This study's population is from the Netherlands and their medical system for transgender patients is much different than that of the United States. For the Dutch, transgender identity can be clinically addressed in childhood and covered by the universal healthcare program (Cohen-Kettenis & Klink, 2015). Studies from the U.S. have historically focused on older persons, although this trend is shifting. For example, all participants in Grossman et al.'s (2005) study self-identified as trans* by the age 18, and had told another person they were trans* by age 19. They found, most often, youth first disclosed to family members or friends.

Grossman et al. (2005) found that parents were often aware of their children's gender nonconformity and attempted to redirect gender nonconforming behavior, yet transgender youth also went through a "coming out" process. For instance, Grossman, D'Augelli, and Salter (2006) found that disclosing transgender status was an important identity development factor, however, it was often followed by transphobia, harassment, or discrimination by family members or peers. They found trans* youth were most likely to disclose to close friends (83%), teachers (75%) and parents (66%) (Grossman, D'Augelli & Salter, 2006). Similarly, Legate, Ryan, and Weinstein (2013) found LGB persons were more likely to disclose their sexual minority statuses in autonomy supportive environments, and were more likely to experience positive effects from that disclosure. However, in controlling contexts, disclosure was not associated with well-being, providing a caveat to previous literature which found associations between disclosure and improved mental health (e.g. Ragins, 2004).

Parents Reactions to Gender-Variance

Previous literature has found that parents' reactions to gender nonconformity varied. For instance, Ryan et al. (2010) found that parents reactions to stigmatized identity disclosure resulted in acceptance and/or rejection. Ryan et al. (2010) reported that acceptance and rejection were distinct constructs, therefore LGBTQ youth could experience acceptance and rejection concurrently. Despite a range of reactions, previous literature tends to focus on specific features related to family rejection (Grossman et al., 2005; Ryan et al., 2009), while other scholars have explored strengths-based family acceptance models (Ryan et al., 2010; Simons, Schragar, Clark, Belzer, & Olson, 2013). Only recently have clinicians and researchers begun to document acceptance and rejection in the same article (Ehrensaft, 2011; Meadow, 2011; Rahilly, 2015; Ryan et al., 2010).

Parental rejection and losses. Grossman et al.'s (2005) findings "reported that 54% of [transgender youth's] mothers and 63% of their fathers initially reacted negatively... The more gender nonconforming the youth, the more likely they reported that they were verbally and physically abused by their mothers and fathers" (pg. 3). Meaning, genderqueer youth and youth who had a non-binary gender identity faced the potential for greater abuse within parent-child relationships. Additionally, Durso and Gates (2012) reported that homeless trans* youth frequently cited family rejection as the primary contributing factor to their homelessness, wherein trans* youth were increasingly at risk for poorer physical and mental health outcomes and risk-taking behaviors (Cochran et al., 2002; Keuroghlian et al., 2014).

Grossman et al. (2005) and Grossman et al. (2007) also found that parental victimization was a contributing factor to suicidal ideation among transgender youth. Similarly, Ryan et al. (2009) found family rejection to be associated with negative health outcomes in LGB youth, stating:

Lesbian, gay, and bisexual young adults who reported higher levels of family rejection during adolescence were 8.4 times more likely to report having attempted suicide, 5.9 times more likely to report high levels of depression, 3.4 times more likely to use illegal drugs, and 3.4 times more likely to report having engaged in unprotected sexual intercourse compared with peers from families that reported no or low levels of family rejection.

Findings suggest associations between parents' responses to youth's non-normative behaviors, and youth's well-being and risk-taking behaviors. Given these previous findings concerning negative mental and social health outcomes, Ryan et al. (2010) explored associations between family acceptance among sexual and gender minorities and well-being.

Parental acceptance and gains. There is a general dearth of information regarding family acceptance of gender-variance. The most salient articles regarding family acceptance come from the Family Acceptance Project, spearheaded by Caitlin Ryan and colleagues. Ryan et al. (2010) found that family acceptance of LGBT youth predicted greater self-esteem, social support, and general health. Comparing LGBT young adults with high family acceptance and low family acceptance, Ryan et al. (2010) found youth with high family acceptance reported significantly lower rates of suicidal ideation and attempts (18.5% and 38.3% compared to 30.9% and 56.8% respectively).

Currently, Family Acceptance Project articles (Ryan, 2010; Ryan et al., 2010), are the only ones that can empirically associate family acceptance with young adult positive health outcomes, and as a protective factor for negative health outcomes. However, literature is developing that addresses a range of varied reactions (Ehrensaft, 2011; Meadow, 2011; Rahilly, 2015).

Ehrensaft's (2011) reported three types of families that either support or impede their child's gender nonconformity. For instance, Ehrensaft (2011) described parents who overcame gender related obstacles to recreate family relationships, parents who were outwardly against gender nonconformity, and parents who ignored their children's struggle with identifying as transgender. Additionally, Meadow (2011) and Rahilly, (2015) described ways in which parents accounted for and adjusted to their children's gender-variance, representing a process of family resilience oriented towards equilibrium and boundary maintenance. For example, Rahilly (2014) found three practices, gender hedging, gender literacy and playing along, in which parents engaged to account for their child's gender-variance within a cultural context that enforced gender conformity and a gender dichotomy. Rahilly's (2014) findings suggested that parents experienced a paradox between supporting their child's autonomy and the responsibility of raising children capable of navigating the larger cultural context. Caught in this paradox, scholars have found that families and parents transition with their transgender youth (Connolly, 2005; Hines, 2006; Kivalanka et al., 2014).

Connolly (2005) and Hines (2006) discussed the process of change that happened within families when youth come out as LGBT. For example, they have identified the phenomenon that families must transition along with personal transitions of LGBT family

members (Connolly, 2005; Hines, 2006), while Whitley (2013) addressed the relational identity transitions of undoing and redoing gender that happened among significant others, family, friends, and allies of transgender people. Additionally, Kuvalanka, et al. (2014) used an ecological perspective to highlight the interplay of youth, family, and community transformations, or lack thereof, when youth come out as trans*. Kuvalanka et al.'s (2014) findings suggested that all ecological levels affected transgirls' demeanor and internal and external sense of self. Additionally, Kuvalanka et al. (2014) found that all ecological levels experienced some form of transition as a result of the transgirls' transitions. For example, local neighborhoods, schools, siblings, parents, and extended family were all affected by youth's transition. Findings highlighted the interrelatedness of personal transformations and social context.

Parents' reactions to gender-variance represented a complicated amalgamation of rejection, acceptance, ambiguity, and family transitioning. Previous research highlighted that parents' reactions were attempts to help children navigate a cultural context that prioritizes a binary, cisgender structure. Despite parents' motivations to alter gender expression, rejection had a detrimental effect on transgender youth (Grossman et al., 2005; Grossman & D'Augelli, 2007; Mustanski, Garofalo, & Emerson, Dec 2010; Ryan et al., 2009), while acceptance was empirically associated with better mental health outcomes (Ryan et al., 2010). Regardless of parents' reactions, gender transitioning necessitated that families adjust and transform along with their trans* youth.

Family Boundary Ambiguity and Ambiguous Loss

Therapists and clinicians have reported that families with transgender family members may experience a sense of loss, grief, shame, betrayal, anxiety, denial, anger,

and depression when their youth discloses their sexual and gender minority statuses (Norwood, 2010; Rosenfeld & Emerton, 1998). Ellis and Eriksen (2002), Lev (2004), and Zamboni (2006) addressed the fact that families may view their loved one's transgender identity disclosure as a loss. Scholars reported loss and grief were the main roadblocks to family support of transgender family members (Lev, 2004; Zamboni, 2006), offering an analysis of coping with loss associated with transitioning family members based on Kübler-Ross' (1969) five stages of grief and bereavement.

Lev (2004) created a unique four-stage model for how families cope with their loved one coming out as transgender. Stage one marked the period of disclosure, in which family members learned that their loved one was trans*. Stage two described stress and emotional conflict associated with family members learning their loved one was trans*. Stage three referred to the negotiation period, in which family members' internal and external dialogue helped them make sense of their loved one's disclosure. Finally, stage four was the reconciliation stage wherein the family reintegrated the gender-variant loved one.

Zamboni (2006) used Lev's (2004) four-stage model to address the difficulties friends and significant others faced when their loved one came out as transgender. These linear stages are problematic and do not account for variability in parents' reaction to gender-variance. For example, sometimes parents perceived gender nonconformity well before transpersons formally disclosed. In other cases, transpersons may have disclosed their trans* identity and parents were frozen in their grief process. Additionally, the models were unrealistically optimistic about reintegration despite the abundance of literature suggesting prolonged family rejection, homelessness, and family breaks. Some

scholars have taken this grief perspective and applied an ambiguous loss framework to understand family boundary ambiguity and variability among LGBTQ families.

Although family boundary ambiguity research in context of LGBTQ families is scarce, the research literature joining ambiguous loss theory and transitions among families with transgender family members is burgeoning. Norwood is one such author who has applied an ambiguous loss framework to understand parents' experiences of ambiguous loss when their child discloses transgender identity (Norwood, 2010; 2012; 2013a).

Norwood (2012) found that the struggles of restructuring relationships with transitioning family members were present in three discourses: presence vs. absence, sameness vs. difference, and self vs. other. The first two discourses correlated with family members' grieving processes and sense of ambiguous loss due to boundary ambiguity and uncertainty about family function and structure. The other discourse, self vs. other, highlighted family members' internal conflict between wanting to be unconditionally supportive of trans* family members, and having their want impeded by lack of information or anti-transgender personal beliefs. Findings suggested that family members of transpersons experience different types of contradictions and conflicted feelings, which affected their sense of ambiguous loss and frozen grief.

Additionally, Wahlig (2014) explored a common narrative of ambiguous loss associated with parental expectations and the loss of their *idealized child*, describing a loss of the future they had hoped for their child. Interestingly, all the articles pertaining to ambiguous loss and transfamilies focused solely on family members' experiences with family shifts, changes, grief, and ambiguous loss. This fact is surprising considering the

prevalence of family rejection and ambiguous concurrent behaviors of family rejection and acceptance outlined earlier in this chapter.

Self-Determination, Social Context, and Compromising.

Currently, no self-determination scholarship has addressed any aspect of transpersons' lives and only a few articles address LGB persons' self-determination in various social contexts (Legate et al., 2012; Weinstein et al., 2012). Given the documentation of parental acceptance and rejection, which creates a social context that either supports or thwarts needs for autonomous exploration of gender and family relatedness, the absence of transpersons in self-determination scholarship is perplexing. Despite an absence of information specific to transpersons, self-determination literature has exceptional ability to provide insight into transpersons' lives through extrapolating information from other applications. For example, extrapolating from findings on LGB persons coming out to parents showcases how social context affects motivation for behavior and conflict resolution tendencies.

The primary reason for including self-determination literature is to show agency as a resource individuals can use to navigate interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, self-determination literature provides a basis for understanding how social contexts influence individual motivation, goals, and interpersonal relationships. For instance, Weinstein et al. (2012) empirically tested associations between LGB persons' perception of parental autonomy support and explicit indices of sexual orientation. Authors found that parental attitudes of homophobia combined with a controlling context affected children's sense of internalized homophobia and willingness to disclose a stigmatized identity. Additionally, authors found that implicit and explicit discrepancies regarding

sexual orientation functioned to minimize negative self-perception in homophobic and controlling contexts (Weinstein et al., 2012). Findings provide evidence for how transphobia, combined with a controlling context, may affect gender nonconforming youth's internal sense of trans* identity and transphobia, which in turn negatively affects agency as well.

Moreover, Legate et al. (2012) found that autonomy supportive contexts and controlling contexts affected the degree to which LGB persons disclosed their sexual minority identity. Findings suggested that in autonomy supportive contexts, participants were more likely to disclose and more likely to experience positive outcomes related to disclosure. Conversely, in controlling social contexts, correlation between disclosure and positive outcomes were not found (Legate et al., 2012), meaning disclosure of minority statuses in controlling contexts can be potentially harmful. These findings have important implications for trans* youth. For instance, previous psychological literature and social media tout the benefits for LGBT persons to disclose their identity -- to be out and proud. Self-determination literature takes into account that disclosure of a minority identity in abusive, threatening, and controlling social contexts creates the potential for dangerous backlash.

Self-determination literature also helps to extrapolate trans* youth's responses to interpersonal conflict, along a range of conflict resolution tendencies, based on social contexts and personal motivation. For example, Yarnell and Neff (2013) found that interpersonal conflict resolution varied along a continuum of mutual-compromising, self-subordinating, and self-prioritizing. Researchers found that during interpersonal conflict, mutual-compromising conflict resolution strategies were most common. The tendency to

mutually compromise during conflict was characteristic of an emphasis on *both* personal and others' needs. Scholars found that mutual-compromising tendencies were the most constructive during conflict, because arguers were more willing to meet in the middle to reach amicable outcomes (Neff & Harter, 2003; Neff, Brabeck, & Kearney, 2006). Researchers also reported associations between mutual-compromising tendencies and improved closeness, and communication and personal relationship satisfaction (Neff et al., 2006; Stein & Albro, 2001; Yarnell & Neff, 2013). Finally, Yarnell and Neff (2013) reported associations between mutual-compromising and increased authenticity in interpersonal relationships.

Deci and Ryan (2000) found correlations between authenticity, social contexts, and willingness to mutually compromise. They found when people felt volitional in their compromise, they felt more authentic. However, when people perceived compromise as coerced, they felt inauthentic (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Self-determination literature revealed correlations between volitional behavior and better personal psychological and interpersonal social outcomes (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). This is due to previous findings which suggested autonomously motivated behaviors were congruent with personal values and goals, therefore seen as desirable, while controlled motivated behaviors focused on contingencies (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000a; Ryan & Deci, 2000b; Yarnell & Neff, 2013). Compromise focused on contingencies represented self-subordinating tendencies, whereby people felt fatigued as a result of continually giving to others' demands. The inability to compromise represented self-prioritizing tendencies, whereby people focused solely on fulfilling their own needs. Findings suggested "meeting basic

needs through interpersonal relationships [was] central to positive relationship functioning” (La Guardia & Patrick, 2008; Yarnell and Neff, 2013, p. 155).

Finally, self-determination literature has focused on how social context and interpersonal relationships either support or thwart psychological needs. Ryan and Deci (2000) found that there were three psychological needs necessary for personal growth and positive functioning: autonomy, relatedness, and competence. Researchers reported interpersonal relationships were fundamentally associated with supporting or thwarting the psychological needs of autonomy and relatedness (La Guardia & Patrick, 2008). For example, people perceived their psychological needs for autonomy and relatedness as met in autonomy supportive interpersonal relationships, because belongingness did not interfere with their ability to self-determine. Belongingness that interfered with volition derailed the psychological need for autonomy. Similarly, concerning oneself with only personal needs hindered the psychological need for relatedness because self-interest impeded the ability to form strong and stable interpersonal bonds (La Guardia & Patrick, 2008; Neff & Harter, 2003; Ryan & Deci, 2000b).

Literature using self-determination theory helps to explain the impact that social contexts, interpersonal conflict resolution styles, and interpersonal relationships have on trans* youths’ ability to fulfill psychological needs. Previous literature has demonstrated that when people feel their behaviors are self-determined or volitional, their psychological need for autonomy was met. Furthermore, relationships that supported autonomy also supported relatedness because both could be achieved concurrently. However, when people were controlled in their interpersonal relationships, they perceived control as an obstruction of autonomy, relatedness, or both (Deci & Ryan,

2000). For instance, during interpersonal conflict, trans* youth contended with the possibility that their parents may foil their ability to achieve autonomy, relatedness, or both. If youth were motivated to maintain family cohesion, they may have overcompensated for family connectedness, resulting in agency geared towards retaining relatedness. However, if trans* youth's primary goal was their autonomy, they may have overcompensated to maintain gender nonconformity, resulting in a resolution tendency geared towards self-prioritizing. Finally, if mutuality motivated trans* youth they may have sought a compromise that accounted for both personal goals and the goals of their parents.

Conclusion

This literature review reflects the published knowledge that was available to examine trans* youth's experiences with ambiguous loss and self-determination, in the context of parental reactions to gender-variance. This section covered the individual elements that are important to understanding the underlying social contexts and interpersonal relationships which affect trans* youth's well-being and positive functioning. Beginning with gender identity development, this literature review examined who was likely to identify as trans* and timing as to when that identity is formulated and disclosed to loved ones. Next, this literature review highlighted findings about parents' reactions to gender-variance in which parents responded with rejection, acceptance, or concurrent behaviors of acceptance and rejection. In light of these ambiguous reactions, this study extrapolated from literature about family members' experiences of loss and ambiguous loss to conceive of potential experiences among trans* youth. Finally, self-determination literature pertaining to motivation, social context, and interpersonal

conflict resolution, provided an empirical context for understanding how trans* youth may navigate ambiguous loss and negative and ambiguous parental reactions.

CHAPTER THREE

Conceptual Framework

Ryan (2010) has developed the family acceptance project, and found that there was considerable variability in parents' reactions to their youth's gender-variance. Varied parental reactions combined with youth's internal fears about negative reactions (Grossman et al., 2005; Grossman & D'Augelli, 2006) may create family stress, uncertainty, and the potential for family breaks. Gender-variant youth may feel uncertainty, ambiguity, and relational tension about whether their parents will accept or reject gender-variant behavior and trans* identity (Grossman et al., 2005).

Some parents attempted to curb gender nonconforming behavior to stay within gender normative constraints (Rahilly, 2013). According to Deci and Ryan (Deci & Ryan, 2000) people need to feel volitional in their actions stating, "when this need is frustrated people feel pressured to behave, think, or feel in a non-desired way, which is typically accompanied with feelings of internal conflict and alienation from what people truly value" (Van Petegem et al., 2015, p. 904). When parents attempted to socialize youth away from gender-variance, tensions arise, creating stress and uncertainty between parents and their trans* youth.

This framework uses ambiguous loss theory (Boss, 1991) and self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000b) to conceptualize transgender youth's experiences of ambiguous loss and self-regulation. Ambiguous loss theory framed transgender youth's experiences with parental acceptance and/or rejection as a loss that created uncertainty and defied closure. Additionally, ambiguous loss theory conceptualized different pathways towards adaptation for transgender youth and their families of origin. Self-

determination theory framed how the presence of gender-variance created family stress and conflict which motivated parents' and youth's reactions to family stress. Finally, self-determination theory provides a framework to view transgender youth's responses to family stress and family conflict.

Ambiguous Loss among Trans* Youth

Boss' (1991; 2002; 2006; 1999; 1977) scholarship provided the central organizing conceptual framework for this study. Boss and Greenberg's (1984) family boundary ambiguity and Boss' (1991) ambiguous loss theory drew from Hill's (1958) ABC-X. When Hill created the ABC-X model the concept of ambiguous loss was not established. Overtime Boss (2016; 2002) mapped her concepts of ambiguous loss (A-Factor), family boundary ambiguity (C-Factor) and resiliency (B-Factor) on to the ABC-X model. This study used Boss' (2016; 2002) model to organize trans* youth's experiences of family breaks in relation to family stress processes. While this research drew on the historical theoretical foundation of Hill's (1958) ABC-X model, Hill's theory was not used (*see figure 1*).

Pauline Boss (1991; 1999; 1977) developed ambiguous loss theory to account for types of losses that defied clarity and closure, as a result of uncertainty and conflicted feelings. Boss (1991) conceptualized two types of ambiguous loss: a loved one who was physically absent while psychologically present characterized a type one—physical breaks, whereas, a type two ambiguous loss represented when a loved one was physically present while psychologically absent—psychological breaks. Boss (2006) proposed these types of losses were exceptionally painful due to the ambiguous nature, which froze emotional processes and ruptured relationships.

This work assumed that transgender youth could experience both types of ambiguous loss, physical and psychological breaks. For instance, physical breaks were instances when parents kicked trans* youth out, youth ran away, or parents stopped physically supporting their child, effectively forcing independence. Alternatively, sometimes relationships were psychologically altered as a result of coercion to conform to gender expectations, abuse, threat, and feelings of ambivalence.

Family breaks. Conceptualization of family breaks was congruent with Boss' (1991) scholarship, in which a physical family break was a type one loss (i.e. family relationships remained psychologically present while physically absent). A psychological family break was a type two loss (i.e. family relationships were psychologically absent while physically present) (*see figure 2*). Additionally, this work assumed that ongoing psychological stress could result in a physical family break and that parent-child relationships could recover from ambiguous loss.

Physical breaks were framed as “leaving without goodbye” (Boss, 1999). Unclear goodbyes are distressing to families because it becomes ambiguous whether youth and parents remain interpersonally and structurally connected. For instance, an ambiguous loss framework has been applied to families of divorce, in which Allen (2007) described “the paradox of presence and absence [as] personally exhausting and socially isolating” (p. 180). A physical break between interpersonally connected people could be vast and unquantifiable, such as soldiers who were missing in action (Boss, 2004), or physical breaks may involve day to day interaction combined with physical barriers to connectedness, such as divorcing families who shared child custody (Allen, 2007). This conceptualization seems to hold true for transgender youth who sometimes experienced

profound rejection from family, resulting in long-term and long-distance family schisms or when parents physically stopped supporting their trans* youth. For example, some youth have described getting kicked out of their home, yet parents continued to pay for a cell-phone to remain in contact. Despite physical absence, parents may have remained psychologically present to their trans* youth in the form of minimal interpersonal contact and youth's memories or longing for family connectedness and acceptance.

Boss (1999) conceptualized psychological breaks as “goodbye without leaving”, characterized by psychological, cognitive, or behavioral changes, resulting in loss of interpersonal relationships despite physical presence. This type of loss has typically been applied to persons with Alzheimer's or dementia because ambiguous loss occurred in the form of lost relationships, as the capacity to connect with family members diminished over time. Extrapolating on these previous applications, trans* youth similarly experienced psychological breaks in the form of relational rupture and identity ambiguity. For example, some trans* youth continued to live in the family home although they no longer experienced warmth, closeness, or intimacy with their parents. Additionally, some trans* youth expressed frustration or ambivalence towards parents when parents attempted to alter childhood gender nonconformity or when parents emotionally shut down because they were unsure how to react to trans* identity disclosure. Secrecy was an example of psychological breaks because secrecy led to feelings of inauthenticity. Landau and Hissett (2008) theorized that selective sharing, secrecy, and concealment broke down family communication and obscured family boundaries and connectedness, despite physical presence.

Early in the theoretical construction of the ambiguous loss framework, Boss and Greenberg (1984) drew on social psychological theory to situate family boundary ambiguity within the context of personal identities in contradiction to family identity—identity ambiguity. Their example drew from Simmel's (1964) work, which stated that as youth developed, they began to affiliate with groups that differed from their family. For instance, trans* youth may seek other trans* individuals and these affiliations may constitute social groups whose beliefs differ from that of the family. Some families accepted that youth were attempting to establish themselves as autonomous beings and youth become increasingly more independent, resulting in little lasting family disruption (Hill, 1958). However, disagreement about involvement in stigmatized group affiliation may result in family conflict. Parental control over youth's gender expression and identity exploration may also create the potential for either failure of the trans* identity to fully develop, or breaks in the family relationships.

Conceptually, identity ambiguity is one form of a psychological break trans* youth experience. For instance, secrecy may allow youth to establish autonomy at the expense of family relatedness, or secrecy may allow family to dictate gender conformity at the expense of authentic transgender identity development. Presumably the goal of family connectedness motivated the disruption of trans* identity, whereby trans* youth minimized gender nonconformity to ensure continued membership in the family. Prioritizing family relatedness may be associated with *trans* identity ambiguity*, in which trans* youth compromise aspects of their trans* identity in order to maintain family cohesion, while causing significant internal psychological consequences. For example,

O'Brien (2007) theorized identity ambiguity caused immobilization, overwhelming feelings, an inability to change situations, and difficulty adapting to change.

On the other hand, the goal of personal autonomy motivated disintegration of family identity, whereby trans* youth minimized family connectedness to ensure exploration of trans* identity. Prioritizing autonomy over family relatedness may result in *family identity ambiguity* because family relationships and the family system as it was previously known no longer existed (Landau & Hissett, 2008). Identity ambiguity contributes to the mosaic of ways transgender youth experienced ambiguous loss of parent-child relationships due to parent's responses to gender-variance.

In addition to conceptualizing ambiguous loss, Boss (2006) set forth a framework to view resilience within the context of ambiguous loss. For Boss (2006), ambiguous loss was not a fixed situation; rather, the goal was to help build resiliency by increasing one's capacity to deal with ambiguity. The process of resilience was a series of operations enacted to attain desirable outcomes. The above conceptualization of identity ambiguity showed differing desirable outcomes motivated trans* youth. Meaning, youth enacted resilient processes to obtain the desired goal of remaining a part of the family of origin and/or to accept the loss of their family of origin for authentic gender expression.

Resiliency and adaptation. Boss (2009) assumed families have natural resiliency to learn to live with unresolved grief and accept ambiguity. She said, "At some point, most people suffering from uncertain loss will hit bottom and then, suddenly or after a long time, shift their perceptions about the status of a family member who is physically or psychologically absent" (p. 106). Boss (2006) said that resiliency as a response to ambiguous loss happened when individuals had the ability to make meaning of their loss

and redefine family relationships in the context of changes in family structure and function. Boss (2006) was discussing families' resources and assets to deal with a stressor event *and* their ability to enact resiliency overtime. Her strategies for resiliency were signposts to therapists about how resiliency may look different for families in the context of ambiguous loss.

McCubbin and Patterson's (1983) double ABC-X theory would argue that a family's ability to stabilize overtime represented family adjustment. Thus, McCubbin and Patterson (1983) suggested that "family adaptation would be a useful concept for describing the outcome of family... adjustment" (pg. 17). Therefore, this work assumed that Boss' (2006) resiliency outcomes of making meaning, redefining relationships, and learning to live with unresolved grief were actually the X-Factor, because they represented outcomes of ongoing family interactions and processes.

When families learned to live with unresolved grief, they have accepted the ambiguous loss situation and learned to cope with unanswerable questions. Parents may have felt confused and uncertain about how to support their trans* youth, while youth may have felt uncertain about whether their parents would support them. In this study, trans* youth described situations with parents which went from torment to eventual reconciliation when there was a commitment to or a hope for connectedness again. Boss (2006) said, "When impossible hopes are turned into newly discovered opportunities, growth occurs." (p. 182). For instance, trans* youth have described connecting with family more authentically after working through physical and psychological breaks, which would suggest a positive adaptation after a period of disequilibrium.

While positive adaptation could be successful family reunification, positive adaptation could also be accepting the situation for what it was -- ambiguous. When trans* youth break from their families they could normalize or resolve ambivalence, uncertainty, or grief by accepting the ambiguous nature of the loss. For instance, trans* youth described accepting ambiguous relationship with their parents because it was better than total rejection. Accepting ambiguity afforded them time to work through family conflict. In this respect, ambiguous loss was less stressful than total loss. Additionally, some trans* youth accepted the loss of their family, without reserving hope for reunification. Boss (2006) stated, "Remaining resilient is not always desirable, especially if it is always the same persons who are expected to bend" (p.58). That is, sometimes the resilient action is to stop hoping for family reunification and to move forward without family connectedness. For trans* youth who were psychologically or physically abused by parents because of stigmatization and transphobia, escaping the abusive conditions was necessary, even though it eroded family connectedness. Therefore, sometimes ambiguous loss outcomes represented positive or negative adaptation among transfamilies.

The framework, thus far, has established how Boss' (1991; 2002; 2006; 1999; 1977) scholarship maps on to Hill's (1958) ABC-X model as a means of organizing Boss' (1991; 2006) ambiguous loss and resiliency concepts, respectively, as well as Boss and Greenberg's (1984) concept of family boundary ambiguity. This framework theorized that parents' responses to gender-variance represented an ambiguous and stressful event for trans* youth. Trans* youth interpreted parents' reactions which represented trans* youth's perception of the event. Based on Boss' (2006) resiliency

constructs, this work assumed that parent-child relationship outcomes could include, lasting family breaks, and positive adaptation in the form of accepting the ambiguous loss or reconciliation. Boss' theorizing satisfied every aspect of the ABC-X except the B factor which represented family assets to respond to stress. While Boss (2006) does address family assets, this work was not focused on family assets to respond to stress. The focus of this project was an examination of trans* youth's assets to respond to the stress of changing parent-child relationships. A family stress theory was not suitable to examine individual resiliency, thus self-determination theory was used to frame trans* youth's agency.

Ambiguous Loss and Self-Determination

In this section, ambiguous loss theory (Boss, 1991) and self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000b) conceptually frame how transgender youth respond to ambiguous loss of interpersonal relationships with parents. Self-determination theory framed family conflict to show how conflict regarding gender nonconformity sets the stage for feelings of ambiguous loss and subsequent feelings of uncertainty regarding family membership. Second, self-determination theory provided a lens for viewing trans* youth's responses to ambiguous loss as a stressor event, to show agency and the bidirectional nature of parent-child relationships. Three central premises were used from self-determination theory in this study: psychological needs, varying social contexts, and how psychological needs and social contexts impact motivation and goal pursuit.

According to self-determination theory, three psychological needs are essential components for positive psychological and interpersonal functioning: autonomy, relatedness, and competence (La Guardia & Patrick, 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2000b).

According to self-determination theory, autonomy is defined as volition, or the active endorsement of ones' will, and relatedness is the need to belong and the tendency to form stable interpersonal relationships (Ryan and Deci, 2000b). Because competence is often achieved outside of the family, this analysis only addressed the constructs of autonomy and relatedness.

Scholars have used self-determination theory to frame how interpersonal relationships create social contexts that support or thwart successful fulfillment of the need for autonomy and relatedness (La Guardia & Patrick, 2008; Legate et al., 2012). For instance, within parent-child relationships, parents create a supportive social context for their youth when they allow autonomy and act as encouraging agents to developing youth. However, when parents are overly controlling, they create a social context that thwarts the expression of autonomy (Gaine & La Guardia, 2009). Additionally, autonomy and relatedness are directly related, suggesting that thwarting autonomy would negatively impact relatedness and vice versa. This is because controlling social contexts foils autonomy and fosters feelings of frustration and mistrust toward the person who is obstructing autonomy fulfillment (La Guardia & Patrick, 2008).

This work assumed that in controlling environments parents pressured trans* youth to conform to expectations about gender expression and sexuality and in doing so parents taught trans* youth to feel fear and shame regarding their gender expression, which motivated them to either suppress or conceal their authentic gender expression or to “act insubordinate” and embrace their authentic gender expression. Thus, family conflict occurs within controlling social contexts because contradictory goals between parents and trans* youth leave youth feeling unable to enact self-determination. That is,

youth want to authentically express their gender and establish autonomy, while parents see gender nonconformity as disobedient, risky, and confusing. Due to societal norms regarding gender, parents often feel compelled to socialize youth into more generally accepted forms of gender expression. However, not all parents feel compelled to socialize youth away from gender nonconformity. Some parents of trans* youth create an autonomy supportive context, which encourages connection and intimacy between parents and trans* youth.

Legate et al. (2012) suggested interpersonal acceptance of authentic self-expression characterizes autonomy-supportive environments. Within self-determination theory, social contexts and psychological need fulfillment affect motivation insofar as people are motivated differently according to the extent people feel their actions are controlled or autonomous. Smits et al. (2010) suggested, “Autonomy supportive parenting is positively related to autonomous motives and negatively to controlled motives” (p. 1343). For example, if parents support exploration of gender, youth feel freer to make their own decisions concerning how they identify. Youth may decide to conform to gender expectations. However, their action is motivated by autonomous decision-making, thus youth’s psychological needs for autonomy and relatedness are fulfilled. Conversely, if parents control gender expression, youth may feel motivated to align their gender identity with parents’ wishes. As a result, youth may be left feeling their psychological needs for autonomy and/or relatedness were not met. Family conflict occurs most often within controlling social contexts because parents and trans* youth are motivated towards goals that are directly oppositional.

Socialization and the bidirectional nature of parent-child relationships.

Gender socialization is a primary family task for parents (Patterson, 2002), while establishing autonomy is a salient developmental task for youth (Eccles et al., 1993; Gutman & Eccles, 2007). During the adolescent stage of autonomy exploration, parent-child relationships move away from an asymmetrical model, in which parents primarily have power and control over youth, to youth becoming more responsible for their own lives (Gutman & Eccles, 2007). Although researchers view stress associated with launching or youth development toward independence as normative (Boss & Greenberg, 1984; Hill, 1958), stigmatization and deviance associated with gender nonconformity (Lombardi et al., 2001) exacerbates family stress related to launching and autonomous identity development. Therefore, family stress related to youth development happens not because of the launching process, rather, society views gender in rigid binary terms and parents, as socializing agents, often uphold these societal views creating conflict.

West and Zimmerman (1987) explained how gender is an important aspect of functioning society; “[Society] conceives of gender as an emergent feature of social situations: both as an outcome of and a rationale for various social arrangements and as a means of legitimating one of the more fundamental divisions of society.” Therefore, when youth are not adhering to the ways in which gender organizes society, society may view parents as flawed or failing in some fundamental way. Additionally, parents may fear for their child’s safety due to social stigmatization and transphobia (Koken et al., 2009). Trans* youth’s gender variance may have elicited parental behaviors that attempted to socialize and normalize gender, in turn, youth responded to parental attempts to normalize gender.

Pardini (2008) conceptualized parenting as a bidirectional relationship, in which parents influence their children, and children influence the parenting they receive. Therefore, while one function of parenting is to socialize children (Patterson, 2002), Pardini (2008) recognized “that children also play an active role in influencing their social environments” (p. 627). When children act in a certain manner they may elicit a certain type of parenting response intended to either support youth or redirect unwanted behavior. Parents may redirect gender nonconforming behaviors as a means of teaching youth how to successfully interact in the social world. For example, Rahilly (2014) found parental practices of gender hedging, which represent parents’ efforts to build boundaries around when, where, and how much youth could express gender nonconformity. This framework suggested that because of cisnormativity, parents attempted to normalize gender through gender socialization, actions that trans* youth may have perceived as rejection of identity. As such, transgender youth responded according to how they perceived the situation and their goals in terms of transitioning gender identity and connectedness to their family of origin.

An assumption of self-determination theory suggests that fulfillment of psychological needs is contingent upon various regulatory processes underlying different goal pursuits (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In a conflict with parents, values, goals, and social contexts motivate trans* youth differently. For example, the need for autonomy may have motivated some trans* youth to pursue authentic gender expression, while the need for family connectedness may have motivated others to hide gender nonconformity. Conflict arose from discrepant views about appropriate gender expression; where one party valued autonomous identity exploration and the other party valued conformity to social norms.

Trans* youth's approaches to conflict resolution were goal directed tendencies.

During conflict,

The evaluation and regulation of social relationships is always present in arguments. An arguer may believe that maintaining a relationship with an opponent is more important than [their] own stance. If so, the arguer may discontinue or abort the argument. When the reverse is true and the relationship is less important than the stance, the arguer may disregard the logic or rationale of anything that is said during an interchange with the opponent (Stein & Albro, 2001).

For example, someone may discontinue an argument to maintain mutuality, but in doing so, sacrifice autonomy. Conversely, standing one's ground is a technique used to attain autonomy that may have the consequence of ending a relationship. Self-determination theory helped to frame trans* youth's motivations during interpersonal conflict based on personal goals for mutuality, autonomy and relatedness, within social contexts that were autonomous supportive or controlling.

Social contexts and motivation. Self-determination theory concerns itself with types of motivation or underlying goals that give rise to action (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000b). Ryan and Deci (2000a) conceptualized two distinct types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic. The inherent tendency towards challenges, discovery, and exploration characterized intrinsic motivation. For intrinsically motivated action, the outcome is inseparable from the action. For instance, practicing the violin is its own reward because it is challenging yet enjoyable. In contrast, Ryan and Deci (2000a) explain, "extrinsic motivation refers to doing something because it leads to a separable

outcome” (p. 55). In the case of extrinsic motivation, practicing the violin was a means to getting a treat at the store. The reward was separate from the action. Ryan and Deci (2000a) further conceptualized four different types of extrinsic motivation: external regulation, introjection, identification, and integration.

Extrinsic motivation, within self-determination theory, varies based on the extent to which action is autonomous. For example, consider two cases of extrinsic motivation, one in which a student does homework to avoid punishment from parents, and one in which a student does homework because they see future value in terms of career placement. Both examples involve instrumental value, however the former involves compliance to external control, whereas the latter involves the feeling of choice (Ryan & Deci, 2000b).

Ryan and Deci (2000b) conceptualized actions that were extrinsically motivated by avoiding punishment or receiving rewards as *introjected regulation* and an internalized sense of value as *integrated regulation*. Introjected regulation was associated with controlling contexts because parents coerced action, to some degree, by either positive or negative outcomes. Integrated regulation was associated with autonomous parenting because youth internalized the value of an action, thus the action was viewed as volitional (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000a). For example, when trans* youth concealed gender nonconformity because they feared parental rejection, Ryan and Deci (2000b) would argue introjected regulation motivated them to avoid punishment. Moreover, integrated regulation could motivate a transman to compromise and wear feminine clothing for a family holiday, because he has internalized the value of temporary family cohesion. The first example of extrinsic motivation represents highly

controlled extrinsic motivation while the latter represents relatively autonomous extrinsic motivation.

Parental reactions to gender-variance signaled the extent to which parents were enacting control over youth. For example, parents could have rejected gender nonconformity in a number of ways including threatening to punish gender nonconformity, positively reinforcing gender conformity, or ignoring gender nonconformity. Youth could have responded to parental control in a number of ways as well. Trans* youth could have disregarded parental control or they might have acted “in accordance with their parental norms out of fear {of} being criticized... to avoid punishment” (Smits et al., 2010, p 1343) or to receive praise.

Conceptualizing transgender youth’s self-determination. During times of stress and interpersonal conflict, transgender youth’s motivation to act was contingent on varying social contexts and priorities concerning psychological need fulfillment. Self-determination theory posits that people who perceive their psychological needs as met, trend toward compromising (Neff & Harter, 2003; Yarnell & Neff, 2013). This study labeled the tendency towards mutuality *mutual-compromising tendencies*. Additionally, because Ryan and Deci (2000b) conceptualized extrinsic motivation according to varying degrees of autonomy, it is possible to compromise to avoid parental rejection. Mutual-compromising tendencies can encompass examples of both positive interpersonal outcomes and ambiguous loss outcomes. In addition to mutual-compromising tendencies, Yarnell & Neff (2013) conceptualized two other response tendencies pertinent to this study.

Self-prioritizing and self-subordinating tendencies reflect a thwarted psychological need (Yarnell & Neff, 2013) and the tendency to overemphasize the need that is missing (Deci & Ryan, 2000). For example, when trans* youth were not allowed the opportunity to explore their authentic gender expression, they may have perceived that their parents derailed the need for autonomy because parents were acting as a barrier to youth's volitional exploration of a trans* identity. Overemphasis on autonomy may result in trans* youth prioritizing the fulfillment of autonomy through establishing a salient trans* identity at the expense of family relatedness, referred to as *self-prioritizing tendencies*. Conversely, trans* youth who felt extremely connected to family may have overemphasized relatedness, resulting in prioritizing the needs of family at the expense of authentic gender expression, referred to as *self-subordinating tendencies* (Neff & Harter, 2003; Yarnell & Neff, 2013).

In this section, ambiguous loss theory and self-determination theory framed how stress associated with parental reactions to gender-variance contributed to feelings of ambiguous loss in the form of physical and psychological family breaks. Self-determination theory provided a framework to understand family conflict based on contradictory goal pursuits between parents and youth. Given cisnormative ideology, parents' goal of normalized socialization motivated them to exert control over youth, which thwarted youth's sense of autonomy. Furthermore, when parents did not allow transgender youth to authentically express gender nonconformity, conflict impinged family relatedness. Thwarted family relatedness can be experienced as family breaks in the form of physical and psychological ambiguous losses or as a positive adaptation which preserved parent-child relationships. Finally, this section considered trans* youth's

agency, within parent-child relationships. Though trans* youth arguably had less power, parents and youth both played an active role in shaping parent-child relationship outcomes.

CHAPTER FOUR

Methods

Participants

Ninety transgender identified adolescent participants were recruited through queer youth community centers and online, from eight different cities, in three countries.

Assigned sexes, that is the sex that was recorded on the birth certificate, were reported to be 42.2% male and 57.8% female. Participants self-identified in three primary gender categories: transwomen (M-F; 37%), transmen (F-M; 31%), or third gender (32%) (*See Table 1*). Third gender refers to individuals who do not identify as male or female, and consolidates a variety of identities such as non-binary or gender fluid. Although not mutually exclusive with transmen, transwomen, and third gender categories, some also described a genderqueer expression ($n = 47$), as a way of distancing from conventional gender categories, roles and expressions. Most of those were assigned a female sex at birth ($n = 37$).

When asked to identify sexual orientation and predominant attractions, participants generated 25 unique labels, while eight participants declined to label themselves, but gave information about predominant sexual attractions. Labels were collapsed and information about primary sexual attractions was incorporated to identify the following general sexual orientation clusters: mostly heterosexual/ straight ($n = 20$), gay or lesbian ($n = 17$) bisexual ($n = 6$) Queer ($n = 29$) pansexual/ fluid ($n = 15$), and asexual ($n = 3$) (McGuire, Doty, Catalpa, & Ola, in press).

Efforts were made to incorporate representation of all major subgroups with the aim of diversifying the sample as much as possible. The participant pool ranged from

individuals in their adolescence to early adulthood, with recruiting limited to ages 15 through 26. Researchers included two older (age 29 and 30) transwomen, they were the only transwomen who had received hormonal and /or surgical medical intervention within a specific (non-U.S.) cultural category. About half of participants (48%) were between the ages of 20-23, whereas 25% were under age 20, and the remaining 27% were over 24 ($M = 21.56$; $SD = 2.9$). Participants came from a variety of family educational backgrounds; 10% reported their parents had a high school education or less, 43% reported at least one parent had some college or a college degree, and 12% reported their parents had more than a college degree. The remaining participants did not know ($n = 8$), or chose not to answer ($n = 22$). Among participants, 21% had some high school, 18% graduated high school, 36% had some college, and 24% graduated college.

The participants were ethnically diverse: 11% Irish, 4% Canadian, 48% U.S. Caucasian, 12% Latino/Hispanic, 10% African American, 7% American Indian, 5% Pacific Islander/Asian, and 5% another ethnic/racial background. Ethnically diverse participants were recruited proportionately to the cities where data was collected by recruiting through interest groups that serve specific populations.

Procedures

Sampling. Purposive sampling was used to ensure participants in the study matched specific criteria -- young adults who self-identified as transgender or genderqueer. Participants were recruited primarily from sexual and gender minority focused community centers and via online listserv distribution by community centers and a study website. Researchers contacted youth centers in cities that specifically provided at least weekly services catering to transgender youth. They coordinated with the youth

center to come to the city for a several (3-8) day period to recruit and interview at the youth center. Emails were also sent to community centers who redistributed them via their own online community center listservs by staff in each city to help reach potential participants. Finally, informal recruitment also took place by posting fliers in additional spaces, such as homeless shelters, youth hangout spots, medical facilities, and other youth organizations to arrive at the final sample of 90 participants.

Ethical considerations. Approval from the Washington State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) was obtained prior to conducting interviews. There were no signatures collected from participants in order to protect the safety and identity of the participants. Instead, participants were verbally guided through assent procedures and given a signed document from the researcher indicating the nature of the study and their rights as participants. The study did not require the consent of parents because potential harm could befall the participants if they had to disclose their transgender identity in order to gain parental consent. Pseudonyms were taken, instead of names, to protect participants' privacy and identity during and after the interview. The primary investigator (PI) and two graduate students, who first observed three interviews with the PI, led interviews with student note-takers present as well. Participants from US were paid 20 US dollars, Canadian participants were paid 20 Canadian dollars, and Irish participants were paid 15 Euros to compensate their time and inconvenience.

Interviewing and transcribing. Interviews were conducted between May 2010 and April 2013 in the following cities: Pullman, WA; Seattle, WA; Olympia, WA; Salt Lake City, UT; Tucson, AZ; Minneapolis, MN; Portland, OR; Atlanta, GA; Montreal QC; and Dublin, IRL. These locations were strategically selected because they had active

LGBTQ drop-in centers, and researchers had access to the target population within these cities. The semi-structured qualitative interviews lasted 1-3 hours and consisted of fourteen sections of potential importance to understanding trans* adolescents' lives.

Interviews were largely conducted in private rooms at youth community centers. In some cases participants preferred to schedule alternative locations like a coffee shop, library, or their home. Seven were conducted via telephone or skype when an in-person meeting could not be arranged. All interviews were voice recorded, although some voice recordings were corrupted and not able to be transcribed ($n = 6$). In these instances, interviewers had taken copious notes, which were used for analyses.

The interviewer team consisted of seven people. The lead interviewers were two queer, white, cisgender females (one faculty, and one graduate student). Research assistants included three white cisgender females, one African-American cisgender female, and one white transman. The research assistants had a mix of sexual orientations including heterosexual, queer and bisexual. Two of the assistants were graduate students, the rest were undergraduates. Two interviewers (at least one graduate student or faculty member) were present throughout each interview: one took notes regarding responses to questions, facial expressions, movement, laughing, crying, and outside noises, and the second conducted the interviews. Seven interviews were conducted without one of the lead white, queer, female interviewers (but still had a graduate student present). All research assistants completed an interview training protocol and a series of joint interviews prior to leading an interview (McGuire et al., in press).

I entered the research team after all the data had been collected and partially analyzed for general meaning. I identify as a genderqueer queer and I assumed a

bifurcated insider/outsider status throughout the entire data analysis process. My presence as a researcher functioned in relationship to the stories I was analyzing. My method of interpretation, based on my biographical history, influenced what I saw in the research and was a reflection of my positionality as genderqueer person who had experienced the ambiguous loss of family. On one hand, I see my insider status as valuable to strengthening and informing the academic perspective (Ferguson, 2013), yet the indelible mark left by my influence as the researcher, interpreter, and cultural member cannot be dismissed or overlooked. The following analyses reflect a level of sensitivity which is directly linked to the interplay between my personal standpoint and the participants' voices.

Interviewees were asked questions relevant in the following categories: (1) development and status of gender identity; (2) family relationships; (3) peer relationships; (4) religion; (5) body art; (6) desire for children; (7) body image; (8) internalizing risk behavior; (9) externalizing risk behavior; (10) sexual history; (11) queer community connection; (12) homelessness; (13) academic achievement; and (14) discrimination and harassment. Interviewers, in most cases, were able to get through questions in each topic area. However, interviewees were encouraged to share their stories, as they deemed relevant. As participants shared their personal narratives, additional questions were asked that were not predetermined in the interviewer guide. These questions were asked to clarify meaning and draw out information regarding personal feelings and reactions associated with narratives. Not all sections were used in the construction of this study.

Voice files, interview notes, interview transcripts, and excel coding sheets were stored on a secure shared network drive. Pseudonyms, location, and participation

numbers were the only source of information used to identify participants and organize their stories. Interviewers and graduate and undergraduate students transcribed the data verbatim, including sounds and pauses, from voice recordings, notes, and memos of the interview process. A second reader verified the voice files were transcribed accurately and reviewed transcripts for errors and completeness. In quoting people for this study, researchers omitted most “mm’s, uh’s, er’s and other nonlexical sounds... and many instances of words and phrases such as ‘like’, ‘okay’, ‘you know’, ‘I mean’ and ‘whatever’” (Rosenblatt & Wallace, 2005). Through the process of cleaning up the quotes for meaning, interpretive, and visual purposes, researchers also deleted restarts and repetition of the same word, phrase, or sentence.

Measures. While entire transcripts were coded, this study primarily used data found in the family relationships and developmental sections of the interview (see *Appendix A*). Questions in the developmental section often solicited responses describing participants’ coming out stories or instances when parents noticed gender-variance for the first time. For instance, interviewers asked, “When you realized that you were transgender/genderqueer: who did you tell first? How did that person respond?” “Did your parents ever try and alter your gender expression?”

In the family relationships section, questions addressed the participants’ perceived relationships with their parents, extended family, and siblings (see *Appendix A*). For instance, interviewers asked questions about conflict, closeness, warmth, and various types of support (i.e. financial, general, and trans*). In some transcripts participants described experiences of homelessness and discrimination because of parental rejection.

These questions were also incorporated into this study because they contributed to data regarding psychological and physical breaks with parents.

Data Analysis Plan

Data were analyzed qualitatively using ethnographic content analysis. Sociologist Altheide (1987) created ethnographic content analysis (ECA) to emphasize the similarity and individual strengths of ethnography and content analysis. Both methods highlight the importance of discovering meaning from cultural activities, as well as examining contexts, patterns, and processes (Altheide, 2004). ECA was selected as a method to work with numerical and narrative data, both of which provided rich information for discovery. Because ECA was developed out of two distinctive methods, content analysis and ethnography, they will be explained to examine the tools garnered from both for this study.

Content analysis is a “set of procedures to code categories systematically with reliability checks to analyze, validate and report the results” (Smith, Sells, & Clevenger, 1994). Content analysis provides a coding strategy that allows words, sentences, or paragraphs of a text to be classified into categories wherein frequencies are calculated and reported. Categories provide structure for grouping into conceptual meaning units, the conceptual meaning units allow for quantifying latent characteristics (Altheide, 1987; Rubin & Babbie, 2013; Weber, 1990). In content analysis, a central idea is that meaning takes up space. When latent characteristics are quantified, their frequencies provide a basis for understanding the importance and meaning of a variety of messages found in the text (Altheide, 1987). The quantitative importance placed on content analysis’ coding procedures allows for systematic category development, however, content analysis does

not allow for detailed syntactic or semantic information (Weber 1990). Ethnography domain analysis allows for analytical constructs to develop from interpretation of narrative information found within transcripts (Smith et al., 1994).

Ethnography refers to the study of the social behaviors of an identifiable group of people, whereby researchers look for patterns of social organization and social ideations (Creswell, 2013). Altheide (1987) stated “The subject matter- human beings engaged in meaningful behavior- guide the mode of inquiry and orientation of the investigator” (p. 66). Ethnographic studies are discovery oriented, meant to generate descriptive categories and theoretical concepts. Data analysis is based on open-ended exploratory interview narratives, which are coded into significant phrases based on semantic relationships. The phrases are utilized to construct a list of domains. Constant comparisons among domains allows for categories to emerge, domains to be subsumed into more inclusive domains, and the ability to confront similarities, differences and consistency. Taking the best of both methods gives rise to what Altheide (1987) coined as an ethnographic content analysis.

The goals of ECA are to document and understand the communication of meaning, verify theoretical relationships, allow for constant comparison and discovery, develop conceptual coding, and generate good descriptive information. Ethnographic studies are known for their high level of reflexivity (Plummer, 2001), which calls for an interaction between investigator, concept building, data analysis, data interpretation, and data collection (Altheide, 1987). ECA uses aspects of content analysis, where researchers will generate a list of codes based on theoretical understanding as well as aspects of ethnography, where researchers give regard to underlying meaning, which allows

categories to emerge from the data (Altheide, 1987; Smith et al., 1994). ECA is an iterative process of subjecting text to reliability tests and revising coding procedures as deemed necessary and appropriate.

The coding procedures used for this study draw from Altheide's (1996; 2004) ethnographic content analysis protocol, as well as constant comparative analysis techniques for refining data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Constant comparative analysis techniques were applied to this study because they aligned with ECA coding protocols related to comparing and contrasting categories to refine and create new categories as they emerge from data analysis. Hansen (2013) outlined the twelve ECA coding procedure steps as described in Altheide's (1996) work (*see table 2*). The following paragraphs describe how this study applied and integrated both Altheide's coding procedures, and Strauss and Corbin's (1990) constant comparative analysis techniques. Also, because this study used qualitative data analysis software, NVivo's capabilities are outlined to provide insight about data organization and how categories were constructed and coded within the software's parameters.

QSR NVivo and data organization. Due to the fact that the data had already been collected prior to this study, previous researchers completed the steps regarding data collection, sampling, and question construction. Lab partners in the Trans* Youth Study (TYS) established a research problem to pursue -- family breaks and resilience among transgender youth. They collectively generated a list of initial categories to code: identity, non-resilience, relationship breaks, and resilience (*see column one of Appendix B*). Initial codes were developed and organized based on Boss' (1991) ambiguous loss theory (e.g. physical and psychological breaks) and Masten's (2001) and Boss' (2006) work

pertaining to resilience. With these general categories, two lab partners familiarized themselves with the transcripts and generated some examples from youth's narratives. For instance, in one narrative, a youth said they felt good about their body image and had high self-esteem. This narrative was highlighted as an example of resilience. These narratives became the prototype for future coding.

Coders generated new nodes as they read transcripts and new ideas were revealed. Data were encoded in QSR International's NVivo 10 (for windows) where codes were electronically attached to transcripts without altering the data. NVivo allowed for a specific type of memoing, which attached descriptive properties to each new node created so coders could refer back to definitions for conceptual consistency. Additionally, when disagreements happened, memoing served as the basis for how to resolve discrepancies.

NVivo organized data into nodes called parent nodes, child nodes, and grandchild nodes etc. The parent node represents the overarching category to which the lower level child nodes are connected (*see table 3*). The child nodes represent refinement related to the overarching category. For example, in the parent node *psychological breaks* trans* youth described experiences of breaks with extended family, parents, and siblings. Because this work only dealt with parent-child relationships it was necessary to refine the data into more precise subcategories. Finally, grandchild and great grandchild nodes are the conceptual meaning units that make up subcategories and categories. For instance, in the category *alter gender expression* the conceptual meaning units represent all the ways trans* youth experienced their parents attempting to alter their gender expression, including negative and positive reinforcement, coercion, and normative socialization.

Therefore, meaning units are not new ideas they are precise examples of the conceptual label.

ECA coding procedure, reliability and validity. For reliability and validity checks, two lab partners each coded the same ten transcripts independently. Per the ECA data analysis plan, coders were given leniency to freely develop additional parent nodes, new child and grandchild nodes as latent characteristics emerged. After the first ten transcripts were completed, coders held a meeting to revise the protocol based on new ideas, categories, inconsistencies, and clarifications that arose in the initial coding.

Coders engaged in another round of coding trials, in which, the two coders implemented the revised coding procedure and independently open coded another five transcripts. Also, coders went back and revised the first ten transcripts with the new coding procedure in place. This involved making sure to capture references that would fit into the new nodes that were added after a transcript had been coded. Again, the coders discussed divergences and the addition or modification of parent, child and, grandchild nodes etc. As coders became more familiar with the flow of interviews and how sources were responding, the node list grew from the initial 4 nodes, to an abundance of interconnected conceptual categories (*see Appendix B*). Once coders developed a comprehensive list of categories that accounted for the majority of concepts found in the entire transcripts, coders set about open coding all 90 transcripts.

Reliability checks were absent from the steps outlined in the ECA coding steps (*see table 2*), however, reliability checks were incorporated to satisfy the need for academic rigor. Coders assessed reliability and validity and used that information to finalize the coding protocol. “Validity [was] supported by the use of examples from the

text itself to demonstrate claims, agreements between researchers... and high reliability of multiple coders” (Smith et al., 1994, p. 270). Coders would look at all the references found in a specific node and make sure each reference was a true example of the attached conceptual label. Reliability was assessed through a tool in NVivo that allowed coders to check inter-rater reliability through a coding comparison query. A coding comparison query compares coding done by two users and assesses the degree of agreement between those users. This is accomplished by assessing the Kappa coefficient, which is a statistical measure that takes into account the amount of agreement that could be expected to occur by chance (Lyn, 2005).

After coding comparisons, coders went through each node’s and each source’s Kappa coefficient. For each node that had a coefficient lower than .80, coders engaged in a discussion resolving disagreements and establishing a consensus for future coding. A coding comparison query was run for child and grandchild nodes in two of the four broad categories: relationships breaks pertaining to psychological and physical breaks with parents, and resilience pertaining to family social support. Coders independently coded an additional eight transcripts with the final coding protocol and comprehensive list of parent, child, grandchild and great-grandchild nodes. Coders checked inter-rater reliability again to assess the finalized coding protocol.

The final results of the weighted, by source size, inter-rater reliability analysis average for nodes were as follows: psychological breaks with parents Kappa = .84, physical breaks with parents Kappa = .90, and family social support resilience Kappa = .84. The results for all nodes across all sources in the coding comparison, weighting each source according to its size, was Kappa = .85. Acceptable reliability criteria are based on

Cohen's (1968) work, in which, coefficients above .60 demonstrate acceptable trustworthiness and credibility of findings. After coders finalized the coding process, they determined the data was accurate and reliable (for a more detailed view of how Kappas were calculated see *Appendix C*). Coders did not calculate Kappas for great-grandchild nodes.

Coders divided the remaining transcripts and open coded independently. Open coding involved reading one transcript at a time in its entirety, and coding all references within a transcript into corresponding conceptual nodes (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). For example, if a participant discussed abuse from parents, coders tagged all references to abuse in a single transcript under the great-grandchild node *abuse*.

Coders constantly compared and contrasted categories and discussed coding, especially pertaining to instances when interpretation was necessary to determine how to place certain narratives. For instance, sometimes participants contradicted themselves, which required coders to make a judgment call about how to code those narratives, often placing the reference in both categories. Also, in some instances, coders inadvertently placed data in a category that did not analytically make sense. Constant comparing and questioning of data allowed coders to locate and arrange data into appropriate classifications (Straus & Corbin, 1990; Altheide, 1987). When interpretation was necessary coders would go back to the theoretical underpinnings and the definition memoed in NVivo to interpret data. Additionally, coders created memos that showed each other interpretation was needed, called annotations. Coders addressed annotations on a regular basis.

After all the transcripts were open coded into broad categories (parent and child nodes), coding was analyzed again to further refine data. At this point, no new references were added, rather original references were reorganized to make sense of how categories were related to subcategories, conditions, contexts, strategies, and consequences (Straus & Corbin, 1990). Open coding generated references in the thousands, however, the coding protocol for ethnographic content analysis gave no basis for how to refine categories or organize data beyond the initial categorization of data into broad categories. Coders decided to further integrate the constant comparative method to analyze and refine broad categories (Straus and Corbin, 1990). For example, coders analyzed and refined the *psychological breaks* node into smaller more descriptive examples of a psychological break. There were 1077 references to psychological breaks across all participants in the study. Coders organized these references according to with whom the break occurred (e.g. parents, siblings, and extended family), and what behavior was the basis for the break (e.g. abuse, rejection, ambivalence, lack of intimacy etc.)

The same process took place for the parent nodes physical breaks and resilience, which had 444 and 4047 references, respectively. Within the node physical breaks with parents there were 372 references and within the node resilience due to family social support there were 879 references. Coders read and refined each reference into smaller conceptual meaning units, which described more precisely how physical breaks and resilience were experienced. The author of this study was primarily responsible for organizing references into smaller conceptual units, which is why Kappas for smaller meaning units was not calculated.

Validity and constant comparison guided the organizing of data. The lead coder discussed decisions about data organization with TYS lab members and exemplars were used to demonstrate trustworthiness (*see tables 5, 6 and 7*). It was during this organizing and refinement process that coders uncovered the category compromise-self. According to the ECA coding protocol the node *compromise-self* represented a curiosity that seemed connected to all other nodes.

Originally, coders placed compromise-self under psychological family breaks with parents. Participants described sacrificing gender nonconformity for the sake of their parents. One reoccurring example was participants' use of the phrase "put away" to reference suppressing gender nonconformity. Many of the participants lamented having to hide or curb gender nonconformity, and described feeling psychologically distanced from parents and from the person they wanted to be. However, looking through all the references within the compromise-self node, a range of experiences emerged. For example, one participant discussed the dilemma of being fearful of parental rejection if their trans* identity were to be expressed, while also experiencing severe depression associated with hiding their trans* identity. This dilemma led the participant to run away from home, which constituted a physical break with parents. Compromise-self appeared to be a central phenomenon to which other nodes stood in relation, which led to a final reorganization of data. Compromising-self became a parent node, and all references within this node were further refined to explain the various ways participants compromised or not (*see column three of Appendix B*).

A return to theory was necessary to understand how to proceed with the compromise-self phenomenon observed in the data. Self-determination theory emerged as

an effective theory to describe what coders viewed in the data. After reading all the references in the compromise-self node it became apparent that trans* youth were responding to their perception of parental reactions or actual parental reactions to the youth's trans* identity. Two questions arose to further refine data: did all trans* youth compromise gender nonconformity, and what conditions led trans* youth to compromise or not compromise? Coders created additional parent nodes based on these inquiries, *no compromise-self*, *alter gender expression* and *no alter gender expression* (see table 3).

Coders created the nodes *alter gender expression* and *no alter gender expression* as parental responses to gender -variance, in which, parents attempted to alter gender nonconformity or instances when parents allowed their youth to explore gender expression. The node *no compromise-self* was indicative of youth not compromising gender nonconformity, either because it was accepted (no alter) or because the parental attempts to alter gender nonconformity had failed. These nodes represented a bidirectional relationship between trans* youth and their parents, whereby attempts to alter gender expression or not were parental responses to gender-variance and compromise-self or not were youth's responses to parental responses. References in the compromise-self node were coded into new parent nodes labeled *self-subordinating tendencies*, *mutual compromising tendencies*, and *self-prioritizing tendencies* (see column 4 of Appendix B). The finalized nodes consisted of a range of refined ambiguous loss and resilience references and self-determination references.

CHAPTER FIVE

Findings

Transgender youth's narratives revealed complex parent-child relationships within the context of gender-variance. Trans* youth spoke of their relationships with parents as sources of conflict, ambiguity, and support. Participants described varied outcomes pertaining to their parent-child relationships, in which youth discussed relationships marked by closeness, loss, ambiguous loss and adaptation. Additionally, trans* youth addressed personal reactions to parental reactions to gender-variance, highlighting a bidirectional relationship, in which youth played an active role in influencing their environments.

Descriptive statistics provide information about how many participants disclosed their trans* identity to parents, how parents reacted to disclosure and childhood gender nonconformity, and how participants perceived their family relationships. The section on ambiguous loss and adaptation reveals how trans* youth experienced various types ambiguous losses, as well as, how some participants were able to accept and/or recover from ambiguous loss as well as how some used family boundary ambiguity as a resilient strategy to mitigate total loss of family. In response to ambiguous loss, analyses revealed that youth were agents unto themselves in attempts to reconcile their need for autonomous exploration of trans* identity and their need for family connectedness. Finally, narrative examples show trans* youth's reactions to parents in relation to varied parent-child relationship outcomes.

Descriptive Statistics

At the time of the interviews, youth were in various stages of identifying as trans*, ranging from non-disclosure of a trans* identity to fully transitioned, which indicated diverse parent-child relationships. Due to the reflective nature of the data participants' narratives fit into multiple coding categories, representing a multiplicity of experiences and changes in parent-child relationships over time. For example, participants varied in their disclosure of a trans* identity, the amount of time they identified as trans*, and the extent to which they openly discussed trans-related issues with different family members. Some participants engaged in many discussions with parents about trans*-related topics and some participants had never discussed gender. In order to accurately represent shifts in parent-child relationships throughout varying stages of identity development researchers coded participants simultaneously into multiple nodes. For example, a single participant might have experienced both acceptance from one parent and rejection from another. Likewise, another participant may have experienced acceptance and rejection from one parent at different times of development.

Disclosure of Trans* Identity to Family. The majority of participants had disclosed their transgender identity to at least some members of their family. Trans* youth were coded as “out” to family when at least one family member had explicit knowledge of youth’s decision to pursue a transgender or genderqueer identity, at the time of the interview. Eighty-four percent of the participants had disclosed to at least one parent ($n = 76$), 62% were out to at least one sibling ($n = 56$), and 60% were out to at least some members of their extended family ($n = 54$) (*see table 4*). At some point during youth’s trans* identity development, 30% of participants described concealing their gender identity by means of secrecy, lying, or cross-dressing in private ($n = 27$).

Parental Reactions. Researchers asked participants to describe how their parents reacted to trans* identity disclosure and to reflect on how their parents reacted to gender nonconformity in childhood. Parental reactions to trans* identity disclosure were organized into four response categories: positive, negative, ambiguous, and not out. Twenty-one percent of youth reported that their parents' initial response to trans* identity disclosure was positive ($n = 19$). Participants had varied criteria for good reactions. For instance, some participants said they perceived reactions as positive when parents researched or seemed interested in trans-related topics. Other participants said they experienced a positive reaction based on words of affirmation, love, and acceptance. Twenty-four percent of participants told researchers that they initially experienced negative reactions from parents citing that parents were unhappy, angry, or even hostile ($n = 22$). The majority of participants, 39%, described ambiguous reactions, in which, parents sent mixed messages of either positive and negative reactions or neutral reactions ($n = 35$). Finally, 16% of participants were not out to a parent and could not answer the interview question pertaining to parental responses.

Parental reactions to childhood gender nonconformity provided additional information about how youth experienced parental responses to gender-variance at a point in time when parents had no explicit knowledge of a trans* identity. Over half of the participants, 62%, said their parents tried to alter their gender expression at some point during their childhood or adolescence ($n = 56$), while the other 38% said parents never attempted to alter gender expression. The conceptual label "alter gender expression" reflected descriptions of feeling pressured to behave in ways that conformed to others' gender expectations. Researchers identified four styles of parental efforts to

alter gender expression: negative reinforcement ($n = 36$), normative socialization ($n = 24$), coercion ($n = 21$), and positive reinforcement ($n = 4$).

The majority of participants, 40%, described parents punishing them or engaging in negative reinforcement for not conforming to gender expectations. Participants described negative reinforcement as consequences to specific acts of gender nonconformity. For example, transfeminine youth may have been grounded for wearing make-up. Participants also described parental attempts to normalize gender expression, 27%, stating parents interacted with them according to assigned gender at birth as a way to dissuade a nonconforming gender expression. Additionally, 23% of the participants described their parents' coercive techniques to alter gender expression. For example, parents threatened to take away support, or verbally and physically abused youth. Participants described how parents controlled their actions by force, threat, and/or intimidation. Finally, a small percentage of participants, 6%, described experiencing positive reinforcement from their parents when their behavior or style of dress conformed to gender expectations. One participant explained that his mother was "very pleased" when he went to the shopping mall and bought feminine clothing.

Family Relationships. Researchers organized family relationships into three categories: family as a source of support, family as a source of stress, and limited or no contact with family. Categories were not mutually exclusive as some participants described parents as both supporting and stressful. Participants experienced two different types of support, financial support and trans* support. Participants who described their parents paying for housing, insurance, cell-phone, college, and other concrete resources were counted as receiving financial support from parents (39%, $n = 35$). Fifty-five

percent of participants described receiving some sort of trans* support from parents ($n = 50$). Participants described trans* support as parents showing understanding (36%, $n = 32$), inclusiveness (16%, $n = 14$), acceptance of trans* status (37%, $n = 33$), protectiveness (23%, $n = 21$), and respect (13%, $n = 12$). For example, one participant explained, “[My mom] got a load of books and videos and she watched them all. I think after that she became super mom, super supportive” (Nev, white, 29, M-F).

Participants also described varying behaviors that led them to feel stressed by family. Overall, 59% of the participants described at least one of the following behaviors which contributed to their sense that family was a source of stress ($n = 53$): disrespect (27%, $n = 24$), conflict (24%, $n = 22$), frustration (18%, $n = 16$) and, lack of intimacy (39%, $n = 35$). For example, multiple participants explained that they were stressed by parents’ refusal to use preferred gender pronouns or names. Finally, 43% of participants described a lasting relationship break with parents characterized by a prolonged lack of contact with parents, as a result of trans* or genderqueer identity ($n = 39$).

The descriptive statistics provide a good foundation for the remainder of the findings. First, it was important to make a distinction between parental reactions to trans* identity disclosure and parental reactions to childhood gender nonconformity. Participants’ narratives about ambiguous loss could be referring to feelings of perceived rejection associated with parental attempts to alter gender expression in early adolescence or participants could be referring to perceived rejection later in life when parents negatively responded to trans* identity disclosure. Descriptive statistics about parental responses highlight Ryan et al.’s (2010) findings which suggested that acceptance and rejection can happen concurrently, thus this study provides statistics about neutral or

ambiguous response to further analyze ambiguous loss outcomes. Finally, family relationship statistics begin to identify the complex perceptions youth had concerning parental responses. For instance, some trans* youth perceived ongoing parental responses to their transition as stressful or a stressor event, while others perceived parental reactions as supportive or immediately experienced crisis because parental responses resulted in little to no contact-- lasting physical breaks.

Ambiguous Loss and Adaptation

The majority of respondents described ambiguous loss outcomes marked by uncertainty about parental acceptance of a trans* identity, parent-child relationships, and membership in the family system. Narratives revealed that participants experienced two types of ambiguous losses: physical breaks, representing when trans* youth and parents were physically absent from but psychological present to one another, and psychological breaks, representing when trans* youth and parents were psychologically absent from while physically present with one another. Additionally, narratives revealed that while some parent-child relationships remained ambiguous and marked by loss, others had progressed towards resiliency. For this study, only breaks relating directly or indirectly to gender identity were counted as family breaks, meaning developmental tasks such as going to college or “launching” were not considered a family break.

Physical breaks. Findings revealed that 46% of participants had experienced physical breaks with parents ($n = 41$). Physical breaks varied depending on who initiated the break. Researchers found three sources of physical breaks and coded them based on who initiated the break: youth initiated leaving ($n = 28$), parent initiated break ($n = 17$), and breaks due to external circumstances ($n = 15$). Youth initiated physical breaks

included two meaning units: avoidance of family of origin ($n = 10$) and youth leaving the family of origin home ($n = 18$). For example, youth said things to the effect of: “we just stopped talking”, “I wouldn’t engage with them”, and “I told my mother it was best if I just leave”. These narratives showed that youth clearly took some sense of responsibility for disconnecting with parents, however, each example was a response to parents’ negativity towards gender identity.

Three examples of parent initiated breaks and two examples of external forces, which caused family breaks, emerged from the data. Parent initiated breaks consisted of times when parents either directly ($n = 13$) or indirectly ($n = 5$) kicked youth out of the family home or the family system, as well as times when parents withdrew financial or concrete support ($n = 10$). For example, one participant told interviewers, “They kicked me out. They didn’t want to keep up with the challenges” (Maggie, Other [self-ascribed label], 24, M-GQ). Finally, there were two scenarios participants described that led to a break as a result of external forces: child protective services removing youth from their family home ($n = 4$), and the death of a parent ($n = 11$). One participant said they experienced the death of their parent as a loss associated with gender because the parent had passed away before meeting the participants’ “transitioned [self]”.

Psychological breaks. A psychological break represented narratives about uncertainty, family stress, conflict, and relational rupture between trans* youth and their parents. Findings revealed 82% of participants experienced some form of a psychological break due to feelings of uncertainty, ambivalence, or emotional remoteness ($n = 74$). Similar to physical breaks, both parents and youth initiated psychological breaks. For example, Tobias explained, “I joined the wrong crowd in high school a little bit. I started

doing stupid things and [my parents] came down really hard on me” (white, 19, F-M). In this instance, Tobias assumed some responsibility of the parent-child relationship dynamic, however, Tobias later admitted to leaving the family home because their mother was “too controlling”. The complexity of Tobias’ experience showcases how psychological breaks and physical breaks can sometimes happen in tandem. The way Tobias was acting elicited control from parents, which, in turn, was the catalyst that caused Tobias to leave.

During the interview, many youth reflected on how they perceived parental responses to identity disclosure stating that parents were, “not supportive” and “really upset about my transition”. Seventy-four percent of participant’s narratives revealed a parent initiated psychological break ($n = 67$). We identified seven examples found in participants’ narratives about parent initiated psychological family breaks: parents’ unrealistic expectations ($n = 21$), displayed disappointment ($n = 8$), ignoring gender variance ($n = 27$), lack of intimacy ($n = 33$), displayed ambivalence ($n = 38$), withdrew emotional support ($n = 13$), and parental abuse ($n = 23$). For example, one participant described displayed ambivalence, stating, “It was really weird, because sometimes [my mom] would get upset about it and other times she would be oddly supportive” (River, white, 24, M-F).

In addition to parent initiated psychological family breaks, seventy-two percent of youth felt they had somehow initiated psychological breaks ($n = 58$) due to: youth acting insubordinate ($n = 23$), pulling away from the family origin ($n = 25$), growing resentful of parents ($n = 29$), perceptions of rejection ($n = 32$), and perceptions of disrespect ($n = 22$). For example, one participant said, “There was definitely the perception that [my parents]

would [cut me off], which led me to do some things that someone would do in preparation for being cut off or not being supported” (Jason, white, 23, M-GQ). Jason alludes to ruthless behavior towards his parents because of he perceived that he would be rejected. In another portion of the narrative, Jason admitted he “didn’t really care about other people or anything else”. These feelings led Jason to feel estranged from his mother, and to leave the family home. Despite the fact that the majority of participants experienced physical and psychological family breaks, some participants were able to recover from family stress and loss.

Adaption. Due to considerable variability in age and time since identity disclosure in this data set, it was important to also document trans* youth’s narratives about current family relationship statuses. At the time of interviews, youth were in various places along a continuum of family relationship repair, based on how long they had been out to parents, and the presence of personal and parental efforts to repair the relationship. Researchers identified two conceptual meaning units which accounted for variations in adaptation: tolerance for ambiguity, which represented instances when ambiguous loss was a positive adaptation and recovery, which represented parental efforts at acceptance and parent-child efforts at reconciliation (*see table 6*). Trans* youths narratives about their ability to live well despite ambiguity demonstrated an increased tolerance for ambiguity ($n = 34$) while restoration or improvement of parent-child relationships demonstrated recovery ($n = 56$).

Tolerance for ambiguity. Families that learned to tolerate ambiguity improved their capacity to live with ambiguous parent-child relationships, ambiguous loss, and/or feelings of ambivalence. Researchers coded *tolerance for ambiguity* according to

participants' stories about their ability living well despite the absence of closure or desirable outcomes. Two examples organized *tolerance for ambiguity*: hopefulness ($n = 12$), and normalize ambivalence ($n = 28$). *Hopefulness* represented narratives when youth described a positive expectancy. Participants maintained ambiguous relationships with their parents because it was better than no relationship at all and it afforded families time to adjust. Andrea's narrative highlights the essence of hopefulness, stating, "Personally I think my mother... even though we're pretty cold right now... she just needs time to adjust. I don't know if [she will adjust] soon or in several years, but I don't think either of us is gonna [sic] die anytime soon, so we got time" (Latina, 20, M-F). Without any sign of impatience, Andrea remained hopeful despite the absence of closure or absolute answers. She felt that one day her mother would eventually accept her trans* identity, demonstrating Andrea's willingness to give her mom time to adjust. The quote also shows Andrea's ability to normalize the fact that her mother needs time and their relationship would be imperfect for a while.

Researchers coded *normalizing ambivalence* for youth's stories about accepting the situation for what it was, either an ambiguous loss or an ambiguous relationship. For example, some participants reconciled the fact that they would never be connected to parents again, while others accepted that sometimes their parent-child relationships were both good and bad. However, trans* youth sometimes experienced desired outcomes, therefore the next subcategory accounts for those narratives.

Recovery. Recovery narratives demonstrated parent-child relationships that restored equilibrium after the adjustment period following parents' reactions to gender-variance and/or trans* identity disclosure. Researchers identified three types of recovery:

reconciliation ($n = 26$), attempted understanding ($n = 22$), and attempted acceptance ($n = 33$). For example, participants described their parents “coming around” to the idea of being trans*, while others described trying to regain relationships with parents because participants missed their family of origin. Additionally, participants often joyfully told interviewers that their parents were doing research, in an attempt to understand trans* issues. For instance, quite a few participants described happiness when their parents went to parents and friends of lesbian and gays (PFLAG) meetings because it showed that parents were trying to engage in their youth’s social network.

Ambiguous loss and adaptation outcomes captured various pathways trans* youth and parents adjusted their relationships in the context of gender-variance. As opposed to thinking solely about parental rejection related to gender nonconformity or trans* identity disclosure, this category showcased families’ ability to adapt to ambiguity and ambiguous loss. Furthermore, analyses revealed that reunification with family was not always the most desired option and ambiguous loss did not always negatively affect trans* youth. For example, there were instances when reunification led to further abuse, while ambiguous loss safeguarded youth against total loss of family.

Overall, the ambiguous loss and adaptation categories highlighted family processes marked by patterns of separateness, connectedness, conflict and adjustment to change. Additionally, analyses revealed transactional patterns in which parents responded to gender nonconformity and trans* identity disclosure and youth reacted to those parental reactions. The above narrative examples illustrated how feelings or perceptions of ambiguous loss --physical, and psychological breaks-- motivated trans* youth to act. Transactional patterns associated with parental responses to trans* youth and trans*

youth's reactions to parental responses demonstrated trans* youth's ability to enact resiliency and determine parent-child relationship outcomes.

Trans* Youth's Agency: Autonomy and Connection

Narratives revealed that there was considerable variability in how youth attempted to reconcile their drive for autonomy in developing their trans* identity, and their drive for connectedness with family. For instance, if parents rejected or attempted to alter gender nonconformity, youth made a decision whether to adhere to parental demands of gender conformity or disobey demands. Findings revealed three ways youth reacted to parents' responses to gender-variance: mutual-compromising tendencies, self-subordinating tendencies, and self-prioritizing tendencies (*see table 5*).

The subcategory mutual-compromising tendencies was created to capture instances when trans* youth described parent-child relationships as reciprocal. Meaning, parents and youth compromised and neither party got exactly what they wanted. For instance, one participant described wearing a dress to church to appease his mother, while his mother satisfied his needs by allowing him to wear shorts under the dress. Researchers coded participants' descriptions of submitting to parental demands for gender conformity as self-subordinating tendencies, whereas descriptions about disregarding parental demands for gender conformity represented self-prioritizing tendencies. Analyses of trans* youth's agency offer a glimpse into the variety of ways trans* youth responded to their parents' reactions.

Mutual-compromising tendencies. Some participants described their parent-child relationships as complimentary through explanations of mutual-compromising ($n = 61$). These participants explained that their parents accepted gender-variance even when

parental beliefs suggested that gender nonconformity was wrong. For example, Karina's narrative demonstrated parental compromise. She told interviewers her mother said, "You know what I think about this, but I love you. You are my child" (Latina, 20, M-F). In these instances, parents compromised some of their personal values to support their youth.

In addition to parental compromise, some participants explained they understood their parents' belief system and personally compromised some gender nonconformity to comply with familial beliefs. The mutual-compromising subcategory had three examples: acceptance, acquiescence, and avoidance. Acceptance illustrated parental acceptance of gender nonconformity ($n = 39$). Participants' narratives highlighted the parents that accepted gender-variance immediately. Additionally, narratives also demonstrated that other parents came around to accepting gender-variance because they feared losing their parent-child relationships. Both instances demonstrated acceptance, however, the second example would have been double coded into other categories such as reconciliation. Acquiescence demonstrated youth reluctantly giving in to parental requests for gender conformity ($n = 27$). For instance, some youth described parents continuing to use their given name at birth or using the wrong pronouns. Rather than speak up at the risk of creating conflict, youth compromised and let it happen. Finally, sometimes both youth and parents avoided talking about gender nonconformity because it was a point of contention ($n = 26$). Instead of arguing about gender, both ignored gender-variance and continued interacting as if nothing had changed.

Self-subordinating tendencies. The original node compromise-self was the basis for coding self-subordinating tendencies, in which gender nonconformity was

subordinated or sacrificed because parents and society rejected it. Conceptually, self-subordinated tendencies were attributed to youth endorsing parents' needs above personal needs, or concerning oneself with family connectedness over personal autonomy ($n = 41$). Self-subordinating tendencies had examples: constraint, suppressed, and hybridize identity.

Narratives revealed varying degrees of subordinating authentic gender identity. Some trans* youth internalized feelings of transphobia and these participants placed personal restrictions on expressing or embracing gender nonconformity. Researchers coded these narratives as *constraint*, characterized by restricting the natural inclination towards gender nonconformity and/or transitioning ($n = 20$). Suppression was an example of parents attempts to eliminate gender nonconformity or trans* identity ($n = 23$). Most of the coding for the suppressed node was found in narratives about parents' successful attempts to alter gender expression. Finally, narratives in which participants described instances where, even though gender nonconformity was suppressed by parents, they secretly engaged in authentic gender expression, which led to trans* youth living a dual life. Researchers termed these narratives *hybridized identity* due to trans* youth describing a slip identity ($n = 19$).

Self-prioritizing tendencies. The final subcategory of trans* youth's agency was self-prioritizing tendencies. Narratives in this subcategory were indicative of youth embracing gender-variance regardless of threat, punishment, or loss ($n = 63$). In contrast to self-subordinating tendencies, self-prioritizing tendencies were conceptually related to endorsing personal needs over parents' needs or prioritizing personal autonomy over family relatedness. Analyses revealed five examples of self-prioritizing tendencies:

standing one's ground ($n = 36$), forced independence ($n = 26$), leaving without goodbye ($n = 18$), dissolved relationships ($n = 29$), and turning point ($n = 17$).

The majority of participants in the self-prioritizing subcategory discussed a concept that coders labeled *standing one's ground*, which showcased participants who were resolute in their gender nonconformity. For instance, Raphael explained, “[My mom] would try to take me to the store to buy girls clothes... I just wouldn't wear them” (White, 19, F-M). Additionally, many participants discussed negative social and family reactions to coming out as trans*, but still pursued transition or gender queer identity development, despite the potential for negative consequences.

Forced independence, leaving without goodbye, and dissolved relationships were very similar to the physical and psychological breaks coding, however, breaks were conceptualized as relationship outcomes and these examples represent responses which sometimes led to parent-child relationship breaks and sometimes adaptation. For example, the node forced independence represented narratives wherein parents revoked general, emotional, and financial support, effectively forcing youth to live independently from the family system. Despite the high potential for relationship breaks, some participants described *forced independence* as “tough love” and harbored no resentment toward parents for making that decision.

The same held true for the leaving without goodbye and dissolved relationships examples. Leaving without goodbye was illustrative of youth who ran away or abruptly moved out of the family home. Sometimes leaving without goodbye did not inherently end the relationship. For example, Girlfriend explained how leaving helped, stating, “I think that the distance saved our relationship...things got better after I moved out”

(white/Irish, 30, M-F). In addition to leaving without saying goodbye, youth also dissolved relationships with parents after parents refused to accept gender nonconformity, or because youth perceived rejection, which led to hopelessness about parent-child connection. Jay explained, “I always anticipated losing my relationship with my dad, so I kind of just gave up on it at a certain point” (white, 24, F-M/GQ). Despite the positive outcome for Girlfriend, participants commonly associated both *leaving without goodbye* and *dissolved relationships* with physical and psychological breaks.

The final self-prioritizing example was labeled *turning point*, representing change, whereby participants initially tried to curb gender-variance, but then later embraced it. To illustrate, youth described trying to compromise or subordinate their variant gender expression, however, participants changed strategies when the other responses proved ineffective. Many of the *turning point* narratives highlighted hitting rock bottom -- when parent-child relationships reached a volatile level or youth were desperately depressed and resolved to make a change.

Analyses of trans* youth’s agency highlighted multiple strategies trans* youth used to enact personal control over their environments and parent-child relationships. Narratives revealed that youth did not simply answer to the whims of their parents, rather trans* youth actively negotiated their environments and parent-child relationships. For instance, trans* youth who valued family connectedness worked to try and reconcile autonomous gender exploration in a way that preserved family relatedness. In contrast, trans* youth who valued autonomous exploration of gender nonconformity worked to reconcile relatedness in a way that preserved authentic gender expression. It was not immediately evident how youth’s agency intersected with relationship outcomes. In order

to ascertain this information researchers performed a matrix coding query in NVivo to get a sense of the links between trans* youth's agency and various relationship outcomes (see table 8).

Links between Trans* Youth's Agency and Relationship Outcomes

Analyses of trans* youth's agency in relation to relationship outcomes revealed that regardless of youth's agency, relationship outcomes varied. For instance, participants referred to mutual-compromising tendencies regarding concessions youth were willing to make for family cohesion, yet despite delaying or not pursuing trans* identity, some youth still experienced physical and psychological breaks, while other youth experienced the desired outcome of acceptance. The following sections used trans* narratives to demonstrate how trans* youth's agency intersected with a range of relationship outcomes (for additional exemplars see table 9)

Mutual-compromising tendencies and ambiguous relationship outcomes. The subcategory mutual-compromising tendencies (68%, $n = 61$) placed emphasis on mutuality and the capacity for each individual in the parent-child relationship to make concessions that were less than desirable to maintain family cohesion. For example, the following participant described how each member in the family conceded something:

I suppose...that they kind of let me dress in the house which is really good. It creates a bit of awkwardness with my dad and I don't go too crazy because of that. I really love my dad, I don't like causing...I don't purposely push things too far basically. Cause I know it does make him uncomfortable (Nev, white/Irish, 25, M-F).

For Nev, the family allowing her to dress femininely in the house, despite it making her father uncomfortable, combined with her decision to not push the boundaries exemplifies the tendency for both parties to make a personal compromise for family connectedness. Further analysis of mutual compromising reveals how parental acceptance ($n = 26$), youth acquiescence ($n = 27$), and avoidance ($n = 26$) intersect with varied relationship outcomes.

Parental Acceptance. Parental acceptance represented when parents were receptive of gender nonconformity and allowed youth to continue to explore authentic gender expression. Also, acceptance demonstrated parents' willingness to compromise their own beliefs to allow youth to live authentically. For example, some participants described instances when conservative parents chose family connectedness over anti-transgender values. Jason explained, "My parents...they don't agree with my lifestyle. But, we have all voiced our opinions and we have all talked through everything and...things are great now. I mean, they come to PFLAG with me" (white, 23, M-GQ). Jason's narrative represented family adaptation because his parents were willing to compromise personal and family values to support him.

Sometimes participants experienced some form of parental acceptance but also dealt with some sense of loss. For instance, Aiden described his mother coming around to being supportive but passing away, saying:

"She wasn't really a big supporter on it but over time she actually became more supportive. Now... it's...she can't...I mean she can support from wherever she is right now. She passed away a couple months ago but she was working on it, she

was working on being more supportive on it” (Aiden, Native American/White, 19, F-M/GQ).

A similar narrative was described by Shanese whose mother also passed away prior to her coming out as trans*. She told interviewers, “[My mom] asked me, ‘were you playing with makeup?’...I was just like, ‘no’... I think she assumed cause [sic] she started pushing me around my cousin Dominique [who was gay and feminine]” (African American, 22, M-F). Both participants’ narratives described beliefs that, eventually, their mothers would have been accepting. However, they would never have the opportunity to know for sure. Aiden and Shanese kept hope alive through keeping their mothers’ memories psychologically present, even though they were physically no longer present.

Narratives of acceptance highlighted compromise on behalf of parents who sought to understand their youth. Jason’s family reevaluated the family’s beliefs after becoming aware of how those values negatively affected Jason. Similarly, Shanese and Aiden felt that their mothers would have eventually accepted their gender nonconformity. Part of their sense of loss was the fact that they would never experience that acceptance, despite feeling it was a distinct possibility. While acceptance commonly represented compromise on behalf of parents, *acquiescence* captured youth’s compromise

Youth’s Acquiescence. Acquiescence represented trans* youth’s reluctant compliance to parental demands for gender conformity. Compliance was achieved through silence or omission of true desires. Acquiescence narratives frequently intersected with narratives of psychological family breaks because secrecy and feelings of inauthenticity left youth feeling disconnected from their identity and their family of

origin. For instance, Allen described the process of acquiescence related to wearing gendered clothing, which felt inauthentic:

I mean generally speaking they usually won, especially when I was younger. I mean I didn't buy, so I didn't get much of a say. It was never frilly, it was never bad. It was just never what I wanted. Um, so the outcome was actually that I don't think anybody was ever happy with it because it was never what they wanted and it never what I wanted ([no ethnicity information provided], 24, F-M/GQ).

Allen's narrative showed how he usually compromised because of his subordinate position to parents. Allen and his parents tried to find a middle ground in which clothing was neither masculine nor feminine and family conflict was avoided. While the above example showed both parties compromising their gender expectations, many participants described giving in to gender conformity without much protest, even though during the interview process participants revealed their true feelings. To illustrate, Elliot told interviewers about parental attempts to feminize gender expression. Elliot said:

When I was younger, my mom would try to get me to wear make-up. She did it once or twice. Things like... They wouldn't let me wear pants with dresses. When we went to church, I had to wear a dress. I hated it at that point. Oh and they wanted me to get my ears pierced, so that I would look more feminine. Things like that... (White, 17, F-GQ)

Elliot described giving in to their mother's demands without much protest. Similarly, other participants described giving into parents' demands despite being unhappy. Turbo explained, "When I was little, [my mom] would try to get me to buy dresses. She tried to

buy me dresses all the time, put my hair up. I have pictures where I'm like, I look miserable. I look like I hate it" (White, 21, F-GQ). Turbo and Elliot told interviewers they hated their parents' actions to curb gender nonconformity, however, absent from their narrative was either telling their parents that they were unhappy. Both participants went along with their parents' wishes which was characteristic of youth acquiescing to parents' demands.

In other narratives of acquiescence, participants pretended that parent-child relationships were good while in reality they harbored ill feelings towards family members. For example, Sam disliked zirs² mother so much that ze referred to her first name because ze lacked the emotional connection to her to call her mom. Sam described zirs relationship, explaining:

I'd say my relationship to my dad is warm, midway close, he's not a super important person in my life, but I love spending time with him and I know that I am important to him. And then Holly [Participants' mother], definitely not close. We tend to have...she got really good at faking it when I was little in terms of not having emotions or not showing emotions, rather, just going with what people wanted. That has maintained or become the status quo in our relationship, where I just pretend that everything is fine even when I'm super mad at her (White, 25, F-GQ).

² Gender neutral pronouns were sometimes used to refer to participants because during the interview participants indicated gender neutral pronouns were their preferred gender pronoun. Additionally, some participants indicated that their preferred gender pronoun was the singular they, therefore, instances where *they* was used grammatically incorrect it was done so out of respect for the participants' wishes.

Like others in the interview, Sam “played along” with the image family created regarding family connectedness. Sam was physically present with zirs family, though psychologically, ze retreated, which resulted in broken lines of communication.

Acquiescence narratives highlighted participants’ reluctance to voice feelings of inauthenticity when parents requested gender conformity. Instead, youth silently accepted parental demands, and seethed internally. In retrospect, youth could tell interviewers how they felt about the situation, however, in the situation they complied. For instance, Sam’s example was demonstrative of inauthenticity. Despite the fact that Sam was frustrated with zirs mother, ze never let that show, resulting in the family perceiving there were no issues. This example shows the ambiguous boundary between reluctantly giving in to family’s demands and avoiding family conflict altogether.

Avoidance. Avoidance represented when parents and participants avoided the discussion of gender in order to maintain family cohesion. In this study, avoidance commonly intersected with psychological and physical breaks because avoidance eroded family communication and interaction. Participants and parents engaged in avoidant behavior while in the same family space, and in extended family contexts. Additionally, some participants described no longer living in the family home, but avoiding phone calls and family holidays or celebrations. For instance, Jay described hesitation to engage with extended family:

I would just get really mad and get like super frustrated and wouldn’t talk to [My mother] and when I would I’d be really snappy and then we’d get in big arguments and fights and disagreements. Actually it caused me not to go to like a lot of family events. I didn’t go to my cousins’ wedding or their baby shower

because everybody there was girly... So, it was like a big divider (White, 21, F-M).

Jay's story exemplified how conflict with parents created barriers to interpersonal family relationships, particularly with extended family. Family conflict impeded Jay's ability to identify and engage with cousins, especially in gender specific contexts, resulting in uncertainty about how to engage with extended family.

Avoidance also intersected with physical family breaks because avoidance often broke down lines of communication and family interaction, which left participants feeling disconnected from family membership. For example, one participant described trying to start the conversation with his mother about transitioning to male:

I just told her, cuz [sic] I added her back to my Facebook and all over my Facebook it has male and all that...I sent her a message and I told her and she didn't respond or anything. She added me, but she didn't...say anything (Raphael, White, 19, F-M).

Later in the interview Raphael revealed that the avoidance persisted in his relationship with both his mother and father stating, "Hey, like you're my mom. That's about it. We don't really talk that much or anything and my dad, he's just completely out of my life".

Finally, a small portion of participants described their parents avoiding the discussion of transitioning which seemed to maintain family cohesion:

I said I was wearing binding, she said she was fine with it. In regards to that they were okay but [smiling] ah.... I can't tell if they are supportive or not, because we don't talk about it that much...My mom will bring it up, every now and again.

And it's getting easier even though we hardly ever talk about it, so it's slow, but it's good. You know? (Clark Kent, Irish, 23, F-M).

Even though the family avoided discussing Clark Kent's transitioning process, his perception of the relationship was positive. His narrative demonstrated learning to live with ambiguity, because he did not push for a definitive answer of acceptance, rather, he remained open to the fact that the relationship was progressively getting better.

Avoidance emerged as a valuable technique for participants and parents for various reasons. For Clark Kent, avoidance allowed his family time to adjust without pressure, while for Jay, staying away from his family cost him some family relationships, yet it also prevented further damage because of the volatile manner with which he engaged with parents. Despite avoidance being a useful technique to retain hopefulness about family connectedness, physical and psychological breaks were common. The next section describes more instances where communication and self-expression were restricted.

Self-subordinating tendencies and ambiguous relationship outcomes. Self-subordinating tendencies were characteristic of prioritizing family needs over personal needs and well-being through subordinating personal desires for authentic gender expression (44%, $n = 41$). Participants frequently described self-subordinating tendencies within a controlling social context whereby parents attempted to alter gender expression. A few participants described that their parents were very abusive in response to gender nonconformity which taught participants to hide and suppress their gender identity to avoid abuse. Findings revealed three examples of self-subordinating tendencies. *Constraint* showed how participants placed their own restrictions on expressing gender

nonconformity ($n = 19$). *Suppression* narratives exhibited instances when participants were forced by parents to eliminate a variant gender expression ($n = 23$). Finally, *hybridized identity* represented participants living a dual life: one of gender conformity, and one of secret authentic gender expression ($n = 19$).

Constraint. Some youth placed value on family membership and family beliefs to such an extent they internally restricted their expression of gender nonconformity. One participant described this process as “putting it away”, Karina explained:

They were telling me I’m wrong, but at the youngest age, I could remember I just wasn’t comfortable being a boy. I was not a boy and its like, you know, I really believe in everybody here...so at that point it was really tough for me. It was tough for me and it was tough for my mom. So I just decided, ok I will put it away, I will put it away (Latina, 20, M-F).

Karina’s narrative about putting away gender nonconformity exemplified *constraint* because she posed personal limitations on her authentic gender identity due to her belief in the people that were telling her she was wrong. Karina also believed her decision to not express gender nonconformity was autonomous despite pressure from the outside to conform.

Similar to Karina’s story, other participants also enacted constraint. Dylan explained feeling disconnected from his trans* identity:

I spoke about it continuously from I would say two on. I was like, ‘I don’t want to wear these shirts. I don’t want to wear these dresses’ and stuff like that. As I got closer to, I would say, seventh grade, that’s when I started feeling a lot of pressure to like kind of conform and dress a certain way and do my hair a certain way. So I just

kind of stopped talking about it. I guess I have to go along with everyone else and do what they want me to do (Native American, 21, F-GQ).

The pressure to conform cost Dylan a sense of self that lasted until he moved to Oregon years later. Dylan told interviews, “Then I started kind of getting back in touch with that side of myself.” Dylan’s story illustrated how social contexts contribute to internal pressures to normalize gender identity development.

Participants who felt they had to constrain gender nonconformity and conform to gender expectations sometimes experienced positive adaptation. For example, Faceblur described, during her interview, a tedious process of trying to restrict gender nonconformity and coming out to her mother:

It hurts me to see my family disappointed at themselves. I mean, it’s so easy to be rebellious against your family if you hate them, but I don’t hate them. That makes things hard. And it’s even harder when they don’t hate you back, when they hate themselves. I would rather they curse me, throw things at me, disown me, I would be like, ‘well, that’s predictable’. I could deal with that. But to watch my family cry in shame and still extensively accept me... You know just because they want me to be happy (Pacific Islander, 26, M-F/GQ).

In this particular context, culture played a big role in Faceblur’s internal pressure to restrict her gender nonconformity. For example, in other parts of the interview she described coming out multiple times to family members mixed with holding back on transitioning to prevent shaming her family. Additionally, Faceblur’s story was coded in the suppressed subcategory because during the times that she was attempting to come out to family her mother “flat out refused” her transition.

Suppressed. *Suppression* narratives revealed highly controlled family environments, whereby parents attempted to alter childhood gender nonconformity and trans* identity development by means of negative reinforcement, coercion, abuse, and threats to disown youth. The suppression subcategory was conceptually very similar to acquiescence, however the discriminative factor was in parents' requests for gender conformity versus parents demanding it. Many responses indicated youth experienced psychological breaks related to family and trans* identity ambiguity. When youth conformed to parents' demands and subordinated their trans* identity some described trans* identity ambiguity and depression because of inauthenticity while other trans* youth described family membership ambiguity because they lived in fear of their parents, which compromised family relationships ($n = 23$). *Suppression* was akin to an unstoppable force (gender nonconformity) meeting an immovable object (parents' rejection of gender nonconformity). This paradox within family relationships created opportunities for varied outcomes. The following narratives highlighted how suppression created lasting family damage. Tina explained:

My mother used to always instill in my head, 'You are a boy! You are a boy! You can't run around like a girl! You can't talk like a girl! Stand up straight!' I always thought it was normal to shave your legs and to sit while you know did your thing in the bathroom. My mother tried so hard... to make me a man (Pacific Islander, 20, M-F).

Tina's story points to participants' confusion between what felt natural and what was expected from parents. Further in the interview, Tina explained that she wanted to tell her mom that she was transfeminine, however, her mother would not listen and persisted in

sending her to her uncle for “masculine training”. Eventually Tina did come out to her mother and explained to interviewers the outcome of that decision. “She dropped what she was doing, looked at me, told me to leave... She slapped me and she cried. Just an expression you can never get out of your head. I told her, ‘I’m a girl, I’m not your boy no more’. And... she just told me to leave”. In this example, Tina experienced a physical family break because her mother immediately rejected Tina’s trans* identity disclosure and kicked her out.

Rain’s story echoed Tina’s. Rain explained to interviewers that his entire goal was to hold on to his trans* identity, waiting for the day he was emancipated from his parents:

I don’t remember many specifics about that portion of my life. I remember talking to random strangers on the internet. And people assuring me that like, one day...from probably when I was like 13 until I was 17 my entire goal was to survive high school and leave the house (Rain, Hispanic, 22, F-M/GQ).

Eventually, Rain too experienced a significant physical family break, explaining:

I just did not feel safe or comfortable identifying myself as [Genderqueer] until I moved out of my parents’ house when I was 17...I came out to them and they stopped financially supporting me for quite a while. I lived in my friend’s kitchen...

Another participant described a scenario parallel to Rain’s:

I had about 4 years to fester with [my trans* identity], so I mean I lived in a really repressive house and I outted myself to my folks when I was 20. I had lot of time to stew with it, so I mean by the time I actually came out and actually transitioned I was prepared to lose it all (Maggie, “Other” [self-ascribed label], 24, M-GQ).

Similar to previous examples, Maggie's fear of losing it all was realized and she experienced a considerable physical family break after coming out to her parents.

The above examples displayed how parents' desired goals of eradicating gender nonconformity were only temporarily successful, demonstrating that participants held on to their trans* identity, waiting for an opportunity to leave the controlling environment. On rare occasions participants described positive adaptation associated with suppression.

Amy described her environment growing up as very repressive, as a result of her father's negative response to childhood gender nonconformity: "Once you are 18 and you are out of this house you can do whatever you want, but when you are living under my roof you are going to live by my rules and that's it" (Native American, 18, M-F). Later, Amy told interviewers, "to an extent I do fear death, but I just feel like I wasn't supposed to be born. I feel like I'm a mistake and that everyone would be better off without me". She described extensive drug use, depressive symptoms, self-harm, suicidal ideation and two suicide attempts. Despite the adversity of her situation, she had this to say of herself and her family: "I am very resilient and I bounce back. At the end of the day, we are a very loving family. We cherish each other and are thankful for having each other." Amy experienced no family breaks and did eventually experience family support, which will be addressed later in the findings section.

Unfortunately, sometimes positive family adjustment was not achieved causing trans* youth to take extreme measures. The next two narratives illustrated desperation among some participants for parents to accept their trans* identity:

My dad, I think [he] was trying to get me to want me to be a guy. He was like, 'so good SON' blah, blah... it was really bothering me, really bothering me and I

didn't approve of it. I hated it and I wanted... it really wasn't a suicide attempt. It was me trying to tell my family, 'leave me alone'. You know? 'Get off of me'... I was trying to prove to my family that this was real. Ya know? That this wasn't just some gimmick. I'm transgender (Jamie, white, 21, M-F/GQ).

Whereas, Jamie's narrative highlighted the need to be taken seriously as a trans* person, the next narrative exposed the nuances of trying to explain an ambiguous genderqueer identity to unknowledgeable family members. Batboy explained:

Everyone wanted more information and they wanted me to be more sure and more certain than I was... I was like, 'Oh. I have been thinking about this thing, I'm struggling with it, I'm feeling this way, I don't know exactly how I identify, I don't really want to be this, but I am different than this' and they were like, 'So are you Trans?' And I was like well... you know...so I had to make my stories a little bit more simpler [sic], I felt like that hurt a little bit too. My sister was super supportive and my parents were not that supportive (white, 23, F-GQ).

Jamie experienced no family breaks and eventually did receive family support, however, Batboy experienced a two month physical family break after his dad continued to call him selfish for coming out as genderqueer. Overall, narratives describing *suppression* uncovered how trans* youth were able to retain their identity under extreme adversity. In the next section additional techniques for retaining trans* identity are outlined.

Hybridized Identity. Hybridized identity falls into the self-subordinating category because one part of the self is subordinated, while participants also secretly expressed gender authenticity. Hybridized identity frequently intersected with narratives of psychological family breaks because secrecy impeded family relationships.

Hybridize Identity characterized youth complying with parents' requests for gender conformity while in the presence of family, combined with secret authentic gender expression without parents' explicit knowledge. For example, Lo explained, "Well first it was, I'm only allowed to dress --you know make up and stuff-- outside the house because [my mother was] not comfortable with me in the house and I was like, 'oh that was pain in the ass'" (Latina, 22, M-F). Furthermore, Antonio's narrative exemplified a *hybridized identity*, "My mom definitely had issues with clothes, which I mostly dealt with by taking an extra set of clothes in my backpack to school and then changing there" (Latino, 22, F-M/GQ). Finally, Christopher explained getting around family attempts to curb gender nonconformity;

She would mostly try and make me stay in the house and I tried to play with Justin. And she wouldn't let me wear his clothes or let me do any of the stuff he did, so she would sleep around 4 in the afternoon, so I would actually sneak out and play football in the streets or whatever. I'd do all that then, but she wasn't okay with it (African American, 24, F-GQ).

These examples conveyed techniques youth used to satisfy authentic gender expression combined with what was acceptable in the presence of family, by means of secrecy and duplicity.

In other examples of *hybridized identity* participants did not want to express their gender in secret, however, they were not allowed at home if they were presenting as trans*. Chuck said, "I told her that I wasn't visiting as often because I didn't want to shave and she would say things like 'if you really wanted to see us you would do it' and I'm like, 'No! I just want you to accept who I am'" (White, 24, F-M). One participant

summed up the feeling of not wanting their trans* identity to be a secret any longer, explaining, “I feel like I just crawl right back into that closet” ([no name or ethnicity information provided] 22, F-GQ). Finally, Tina expressed the essence of a hybridized identity through her description of tension between identifying as trans* and connecting with family. She said, “It’s like having a double life growing up. In her eyes I have to be a boy. In my eyes I knew I was a girl” (Pacific Islander, 20, M-F). Living a double life created turmoil. However, it also prevented family conflict. Each person got what they wanted, even though trans* youth were split in two. Sometimes, that split gave way to prioritizing self needs at the expense of family connectedness.

Self-prioritizing tendencies and ambiguous relationship outcomes. The self-prioritizing tendencies category was characteristic of participants’ descriptions of overemphasizing self needs, which were often related to prioritizing autonomy and authentic gender expression ($n = 63$). Self-prioritizing tendencies were the most frequent responses in the data set. For example, Layla described a continual fight with parents;

I basically just flat out told them... I tell her the only reason I am getting into it is because [she] can’t accept the fact I am gay. Then it goes from there to ‘your dad doesn’t approve’ and I tell her, ‘I don’t give a fuck whether he approves or not’

(African American, 24, M-GQ).

Findings revealed five examples of overemphasizing autonomy, including *Turning point* ($n = 17$), which represented youth becoming fed up with subordinating themselves and turning to overemphasizing self needs. Narratives about *standing one’s ground* demonstrated a lack of compromising trans* identity regardless of threat or consequence ($n = 36$). *Forced independence* was indicative of low agency on behalf of trans* youth

because parents' withdrew general and financial support leaving youth with little recourse ($n = 26$). *Dissolved relationships* was indicative of relatively high agency on behalf of trans* youth because they emotionally disengaged from and ended parent-child relationships leaving parents with little recourse ($n = 29$). Finally, *leaving without goodbye* represented youth's decisions to abruptly physically leave the family of origin home ($n = 18$).

Turning Point. Within the transcripts, some trans* youth described reaching a tipping point wherein they began to prioritize personal well-being, despite the potential for losing family connectedness. This represented the moment in time that hybridizing identity, constraint, suppression, avoidance and, acquiescence were no longer functional, and choosing autonomy became necessary for well-being. For example, Justin described trying to avoid hurting his mother, which eventually gave way to honesty about being trans*:

[My mom] found my MySpace page and it said male for the gender and she called me flipping out. Crying. Like almost physically ill because of it. And so for every couple months that would happen; she would call me freaking out, tell me, 'you don't think you are a boy? Tell me, 'you are still my daughter'. I was like, 'yeah, yeah, anything you want. Okay. Yup. Anything you want'. And then I moved to Portland and then that started up again and she called me one night and I was like, 'everything you are scared of is true, I don't know what to tell you anymore' (Justin, White, 26, F-M/GQ).

Justin explained to interviewers that he had come out many times and never received "ideal reactions". Justin also explained how staying in a state of ambiguity gave his

family time, stating: “I would like to know and trust that they’re working on their own shit, figuring out if they want me in their life, which is what I want. If they want me in their life, figuring out some way to negotiate my existence as is versus my existence as they would like it to be”. Initially, Justin tried to hybridize his trans* identity, however, after reaching a breaking point, he braved the potential for family boundary ambiguity. Moreover, instead of breaking with family, he used ambiguity to achieve his true desire of both acceptance by parents and authentic gender expression.

Interestingly, the turning point was not solely for participants, sometimes parents also reached a crucial point that changed the course of family relationships. Going back to Amy’s narrative there was a moment that her father’s value system started to change. Amy explained:

[My dad] was really hoping it was just a phase. He went to one of my doctor’s appointments with me and he asked ‘is this just a phase or is this for life?’ And [the doctor] said, ‘this is not a phase. This is in fact real and there is no changing her...and if you don’t accept your daughter now you will lose her.’ And that is when my dad got it (Amy, Native American, 18, M-F).

Eventually Amy’s father was able to come to terms with her trans* identity which may have been a contributing factor to Amy’s story changing from suicidal thoughts to positive family adaptation.

While Amy’s narrative showed a change on behalf of the parents, in other instances, participants described the inability to continue to compromise their trans* identity. Llyr discussed the reasons behind his turning point;

I grew up my whole life having to be closeted. And so I bought my first pair of boy pants and I was so embarrassed and so guilty that I called [my mom] from the store and I told her everything. The conversation went something like this... I said, 'I think I am a boy.' And my mom says [sic], 'but you don't like girls' or 'you like boys' or something. And I said, 'Well that means I am gay then.' And my mom gets really quiet and she goes, 'have you talked to God about this?'(white, 23, F-M).

Llyr told interviewers that his mother tried to send him to a reparative therapy camp meant to help him embrace gender conformity. Llyr did not go to "gay camp" and instead transitioned further by starting hormones and having surgery to remove his breasts.

The important distinction between *turning point* examples and other responses was that participants described trying other conflict resolution responses first. Justin first hybridized his identity, Amy's narrative of suppression was highlighted earlier in the self-subordinating tendencies section, and Llyr tried constraint. Each narrative illustrated how participants reached a critical point and could no longer conceal or suppress their authentic gender identity. In some instances, the turning point led to trans* youth no longer making any concessions concerning gender nonconformity.

Standing One's Ground. Narratives about *standing one's ground* demonstrated a fixed dedication to gender nonconformity, despite threat and potential consequences. Standing one's ground required knowing when to push and when to pull. The following narrative describes the process of push and pull between altering gender expression and gender nonconformity. River explained:

I started wearing make-up, my mom a couple of times freaked out about it and like tried to urge me not to do this. But every time I was like now I am going to do it anyways and um eventually she kind of gave up on that...That was basically it (White, 24, M-F).

River's narrative showed how she pushed against requests for gender conformity to such an extent that her mother gave up. River stood her ground and did not compromise at all.

Standing one's ground could take a lengthy amount of time. Participants' narratives read like calling their parents bluff. If parents put their foot down and demanded that their child dress a certain way and threatened consequences, some youth responded by explaining to their parents that they no longer had control over the participants' gender expression. For instance, Jax explained, "My dad, he was really upset about my transition too I think. I mean I know. And he didn't talk to me for the two years too. Now I think that I can have conversations with him if as long as we don't talk about gender stuff" (White, 21, F-M). Instead of Jax responding to his dad's reaction of silence by conforming to gender norms, he patiently waited for two years. One could assume that over the course of two years it became apparent that Jax was prepared to lose it all to express his authentic gender.

Jax's narrative also showcased a common thread in this study wherein conversations pertaining to gender-variance were avoided, causing uncertainty. Some participants described responding to this type of avoidance by standing their ground and pressing the issue. The following example was a discussion between interviewer and participant;

P: [My parents] didn't want to deal with it now. So they were kind of trying to ignore it.

I: How long has it been?

P: A year and two months

I: Are they still ignoring it?

P: Eh a little bit. I'm confronting them about it, they don't want to see it. That's kind of how it is ([no pseudonym given], white, 20, M-F).

The participant above described actively confronting her parents about trans* issues.

Later in the interview the participant explained her parent-child relationship further saying, "we don't talk a lot, but they like it when I'm around. We're kind of distant but there is an odd closeness" ([no pseudonym given], White, 20, M-F). The participant stood her ground and continued to bring up gender conversations with parents. In this instance, that technique appeared to be a productive tendency to at least remain minimally engaged with parents.

Some participants also described their parents as a barrier to the goal of transitioning. For example, Andrea told interviewers the first person she told about being trans* was her mother, specifically to ask for financial assistance to transition. Andrea explained, "I asked for help which turned out the not be the best move... she didn't kick me out of the house or anything...she said that I needed a psychologist. Thought maybe I was gay but couldn't possibly be a girl". Andrea remained determined to begin transitioning, she told interviewers;

I paid for [surgery] by stealing money from my father. And my father didn't disown me. He told me he would disown me next time I did it. He told me, 'if you pull any stunt like that I'm not talking to you again'. I guess I used what leeway I had with him. I'll pay him back some time. I know exactly how much money I took from him (Latina, 20, M-F).

Andrea's narrative illustrated commitment to transitioning despite barriers. Luckily for Andrea, her father did not disown her, in fact, he started using her preferred gender pronoun and chosen name representing positive adaptation.

Finally, standing one's ground intersected with family breaks when the family of origin was perceived by participants to be toxic to well-being. Dandra described a complicated family relationship in which she lived with extended family, an aunt and uncle. Dandra experienced a physical family break combined with adaptation in the form of tolerance for ambiguous loss. Dandra told interviewers that she had many problems with her extended family because of their religious background;

I was dressed up as a women. After that, I remember they told me I couldn't come back. But it wasn't right after that, it was like a couple weeks. Because I remember around gay pride- I went to gay pride that year for the first time and then they told me that I couldn't come back to their house... They were Jehovah Witness fanatics and thought they were high and mighty and above everything and everybody to the point where if you are not falling within the category that they allow, you can't talk to them. And I didn't give a fuck. 'You guys don't do anything for me now'...I think they were just the nastiest towards me. Still to this day, the nastiest (African American, 22, M-F)

Dandra's narrative exhibited how sometimes family breaks were positive because Dandra's toxic family relationship was harmful. Interestingly, Dandra used this firm approach to dismantle bigotry. She remained true to herself by undermining the family's nastiness towards her. She told interviewers, after that she lived on her own with a

“surrogate mother” and girl-friend, showcasing how standing one’s ground opened new social support networks.

Another narrative showed how standing one’s ground intersected with psychological breaks related to family relationship ambiguity. Batboy told interviewers:

Both my parents have struggled with [my genderqueer identity] a lot... it has provided a lot of fodder for conversation and silences. My dad told me I was really selfish and it’s created a lot of strain with my relationship in my extended family and my parents (White, 23, F-GQ).

Batboy’s narrative about strained relationships in extended family and with parents represented family relationship ambiguity because Batboy’s sense of identification with family subsystems was uncertain. Unlike physical family breaks, representing a structural uncertainty about the extent to which one remains in or out of the family system, Batboy’s ambiguity stemmed from uncertainty concerning how to interact or relate to others within the family system. The remaining examples further explore the distinction between psychological and physical family break outcomes.

Forced Independence. Forced independence was one of the first examples found in the data, because it represented a common narrative throughout transgender literature-- parents disowning trans* youth. *Forced independence* highlighted instances when youth experienced a physical break as a result of outright family rejection. Additionally, a discriminative feature of narratives about forced independence was participants were not the agents making the decision, parents were the actors and they decided connectedness with family was no longer an option. Therefore, it is no surprise that forced independence narratives frequently intersected with physical family breaks. There was a considerable

amount of narratives concerning trans* youth getting kicked out or disowned by family, temporarily or for prolonged periods of time. For example, Christina explained, “When I was 14 they kicked me out on the streets... because I was gay” (White, 21, F-GQ). At the time of the interview Christina was still navigating unstable housing. Similarly, Allay told interviewers her mother kicked her out, however, they were able to reconnect when Allay’s brother was born.

Additionally, participants like Kayla and Evan described getting kicked out by parents multiple times. They both had their parents beg them to come home, only to be kicked out again.

I called my mom, and she was like, ‘okay. You can come home.’ So I came home and every single time I’ve gone home, my parents still are not understanding and won’t let me live as a girl. So, I decided, ‘well, ok, whatever. I don’t care.’ Then it got so bad that my dad said, ‘ok, you have two days to get out of this house.

Otherwise, there are going to be problems (Kayla, White, 20, M-F).

Similar to Kayla’s narrative, Evan experienced abandonment multiple times. Evan explained, “My mom would kick me out of the house a couple of times. Tell me to get the fuck out then tell the cops I ran away” (Latino/Greek, 22, F-M). Evan’s and Kayla’s narratives showed a drive for connectedness because each returned to family in hopes that the situation would be different. Unfortunately, because no family members had changed their diverging opinions about gender nonconformity, the situation had not changed and abandonment was the continual outcome.

Surprisingly, there were instances where forced independence was found in relation to positive adaptation. Of the participants who did experience positive

adaptation, they described the distance saving family relationships despite physically breaking from family. Girlfriend's story was highlighted earlier in the findings section.

Similar to Girlfriend's narrative Margaret explained:

My parents didn't go out of their way to support me but maybe, I don't know what they could have done anyways. But I feel like I did a lot of that without any of their input at all, I wasn't living in the same city with them and it was other trans* people and other people who helped me with that. And so, I don't think we have a very close relationship just because there's a lot about my life and things that they don't know about it... I think, I get along with my parents when I see them, but we're not particularly close. We're maybe slowly getting closer now that we're adults, but not that close (white, 26, M-F/GQ).

Margaret's narrative demonstrated ambiguity and independence due to a lack of support from her parents. She physically broke from family, and grew up a little with the help of friends and queer kinship. Margaret continued to feel that her parents did not know the real her, however, she also expressed slowly growing closer to her parents as an adult. This suggests that sometimes distance and development fostered reconciliation.

There were other narratives where abandonment or getting kicked out were not explicit, however, participants felt like it was a distinct possibility given previous acts of homophobia and transphobia. For example, Jay explained:

I was in a lot of conflict with [my parents] through my youth just because I didn't really know what was going on with me and I always anticipated losing my relationships with them. I feel like ever since I was a kid, I always anticipated losing my relationship with my dad so I kind of just gave up on it at a certain

point. And it was easy to ignore him, just because I didn't anticipate having him in my life anymore...my dad is just really openly homophobic (white, 24, F-M). Jay's narrative touched on a common theme among trans* and genderqueer youth, which researchers coded as *perceived rejection*. Jay was convinced that he would be disowned by his dad, creating lasting conflict and breaks in family relationships. Ultimately, Jay's story falls somewhere between forced independence and the next node *dissolved relationships*, because Jay ended his relationship as a reaction to homophobia and a hypothetical situation of abandonment.

Dissolved Relationships. The last two examples of self-prioritizing tendencies were much more representative of trans* youth's agency, because both were instances of youth making a choice to break with family. Youth psychologically ending relationships with parents characterized examples of *dissolved relationships*. For example, Lo was a participant who was kicked out by her mother for being trans*. Despite forced independence from her mother, Lo continued a relationship with her aunt who initially seemed accepting of Lo's trans* identity. However, that turned out to be untrue, and Lo eventually dissolved the relationship:

She says that she does accept it but ya know like when you can tell someone is being shady. I think that's what she's doing. She says that she is accepting of it but then she talks about it behind my back, ya know? And I'm like well I don't need people like that in my life (Lo, Latina, 22, M-F).

Much like Dandra, Lo realized that the toxicity of her relationship with aunt was not worth the trouble.

Even though dissolving relationships suggested a psychological family break, physical family breaks were most frequent. The participants whom researchers coded as dissolving relationships often had complicated home lives as a result of gender-variance and other family issues. For instance, Henry explained severing their father's paternal rights, legally, due to drug, alcohol, physical and psychological abuse;

The big thing that shattered our relationship is he hit my stepmother while my stepmother was holding my baby half-sister. She wasn't even a year old yet. And I screamed at him and made him stop and he retaliated against me instead. And that was the first and last time he'd ever hit me. So, I was used to seeing the abuse from all the other members of my family, when I finally stepped in I got it and that shattered our relationship entirely. (white, 16, F-GQ).

In other sections of the interview Henry disclosed that issues concerning gender were probably related to psychological abuse and ridicule in which Henry's father would say "It's okay you couldn't do that right, you're stupid, you're a woman" Henry explained, "So it was everything was forgivable because I was female. And it just grated on me a lot as a kid". Henry's narrative highlighted how interpersonal family relationships were affected by factors in addition to gender nonconformity.

Similar to Henry's story, Taylor dissolved his relationship with his mother because of mental health issues:

Growing up I was really close but recently [my mom] has just been bipolar, I don't know what is wrong with her, she is just crazy in the head. One minute she wants you in her life, the next minute she calls the cops and tries to get a restraining order on me. I'm not even in Texas, so I don't see how that is possible.

She is just going through a lot of stuff I guess...About a week and a half ago I was like, 'you know what? I'm out of your life for good.' You know? One day they'll realize how good I am, but I feel distant (Native American, 21, F-M).

These narratives illustrated how emotions, personal values, and personal struggles acted as barriers to productive family relationships in addition to difficulties adjusting to gender-variance.

Finally, participants dissolved relationships with parents based solely on issues concerning gender. For example, after coming out many times to parents and experiencing homelessness, Rain explained eventually ending contact with his parents:

We just stopped talking, honestly. I came out to them over a phone call, because I knew it wouldn't go well, you know? From my experience of coming out to them before, I knew it was going to be drama. And I was like, well I could write them a letter or I could go down there. I could drive down in person and talk to them, and I was not up for that for a lot of reasons. Um, I thought they would like, lock me in the house and never let me out...So I called them. And my mom was just freaked out, and was just like, 'you're not my child; I don't know who you are'. I hung up, and that was that for quite a while (Latino, 22, F-M).

In order to be coded into the *dissolved relationships* category, participants had to describe severing ties with their parents, however, this definition missed a considerable amount of people who ran away and never discussed ending the relationship.

Leaving without Goodbye. *Leaving without goodbye* draws on language used in Boss' (1991) ambiguous loss theory, in which, family members were physically absent while psychologically present in the family system. The majority of participants coded in

the leaving without goodbye category were those who ran away or moved out with very little communication resulting in the common occurrence of physical and psychological breaks.

One participant described leaving multiple times because of family conflict over gender nonconformity. The first time leaving, Ovid bought a plane ticket and went to live with zirs dad. "I said, 'okay dad, I have a plane ticket. I'm moving!'" He said ok and came and picked me up. He wasn't expecting... he wasn't a parent yet and wasn't ready for any 15-16 year old gender-fucked, mentally ill child. He was ready for his 5 year old girl to move in". Eventually, conflict arose between Ovid and zirs dad resulting in zir running away again.

[My dad said] his daughter was welcome but [Ovid] was not. And so the next day I left for school and I don't remember... I think that was on a Friday night and Sunday he went out to the shooting range... and I stayed back 'to do homework' quote unquote. And I packed a bag with everything I could fit in one of my duffel bags and I went and I hid it in the bushes, out a ways back and then the next day, leaving for school I packed as much as I could into my backpack to leave for school... and I got on the train like I do, like I would do every day and I went all the way to San Francisco (White, 19, F-M/GQ).

Ovid told interviewers after a seriously dangerous encounter, zirs mother drove out to where ze was staying and brought zir back home. Additionally, Ovid's mother was diagnosed with stage-four lung cancer, which had the effect of opening lines of communication between Ovid and zirs family, representing a narrative of positive family adjustment.

Positive adaptation appeared infrequently within the context of *leaving without goodbye*. Ovid's story was one of only four instances. Trip's narrative was another instance in which leaving without goodbye intersected with positive adaptation. Trip described frequently running away, yet he experienced continual support from his mother both through personal mental health issues and gender transition:

My family is basically a military family; they all grew up military style. I'm the only one who went through ROTC and dropped out of ROTC and dropped out just for no reason. They would always try and keep me confined to my room but I would always open up the window and go run off. They got tired of it and sent me to the mental institution like three different times because I would not listen to them (White, 21, M-GQ).

Later in the interview Trip had this to say of his family: "Yeah they have been accepting me for who I am since I was 17. They love me. I'm their son slash daughter. They said if that's what I want, then they will help me in my decision. So I got a really happy family that is happy with me". Despite all of Trip's efforts to leave he still received love and support from family.

The previous two narratives highlighted instances when leaving was met with parents fighting to keep youth in the family. The next few narratives were marked by physical family breaks, in which no reconciliation has happened. In the forced independence section, Kayla's story was shared because she had been continually kicked out by her parents. However, eventually Kayla made a decision to leave, she explained:

I called my parents one day and told them where I was and let them know that I was safe. Uh, and they're like, 'oh, come home!' and I was like, 'oh yeah! That's

the thing, I can't come home now.' So then I was finally free, and now I'm living how I want. I've been full time for a year and a half (White, 20, M-F).

Kayla's narrative about freedom showed how leaving without goodbye represented liberation for trans* youth. After experiencing perpetual control by her parents, Kayla made an autonomous decision to leave on her own terms.

Additional *leaving without goodbye* narratives came from people who ran away from group homes or foster care. MSeven is one such participant who described getting taken from home by child protective services and being put into a group home. When the interviewers asked MSeven about homelessness, MSeven disclosed they had experienced homelessness because they regularly ran away from group homes. They told interviewers simply, "I didn't want to be there" (African American, 19, F-GQ).

Similarly, Prada grew up primarily in foster care and group homes. She told interviewers that she was placed in more than 20 foster homes, in which she was either kicked out for being different or she ran away:

People was mistaken me as a girl and like they had asked me if I was having any identification issues or whatever...and first I said no and then I ended up coming out, like being transgender. It was, it was really hard. They didn't know what to do with me... Yeah, so I ended up...I was on the run for most of my life (Prada, Latina, 21, M-F).

The above narratives highlighted variability in terms of the reasons for and outcomes of youth running away from family and protective services. For some participants, running away was the only option to live free and authentically, exemplified by Kayla's story,

while, for others running away actually resulted in family rallying to show support, as in Trip's and Ovid's narratives.

Findings revealed that self-prioritizing tendencies were common responses to parental attempts to alter gender expression. Unsurprisingly, self-prioritizing was found most frequently in relation to physical and psychological breaks with family. However, positive adaptation was also fairly common, suggesting that parents responded to the needs of their youth. A great example of this was Amy's narrative about her dad who eventually accepted Amy after realizing that the gender nonconforming behavior was not a phase. Overall, the self-prioritizing tendencies findings showcased trans* youth's drive for personal autonomy and authentic gender expression, even at the expense of family membership and family identity.

Findings Conclusion

The findings section highlighted trans* youth's agency in relation to parent-child relationships outcomes. First, this section illustrated how parents respond to gender nonconformity either because they noticed it during youth development or because youth came out as trans*. Findings revealed variability in the ways parents respond to gender nonconformity. Second, relationship outcomes demonstrated parent-child relationships marked by ambiguity, ambiguous loss and positive adaptation. Next, findings revealed that youth responded to parental responses pertaining to gender nonconformity. Exemplifying the fact that youth enact personal agency and control over their environment and parent-child relationships. Finally, linking relationship outcome narratives with narratives about youth agency showed that there are many factors which influence relationship outcomes such as family context, family meaning associated with transitioning, and willingness for

both parties to change and/or compromise. Overall, findings emphasized the fact that trans* and genderqueer youth navigated complex parent-child relationships whereby participants enacted agency in attempts to reconcile their need for autonomy and authentic gender expression combined with their need for family connectedness and acceptance.

CHAPTER SIX

Discussion

In much of the current literature regarding transgender youth there is a common discourse of parental rejection or ambivalent parental reactions to transgender identity disclosure and childhood gender nonconformity (Grossman et al., 2005; Koken et al., 2009; Wahlig, 2014). In light of this research, this study sought to focus on the ways in which trans* and genderqueer youth responded to varied parental reactions with regard to experiences of ambiguous loss. Findings revealed that trans* youth reacted to their parents' responses to trans* identity disclosure or childhood gender nonconformity in a variety of ways. To illustrate, parents who attempted to alter their youth's gender expression in childhood created a social context characterized by exerting control. Participants described reacting to that situation by submitting to parents' requests, while others pushed against control.

According to self-determination theory these reactions were varied due to differences in motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000a). Perhaps the former participants were motivated by preserving family cohesion, while the latter were motivated by a need for authentic gender expression. Participants' narratives revealed an extensive amount of reflection concerning their own agency. Whenever researchers asked participants about family relationships and family breaks they all described personal reactions to their perception of the situation. Thus, the data revealed three factors that influenced trans* youth's parent-child relationship outcomes: parents' responses to gender-variance, trans* youth's perception of that response and their agency to react to that response. These findings are discussed in relation to how they advance current literature and theory, providing implications for future research.

Transgender Youth's Experiences with Ambiguous Loss

This study was initially and primarily focused on generating academic knowledge regarding how trans* youth experienced their parents' reactions to gender-variance, using an ambiguous loss framework. Findings have shown that trans* and genderqueer youth experienced uncertainty concerning family membership, family relationships, and when and how to express their transgender identity. Furthermore, findings have expanded ambiguous loss theoretical applications by providing evidence that transgender youth's uncertainty may stem from contradictions about structural and/or emotional ambiguous losses. Parents that kicked youth out of the family home were an example of a type one, physical break, because the family of origin was physically absent while remaining psychologically present. In contrast, Parents who ignored, abused, mistreated, and neglected their trans* youth were an example of a type two, psychological break, because the family of origin which was emotionally and psychologically absent, remained physically present.

Physical breaks are well documented in literature concerning transgender youth (Cochran et al., 2002; Grossman et al., 2005; Keuroghlian et al., 2014). A common discourse in current literature is parents' rejection of gender nonconformity (Grossman et al., 2005; Grossman et al., 2006) and negative outcomes associated with rejection (Grossman & D'Augelli, 2006; Grossman & D'Augelli, 2007). This study has shown that transgender youth do experience these parent initiated physical breaks; however, this study extends that research by showing that trans* youth and external contexts also influenced parent-child relationships outcomes.

Findings pertaining to parent initiated family breaks were consistent with previous literature which suggests that some parents reject their transgender youth, verbally and physical abuse youth and kick youth out of the family home or reject youth from family relationships (Durso & Gates, 2012; Grossman et al., 2006). Participants discussed physical abuse from parents and getting kicked out of the family by parents. Tina recalled her mother slapping her and telling her to leave. For Tina, her mother initiated the physical break by effectively taking away Tina's choice to stay or to leave. The only option was to leave.

While the concept of physical family breaks is embedded in literature, Keuroghlian et al. (2014) found that youth also made decisions to leave hostile environment which was the most cited cause for youth homelessness, followed by parents' decision to kick youth out. Keuroghlian's et al. (2014) finding suggests that parents do initiate rejection, however, the physical break itself may be a choice of the parents or the youth. In this study, quite a few participants told stories of running away. For example, Trip reported running away multiple times. Also, Ovid and MSeven told researchers they ran away from their respective homes because they "didn't want to be there".

Additionally, some participants were dealing with issues above and beyond gender. Participants dealt with the death of parents, divorces, and impermanent foster care placements which all represented physical breaks due to external forces. For example, Tia told researchers, "I was adopted when I was a baby. My parents just couldn't take care of me". Over the years Tia experienced many physical family breaks with various families and foster placements. Additionally, Henry told interviewers about

the process of getting his father's paternal rights severed. Inherent in Henry's story was the idea that other family issues intermingled with his trans* identity.

Physical breaks represented a stressful period in transgender youth's lives because youth perceived uncertainty about their membership in the family system. Due to uncertainty and a lack of security, youth often faced hostile conditions such as homelessness, economic disadvantages, and/or lasting estrangement from family (Grossman et al., 2005; Keuroghlian et al., 2014; Lombardi et al., 2001). Physical breaks represented family schisms in which youth were physically detached from their family of origin and living independently.

Psychological breaks were instances when youth described emotional and psychological barriers to positive parent-child relationships. For transgender youth, psychological breaks were a reflection of abuse, neglect, and avoidance. For example, Grossman et al. (2005) reported that gender nonconforming youth experienced verbal and physical abuse. Many of the participants in this study described verbal abuse, such as Kayla recounting her father asking, "Are you a mouse or a man?" Additionally, participants reported psychological breaks from their parents because of attempts to alter authentic gender expression.

Rahilly (2015) reported that when parents noticed gender nonconformity, some attempted to alter their youth's nonconforming gender expression. The majority of participants told researchers that parents attempted to alter their gender expression. Some participants discussed parental attempts to alter gender expression early in life. For example, Henry told researchers his father painted his room pink with lavender accents. Others described parents dissuading plans of transition. Sandra told researchers her

mother begged her to postpone transitioning. After each of these instances, the participants lamented their parents' efforts to alter their gender, and told researchers they resented these attempts.

Similar to physical breaks, parents initiated psychological breaks by expressing ambivalence towards youth's gender expression and through abuse, control, or withdrawing from youth. Youth initiated psychological breaks when they grew resentful toward or pulled away from parents. Trans* youth may have been responding to both actual ambivalence and rejection from parents and their perception ambivalence and rejection. Jason explained, "there was the perception that [my parents] would [cut me off]. Which led me to do some things in preparation for being cut off or not supported". Jason preempted parental rejection by ending the relationship himself. Jason reacted to his perception of the event. Trans* youth's perception of their parents responses are important to consider because "the meanings we making for family stressors determine how we experience them and thus are consequential to our well-being" (Boss, 1992; Norwood, 2013b).

The last finding from transgender youth's experiences with ambiguous loss addressed how youth had progressed through ambiguous loss towards adaptation. Adaptation captured parent-child relationships across time to account for parent-child relationships that adjusted overtime, resulting in various relationship outcomes. Youth's stories were fluid and dynamic, sometimes describing parent-child relationships from early childhood to young adulthood. At the time of the interview, some participants were not out to parents while others had been out for years. In this study, Boss' (2006) notion of resiliency guided examination of trans* youth's relationship outcomes. For example, it

was Boss (2006) that explained resiliency as building *tolerance for ambiguity* and *recovering* from ambiguous loss by readjusting family relationships, rituals, roles and boundaries. Jason was one such individual who described an ambiguous loss situation that led to reconciliation. He told interviewers that reconciliation happened because his parents grew to respect him after seeing his growth and strength in response to adversity and hardship.

Boss (2006) wrote “the most important predictor for resilience in the face of ambiguous loss is an individual’s ability to learn how to hold two opposing ideas in their minds” (p. 16). Learning to hold two opposing ideas was one way the participants attempted to build a capacity to tolerate ambiguity. Transgender youth told researchers that they wanted their parents to accept them, however, they understood the reasons behind rejection. For example, Jax explained “I have tried to give up a lot of my expectations about what my family is going to do... For now, I just accept that this is where they’re at.” Furthermore, data revealed that some trans* youth benefited from ambiguity because it was better than total rejection. Ambiguity offered families time to readjust and work on family relationships. Tolerance for ambiguity also allowed youth to leave abusive families, recognizing the fact that family members would not change their belief systems and that the environment was toxic to mental and physical health.

In addition to building a capacity for ambiguity, parent-child relationships were able to *recover* from perceptions of family boundary ambiguity and ambiguous loss. Recovery was an example of adaptation to stress, which was the result of families stabilizing after a period of conflict or disequilibrium (Boss, 2002). Previous literature has demonstrated that despite mainstream cisnormative expectations, some families were

able to accept their transgender youth (Ehrensaft, 2014; Kuvalanka et al., 2014; Meadow, 2011; Ryan et al., 2010). Family acceptance may happen immediately after parents become aware of gender nonconformity or youth disclose their transgender identity, or acceptance can happen much later after parents and youth explore and learn more about trans* issues. For example, nearly a third of the participants told researchers that parents never attempted to alter gender nonconformity. Instead, parents allowed youth to explore gender expression in a way that was conformable. Other participants described a period of disequilibrium followed by attempts at reconciliation. Kuvalanka et al. (2014) and Connolly (2006) reported that parents, families, and communities often went through personal transitions along with their trans* family members. These transition processes take time and sometimes result in reconciliation after personal exploration and discovery.

Through the focused examination of transgender youth's experiences with ambiguous loss, additional concepts emerged regarding family adaptation. To illustrate, this study has demonstrated that transgender youth responded to parental responses to childhood gender nonconformity and trans* identity disclosure as well as their own perception of how parents may respond. Although bidirectional parent-child relationships are well-documented in child development literature (e.g. Pardini, 2008), this concept is rarely discussed in literature regarding parental reactions to sexual and gender minority youth.

Transgender Youth's Agency

Currently, there are no studies that have examined transgender youth's agency, however, Pfeffer (2012) has examined agency among transmen and their cisfemale partners, and Scourfeld et al. (2008) and Singh et al. (2011) have examined trans*

youth's resiliency in the context of taking action. Through the application of self-determination theory, this work has conceptualized how transgender youth enact agency in response to parental reactions to gender-variance. This study illuminates the fact that while youth held less power within families, they had the ability to enact autonomy as they developed and settled their personal and social identities. For instance, similar to previous findings concerning conflict resolution of college age students (Yarnell & Neff, 2013), trans* youth's stories highlighted a range of reactions they employed to respond to stress due to uncertainty about family function and makeup.

Mutual-compromising tendencies. Findings showed that both youth and parents compromised themselves in order to maintain family cohesion. For example, Nev told researchers her parents let her dress feminine in the house, which created a bit of awkwardness. She personally compromised by not going "too crazy with it". Nev's example illustrated both parties' willingness to concede something to adapt to the situation. The examples associated with mutual-compromising demonstrated different pathways towards mutuality and also showed how inaction was in and of itself a form of compromise.

Trans* youth's mutual-compromising stories demonstrated a focus on acceptance, acquiescence, and avoidance. A common theme in the acceptance narratives was parent's willingness to compromise to accept youth. Sometimes this meant youth could express themselves authentically and sometimes this required youth to hold back such as in Nev's narrative. A common discourse in the acquiescence narratives was the increased likelihood of youth's compromise. Allen discussed compromising on gender normative clothing. Allen was usually in the position of compromise, however, the end result was

both parties compromised because “nobody was ever happy” in the end. Even though Allen wore feminine clothing, his disposition betrayed him as displeased with the decision. Finally, avoidance demonstrated compromise in the form of inaction because of a lack of communication.

Findings within the *acceptance* subcategory showed consistency with previous literature which suggested families transition with trans* youth (Kovalanka et al., 2014) and that parents work at gender affirmation through transformative experiences with their trans* youth (Ehrensaft, 2011). Narratives showed that sometimes parents moved away from personal beliefs that contradicted accepting their trans* youth. For instance, participants described their parents saying, “I love you no matter what”, and “you are still my child”; suggesting that parents initially felt uneasy about gender-variance, then moved towards acceptance. Family acceptance of transgender youth is recently gaining more traction in the family discipline. Ryan et al. (2010) reported that family acceptance of sexual and gender minority youth was associated with greater well-being and positive psychosocial outcomes. Youth in this study often spoke of family acceptance as an important social support resource. In most narratives family acceptance was synonymous with support.

Acquiescence findings showed nuances in parent-child relationships that are not currently discussed in literature. Acquiescence focused more on what youth were doing in the context of family control and rejection. Over half of the participants in the study experienced parental attempts to alter gender expression. Altering gender expression was accomplished through affirming gender conformity and dissuading gender

nonconformity. In this context, youth made a decision: conform to gender expectations, hide gender nonconformity, or embrace gender nonconformity.

Acquiescence was conceptually very similar to suppression because youth gave in to parents' demands. The conceptual distinction was in the parent-child relationship. Narratives which described parents' socializing efforts to normalize gender combined with youth reluctantly giving in to those demands represented youth's acquiescence. In contrast, narratives that described parent's threat and coercion to normalize gender and youth giving in to those demands to avoid punishment and/or abuse represented suppression. In both instances youth compromised, however, they were motivated to compromise in different ways. In the former example, compromise represented a volitional extrinsic motivation to conform. In the latter example, compromise was highly controlled.

Finally, *avoidance* narratives demonstrated parents and youth shutting down communication. Trans* youth described feeling uncertain about the status of their family relationships in the context of shutting down. This was consistent with Landau and Hissett's (2008) findings which suggested that "shutting down" emotionally in response to physical and psychological pain led to the inability to interpret reactions and responses. Many participants used words like "can't tell", "not sure", and "don't know" when asked to specify parent-child relationships. These words suggested ambivalence and uncertainty due to miscommunication and lack of clarity about individual identity in relation to parents and extended family. When communication about sensitive topics was avoided, youth could only speculate reactions and responses, and simulate best and worst case scenarios. In the absence of concrete information about parental rejection, some youth

perceived parental rejection and acted in accordance with the meaning they associated with their perceptions.

The avoidance narratives were also consistent with Ehrensaft's (2011) findings, in which youth told parents they were trans* and parents never responded. The parents ignored gender variance and disregarded physical and social changes implicit in the transitioning process. Avoidance emerged as an adaptive technique to maintain family relationships, even if they were ambiguous. For example, Clark Kent told researchers that during the beginning of his physical transition he couldn't tell whether parents were supportive. Even though Clark Kent felt that his changes were fairly obvious, his parents did not openly address the subject matter. In Clark Kent's situation, the absence of concrete information allowed him to use avoidance to maintain family cohesion and transition.

Youth's mutual-compromising tendencies were indicative of families trying to find equilibrium in the face of child development and family changes. In some cases youth's parents compromised to maintain family connectedness, while in others, youth compromised. Narratives showed that findings were consistent with previous literature regarding family acceptance (Ryan et al., 2010), multiple family member transitions (Kovalanka et al., 2014; Norwood, 2013a), and avoidance of gender variance (Ehrensaft, 2011).

Self-subordinating tendencies. Self- subordinating tendencies were the primary focus of initial coding. The researchers aimed to uncover how youth subordinated aspects of gender nonconformity at the request of parents and society. Findings emerged primarily from participants' responses to parental rejection. Individuals discussed

parental attempts to alter gender expression, to which some participants responded by subordinating or sacrificing gender nonconformity. Participants described subordinating gender nonconformity because of threat, violence, abandonment, and requests for gender conformity. For instance, Faceblur's story showed that trans* youth compromised gender nonconformity out of love for family and apprehension to shame or besmirch the family's name. Sacrificing authentic gender expression was indicative of a focus on what parents wanted, and less about what youth needed. Findings were consistent with previous literature concerning college youth who, during family conflicts, focused less on personal needs and more on the needs of the family (Neff & Harter, 2003; Neff et al., 2006; Yarnell & Neff, 2013). Narratives revealed three examples of self-subordinating tendencies: *constraint*, *suppression*, and *hybridized identity*.

The *constraint* narratives mirrored Ryan and Deci's (2000b) findings concerning integrated regulation. Ryan and Deci (2000b) theorized that people who internalized a sense that an action was worth their doing felt the action was more volitional. This study conceptualized constraint on very similar terms to account for participants who internalized the sense that gender conformity was desirable. For instance, participants felt their lives would be easier if they were not transgender and if they could conform gender. Once participants internally valued gender conformity, they placed personal restrictions on the extent they could express gender nonconformity. Participants told researchers they put their gender identity away, citing not wanting to shame family as the reason for doing so. Internalizing the belief that gender-variance was wrong and personally posing limitations on the expression of gender nonconformity allowed participants to feel autonomous in their action while adhering to parents' demands.

While examples of *constraint* concerned volitional self-subordination, the *suppression* subcategory demonstrated the common discourse in current literature. Grossman et al. (2005) reported “many transgender youth [lived] in fear of being ridiculed and rejected by family” (p. 12). Grossman’s et al. (2005) findings were consistent with a subset of this transgender youth sample. For example, Kayla’s father’s question, “Are you a man or a mouse?” resembled the type of ridicule some transgender youth experienced. Furthermore, Kayla told interviews she replied, “I’m a mouse!... I’d continue to cry and then he’d slap me, or punch me or kick me”. Kayla referenced this experience many times throughout the interview noting that a mouse meant feminine and the tactic was used to masculinize her. Similarly, the findings section also discussed Tina’s story. Her mother sent her to a masculine uncle who could teach Tina to be more masculine. These narratives demonstrated the brute force parents used to control their youth’s gender expression and the hostile environments some youth were trying to escape.

In response to parents’ hostility and ferociousness, youth attempted to hold back or make themselves smaller and less of a target. To the detriment of Kayla’s mental health, she often conceded she was a mouse. Rain described waiting for the day he could be out of the family home and waiting for the day he was free to express gender authentically. Similarly, Maggie described “stewing” with a transgender identity for four years. Maggie was also waiting for the day to express gender authentically.

Narratives about trans* youth’s *hybridized identity* showed that youth were goal-oriented toward autonomy and relatedness, resulting in living a double-life. Narratives revealed participants primarily discussed secrecy and acting one way around family and

another way in personal social circles. For example, one participant talked about crawling back into “the closet” around parents. Batboy described engaging in a secret relationship with their best friend, which resulted in their parents experiencing a lot of “anger and mistrust”. Findings were consistent with Mallon and DeCrescenzo’s (2006) reports that trans* youth lived in secrecy because of parental rejection, punishment, and/or violence. Findings were also consistent with Landau and Hissett’s (2008) reports that secrecy contributed to feelings of family boundary ambiguity and identity ambiguity because of attempts to hide perceived deficits or avoid painful topics. Youth often spoke of the need to change around family or to hide extra clothes.

Deci and Ryan (2000) assumed that “humans are active, growth-oriented organisms who are naturally inclined toward integration of their psychic elements into a unified sense of self and integration of themselves into larger social structures” (p. 229). Youth who described hybridizing their identity discussed secretly expressing trans* identity among friends and personal social networks, suggesting that trans* youth attempted to integrate their trans* identity in personal social networks, while integrating family identity within the family system. However, Boss and Greenberg (1984) discussed contradictions between group affiliations may cause family boundary ambiguity, especially in the context of young adults launching or beginning affiliations with “conflicting groups (for example, peer groups that differ in beliefs and behaviors from the family group)” (p. 541). Findings suggest that hybridizing identity can be functional and harmful. On one hand, maintaining family cohesion and authentic identity is the primary objective. On the other hand, sometimes secrecy has the effect of dismantling family cohesion and authenticity.

Self-subordinating narratives have shown that some trans* youth responded to controlling social contexts by sacrificing personal identity for family cohesion while others waited, biding their time, or lied to preserve a sense of self. Many youth were subordinate to parents because of financial and safety concerns. Findings were consistent with Lombardi's et al. (2001) research, which revealed that economic discrimination was a strong predictor of violent incidences because economic insecurity contributed to transpersons' willingness to engage in risky behavior or subject themselves to risky environments. Additionally, trans* youth's stories demonstrated savvy self-determination to give parents what they wanted and to achieve personal desires through hybridizing their identity.

Self-prioritizing tendencies. Self-prioritizing tendencies demonstrated youth's focus on autonomy and a lack of regard for parental concerns or opinions. For example, Justin described the point at which he began to prioritize his own well-being over his mother's fear that he was transgender. He told his mother, "everything you are scared of is true. I don't know what to tell you anymore". Deci and Ryan (2000) reported that when needs were thwarted, "people [were] persistent in their attempts to satisfy their primary needs, devising new paths when old routes no longer [worked]" (p. 128). Self-prioritizing represented instance where youth reached a point and thought, "I need to be me or I will end up dead." Due to the recruitment methods of this study and the developmental stage of participants, they primarily discussed self-prioritizing tendencies, which diverged from previous findings (Yarnell & Neff, 2013). Youth were primarily recruited from sexual and gender minority support centers and community organizations, therefore, the sample

primarily consisted of youth who have on some level embraced and prioritize a trans* identity.

Findings revealed five examples youth's increased emphasis on self-needs in response to ambiguous and conflict-ridden parent-child relationships. Some trans* youth went through phases of initially internalizing transphobia and then later learning to accept or synthesize their identities, representing a *turning point*. *Standing one's ground* captured youth narratives about discontinuing inauthentic gender expression because they no longer prioritized societal and familial acceptance. *Forced independence* was an example of self-prioritizing tendencies because youth were often forced into survival mode, which made it necessary for them to prioritize personal needs. Whereas parents' decision-making was the influencing factor behind findings related to *forced independence* narratives, narratives about *dissolved relationships* reflected trans* youth's decision-making. Youth decided to end toxic relationships with parents in order to maintain mental and physical well-being. Finally, youth also decided to physically leave. *Leaving without goodbye* stories demonstrated youth initiated physical breaks.

Turning point narratives were characteristic of participants attempting to satisfy needs for authentic gender expression in ways that resulted in less conflict, however, youth changed their approach when earlier responses failed. For example, Amy was coded in self-subordinating tendencies, suggesting a focus on suppressing gender nonconformity, however, eventually she went to a counselor to pursue transition, marking a turning point where she began to self-prioritize. Additionally, Kayla was coded into multiple categories, self-subordinating in response to family abuse and punishment,

which resulted in Kayla getting kicked out and eventually leaving on her own terms. When Kayla made the decision to leave she said “I’m finally free”.

When participants described *standing their ground* they were highlighting a personal strength to live authentically, regardless of the consequences. Interestingly, many youth who reported standing their ground also reported family adaptation. For example, River told interviews her mother “freaked out” about her wearing makeup. River’s response was to keep doing it and eventually her mother realized that River would not concede, and eventually gave up fighting about it. Youth’s reflections showed how families responded to their persistence. For example, multiple narratives about *standing one’s ground* illustrated how youth pressed the issue by not allowing parents to avoid discussions about gender. Also, youth pressed the issue by remaining steadfast in gender nonconformity to the extent that parents gave up on gender battles. These findings mirrored Rahilly’s (2014) observations in which “parents increasingly give way to their child’s preferences, per the child’s persistence about how they wish to express themselves” (pg. 349). When parents did not give way to their child’s persistence, some youth in the study continued to enact self-prioritizing reactions.

Examples of *leaving without goodbye, forced independence* and *dissolved relationships* were indicative of family breaks wherein youth made a decision to end parent-child relationships, or parents disowned and/or kicked youth out. Multiple studies have documented the prevalence of gender nonconforming youth experiencing negative parental reactions and parental rejection (Grossman et al., 2005; Grossman et al., 2006). In addition, Durso and Gates (2012) have documented that the majority of their LGBT homeless youth respondents indicated that family rejection (68%) and family abuse

(54%) were major contributing factors to their homelessness. This study's findings were consistent with previous findings, in that negative parental reactions and parental rejection were met with youth either running away (demonstrated in the reflections about *leaving without goodbye*), or trans* youth were disowned or kicked out (reflected in descriptions of *forced independence*). In addition, using an ambiguous loss framework revealed a greater nuance to youth's reactions to parental rejection opting for a more ambivalent psychological family break coded as *dissolved relationships*.

One of Grossman et al.'s (2005) findings suggested that transgender youth terminated family relationships after experiencing parents' persistent negative reactions to gender nonconformity. This study also found that youth terminated relationships with parents due to persistent negative reactions to gender-variance. Very little research has addressed the fact that youth may reject their parents, yet narratives revealed that a subset of transgender youth absolutely rejected parents, their values, and beliefs. In fact, some child development researchers have documented that rejecting parental beliefs and values was an important aspect of adolescent development (Eccles et al., 1993; Gutman & Eccles, 2007; Simmel, 1964). For example, the results section showcased Jay's narrative which fell somewhere between *forced independence* and *dissolved relationships* because Jay was reacting to the perception that he would be disowned by his dad. Jay described psychologically ending the relationship with his parents before his parents could make decisions about gender expression. This situation could be explained by Hill's (1958) ABC-X model and Boss and Greenberg's (1984) use of the model, in that, Jay was not reacting to the stressor event (factor-A), rather he reacted to his perception of the event

(factor-C), which gave meaning to his sense of family rejection and ambiguity surrounding family relationships.

Findings concerning self-prioritizing tendencies have shown that the majority of trans* youth in this study emphasized or overemphasized autonomous and authentic gender expression. The self-prioritization findings were consistent with Stein and Albro's (2001) assertion that sometimes arguers disregard the logic and rationale of opponents, instead choosing to enforce their own position or stance. The strength inherent in the ability to maintain a sense of self in the face of opposition, especially opposition from loved ones, speaks to trans* youth's sense of agency.

Trans* Youth's Agency and Adaptation

The last piece of this work is a general exploration of the ways in which ambiguous losses among transgender youth intersected with their ability "intervene in, resist or transform" (Pfeffer, 2012, pg. 5) their family relationships. Within youth's narratives it was difficult to get a clear image of the trajectory of their agency in relation to ambiguous loss. This section will discuss the points of intersection between narratives of ambiguous loss and the various self-determination tendencies.

As previously outlined, all types of relationship outcomes (psychological breaks, physical breaks, tolerance for ambiguity and recovery) intersected with trans* youth's agency (mutual-compromising, self-prioritizing, and self-subordinating). Researchers abandoned the initial assumption that specific tendencies were more likely to be related to specific relationship outcomes. For example, mutual-compromising tendencies trended toward mutuality, therefore one would expect positive adaptation in the context of mutual-compromising. However, that was not observed in this particular dataset. In fact,

even when participants experienced acceptance from parents ambiguous family breaks happened. Relationships changed regardless of whether parent's reactions were positive, negative, or both.

Within descriptions about mutual-compromising, transgender youth expressed the ways they tried to keep family intact while also struggling to find an outlet for authentic gender expression. Some participants described feeling happy and assured of their acceptance in family, while others described family breaks due to a general lack of intimacy or contradictory parental behaviors. For example, Maya discussed how her dad “just kind of let people be what they want.” However, Maya goes on to say “he never expressed any investment in me being genderqueer.” This narrative highlighted one example of how acceptance and support differ. Simply because a parent accepts their child's gender-variance that does not mandate that they support it.

Maya's narrative also demonstrated avoidance. Both parents and youth avoided conversations about gender, especially in the context of possible rejection. Youth described avoiding conversations concerning gender-variance and how they played along with parents' conceptualization of their gender, even when it was inauthentic and incorrect. Rahilly (2015) reported that parents of trans* youth “played along” when people misgendered their child. Similarly, this study found that youth played along with parents when parents misgendered them or misinterpreted their feelings associated with parent-child relationships. The results section discussed Sam playing along with zirs mother's image of their parent-child relationship. Ze said “I just pretend that everything is fine even when I am super mad at her”. Sam made a conscious and ongoing decision to avert family conflict through avoidance.

Avoidance narratives also showed that a lack of clarity contributed to ambiguous loss of family membership because parents avoided conversations concerning gender. Parental avoidance of conversations regarding gender communicated to youth the increased likelihood of rejection. Boss (1991) discussed situations similar in her research, in which respondents refused to integrate changes regarding family members as a defense mechanism, because the information was too painful. In some instances, participants in this study told interviewers the family interaction, directly following disclosure, went on like nothing had happened. In other instances, youth described losing all sense of intimacy with parents, suggesting that avoiding the topic of gender-variance also impeded parent-child relationships in other contexts.

Lastly, descriptions about *acquiescence* were linked primarily to psychological breaks and recovery. Youth were in subordinate positions within the family hierarchy and they felt they had very little control over decisions in their lives. Some youth discussed how they gave in to parental demands for certain types of clothing and products that transmitted a specific gender expression because they were dependent on their parents. For instance, some participants described situations where family members about clothes that reaffirmed parental gender expectation. Habib told interviewers “I need to talk with my mom and tell her...just don’t get me clothes at all”.

Acquiescence was also linked to positive relationship outcomes because participants avoided conflict or because youth chose to focus on what they had, instead of on what was missing. Dana West told interviewers how her parents would go to art openings to demonstrate support for her work, yet they refused to use her chosen name. Instead of demanding the use of her chosen name, she focused on the ways her parents

were there for her. Other participants had similar narratives, stating they allowed slipups regarding name changes and pronoun changes to slide, opting not to cause a scene or make a fuss.

Mutual-compromising tendencies findings have shown that tendencies towards mutuality were, in fact, useful tools to bring about positive family adjustment. Positive adaptation was particularly salient in examples of acceptance, suggesting consistency with previous literature documenting improved outcomes among gender and sexual minority youth in the context of parental acceptance (Ryan et al., 2010). However, narratives also revealed that no matter how hard parents and youth tried to emphasize mutuality, feelings of uncertainty about parent-child relationships lingered. Sometimes acceptance was not enough because acceptance is not the same thing as affirmation and support. Overall, the findings in the mutual-compromising category showed that even in the context of family acceptance and mutuality, youth navigated stress associated with feelings of ambiguous loss.

Intuitively, it is no surprise that self-subordinating tendencies were frequently discussed in relation to psychological breaks between youth and parents. The prevalence of loss in the context of self-subordinating tendencies suggests that parents' coercion resulted in significant family breaks. The surprising finding was the presence of positive adjustment in the context of self-subordinating, which suggests that families can adjust and change. For example, Amy's situation may have seemed hopeless up to the point when her dad changed his thinking and committed to understanding what she was experiencing.

Constraint revealed that youth subordinated themselves in response to their perception of how family and society would react, if they were to enact authentic gender expression. Because youth subordinated themselves, their actions could be viewed as volitional. When constraint is conceptualized as a volitional reaction to parental suppression then it makes sense that family breaks would be less prevalent. For instance, in the case of *constraint* participants buried gender nonconformity; therefore, youth were not confronted with the prospect of getting kicked out or prioritizing gender authenticity. There was very little bidirectional decision-making happening in the context of constraint, because youth had already chosen gender conformity. Youth who constrained their identity were, however, at a greater risk for identity ambiguity.

This study conceptualized identity ambiguity as a psychological break of self because feelings of inauthenticity led to feelings of ambiguity and ambivalence associated with personal identity. To illustrate, Karina remarked that she was told from a very young age that she was wrong-- she was not a girl; she was a boy. As Karina grew older, instead of continuing to progress her trans* identity, she internalized messages from society and tried to “put [being trans*] away”. When trans* youth spend years trying to endorse inauthentic gender expression they miss out on valuable socializing experience in their authentic gender identity. Examples of *constraint* highlighted the little pieces of self-identity that were shaved away by constant gender policing from society and family. Eventually, for some participants, the fight against gender policing became too exhausting, and youth opted to conform instead.

Psychological breaks were frequent in the context of gender suppression. Youth grew resentful and distrusting of parents because of parents’ coercive efforts to curb

gender nonconformity. Many narratives about suppressing gender nonconformity came from participants who also described suicidal ideation, suicide attempts, and lasting breaks with family and extended family because of parental attempts to eliminate gender nonconformity.

Youth who described hybridizing their identity also discussed the concept of secrecy and psychological breaks. Landau & Hissett (2008) proposed that selective sharing, secrecy, and concealment broke down family communication and obscured family boundaries and connectedness, despite physical presence. Youth felt that they could not be genuine with family and family felt that youth were disingenuous. Sometimes secrecy resulted because of overt rejection of gender-variant behaviors, or because youth felt rejection was a possible outcome. Either way, the presence of secrecy created a barrier that families had to work to overcome.

Within the self-prioritizing narratives, across all meaning units, participants primarily discussed physical and psychological breaks. Previous literature has well-documented that youth were homeless, couch surfing, or otherwise economically disadvantaged because of parental rejection (Cochran et al., 2002; Keuroghlian et al., 2014; Lombardi et al., 2001; Rosario, Schrimshaw, & Hunter, 2012; Ryan et al., 2009). On one hand, examples of *forced independence* showed the consistency of these findings. Youth expressed that their parents made a unilateral decision that forced youth to procure safety and stability for themselves. On the other hand, the narratives about *leaving without goodbye* and *dissolved relationships* suggested that youth made unilateral decisions as well. It should be made clear, youth's decisions were responses to the controlling, ambivalent and rejecting behaviors of parents. However, it cannot be denied

that some youth were not actually kicked out, rather they are shown the door and they made the decision to leave. This distinction is rather important. When youth are forced to live independently, their autonomy is taken from them, whereas when they choose independence, their autonomy remained intact. Whether a youth's sense of autonomy remains has important implications for their psychological well-being and their internal sense of self-esteem and self-efficacy, which is why tolerance for ambiguity suggests youth's positive adjustment.

The last point of discussion regarding links between relationship outcomes and trans* youth's agency is the prevalence of positive adaptation in relation to *standing one's ground* and *dissolved relationships*. In these two meaning units, youth made a decision, and stuck to it. The decision to cut out harmful relationships was a decision of courage. At the end of the wreckage, some participants found that parents were willing to reevaluate their stance on gender because of their child's ultimatum. Participants communicated to parents, "I don't need you in my life". Afterwards, some parents decided a relationship with their child was worth more than winning the gender battle.

Even when participants did not experience reconciliation with parents after giving their ultimatum, some experienced positive adaptation in the form of accepting ambivalent relationship. Boss (2006) said, "there are multiple and sometimes unexpected pathways to resilience... Sometimes fighting back, insisting on radical change, or going into crisis is better than continuing to endure... abuse and injustice" (p. 57-58). Examples of *standing one's ground* and *dissolved relationships* demonstrated less focus on adapting to the context of unsupportive family and more focused on adapting to context of no longer having an unsupportive family. Adaptation, then, came in the form of learning to

live with ambiguous loss, suggesting that ambiguous loss, adaptation, and trans* youth's agency are all intertwined.

This section discussed the links between transgender youth's experiences of ambiguous loss, and their ability to enact agency to determine the course of parent-child relationship outcomes. Despite youth's agency, psychological family breaks were the most prevalent findings highlighting the fact positive family adjustment requires collaboration between parents and their trans* youth.

This section highlighted the complicated nature of youth's experiences with psychological and physical breaks and adaptation. Because there was no one trajectory to avoid breaks or to bring about positive family adjustment, youth made the best decision by simulating possible outcomes. Even though their agency represented attempts at resiliency, sometimes trans* youth's decisions exposed them to greater risk. In the case of hard choices, there was often no preferable outcome. Youth often made decisions based on what they thought was the best course of action. For instance, when youth conceded to the "fact" that loss is imminent, they were surprised to find that parents wanted reconciliation. Also, when youth made a decision to conform gender in an effort to maintain family cohesion, they sometimes experienced loss regardless of their attempts to avoid it. The overarching point this research illustrates that parent-child relationships are complex for a number of reasons, and are not easily relegated to specific trajectories or absolutes.

Limitations and Future Directions

Limitations regarding methodology restricted the extent to which relationships can be identified with certainty. Semi-structured interview data collection method, while

appropriate, limited consistency. For instance, participants were asked questions naturally throughout the course of conversation, creating the opportunity for questions to be missed, misunderstood, or unanswered. Additionally, because the interviewer and interviewee worked in tandem to determine the progression of the interview, participants could decide how much or how little they wanted to discuss each topic, resulting in a dearth of information for some participants and abundance of information for others. Also, asking youth to provide a retrospective account of interpersonal family relationships created the potential for recall error, misinformation, or skewed accounts. Because access to parents could not be achieved, there was no way to cross-check the retrospective accounts.

Methodology concerning ethnographic content analysis also provided limitations on the quality of findings. This research confronted a multiplicity of information represented by retrospective accounts of family relationships at varying time points in trans* youth's lives. According to ethnographic content analysis, categories that are mutually exclusive and exhaustive are the most desirable (Smith et al., 1994). However, narratives often expressed complex ideas, representing a historical progression of trans* youth's interpersonal relationships marked by change and growth. Thus categories were not mutually exclusive, opting instead for maintaining the authenticity of the narratives and ideas represented therein. Because no categories were mutually exclusive further quantitative analyses were not performed. Instead, this study could only show the frequency that participants endorsed conceptual categories.

Furthermore, the best measure for reliability is reporting Kappa coefficients for all categories and subcategories, as a means of assessing the degree to which findings were

replicated by another coder. Unfortunately, due to the breadth of this project there was little opportunity to recruit another coder to record Kappas for refined coding. Instead of reporting Kappas, the author chose to demonstrate trustworthiness in the form of transparency regarding methods and the use of demonstrative quotes to illustrate abstract categories.

Lastly, findings are contingent upon two other methodological concerns regarding sampling and epistemology. Participants were recruited from urban city community centers and reflect a specific sociocultural location as a trans* person who is out about their trans* identity to some degree, and has received resources pertaining to the identity in some form. These narratives will likely be qualitatively different from transpersons not involved in community centers, not out about their trans* identity, and transpersons living in unique geographical contexts (e.g. in another country or in rural communities). Additionally, all interpretation of the data is subject to my genderqueer feminist epistemological lens. While the majority of the data was coded in tandem with another lab member, it cannot be denied that I was the primary researcher and held interpretative power in all analyses.

Further exploration of the statistical significance, strength, and direction of the relationships between trans* youth's agency and their experiences of ambiguous losses is needed. Further investigation is also needed to examine exactly why youth compromised, self-prioritized, and self-subordinated. Empirically linking trans* youth's agency to specific relationship outcomes could provide important implications for family acceptance and reconciliation interventions. Additionally, given that there is currently no research regarding transpersons' experiences with ambiguous loss, future research should

continue to examine ambiguous loss among trans youth. Moreover, an examination of trans* adults' experiences with ambiguous loss are likely to elucidate important developmental differences. Particularly, trans* adults may reveal differences in agency based on changes in different relationships, such as with peers, coworkers, parents, and partners.

Implications and Conclusion

This study began the discussion of trans* youth's experience with ambiguous loss, providing insight to how youth experience both types of ambiguous loss, as well as adaptation in the face of ambiguous loss. Next, the discussion provided an exploration of youth's agency, bringing awareness to the fact that youth exert control within parent-child relationships. This study has revealed the veritable usefulness of ambiguous loss and self-determination theories applied to transgender populations. Also, this study has contributed to literature pertaining to trans-identified young people, creating greater visibility of transpersons within academia and academic literature. Finally, the concerted efforts to explore complexity has contributed to an increased awareness about the lives of transpersons.

Findings from this study suggest a number of implications for social service providers, particularly therapists and community organizers focused on transpersons' needs. The major implication of this research is that trans* lives are complex and more research is needed to explain those complexities. It is important for social service providers and academic researchers to continue to promote and absorb knowledge about the range of experiences among trans* youth within the context of interpersonal relationships. For instance, this study has shown that trans* youth continue to experience

rejection, negative reactions, abuse, victimization, and transphobia. These are important findings concerning community organizations, therapists, and academic researchers, because they reveal that trans* youth still need services geared towards helping them navigate family relationships and gain access to community resources should rejection happen.

Additionally, consistent with previous literature, this study has shown that a number of trans* youth experience family acceptance and family support, which ought to be better reflected in the research. However, acceptance remains an issue addressed by only a handful of scholars. It is also important to generate scholarship that addresses the range of experiences trans* youth must navigate in the context of family, instead of dichotomizing experiences into acceptance and rejection. Ambiguous loss theory, as a framework, captured complexity and a spectrum of experiences which helped to illuminate the reality of trans* lives-- the wins, losses, and ambivalence found therein.

Finally, family therapists can benefit greatly from the ambiguous loss findings. Through this study's findings, therapists can work to normalize feelings of uncertainty, ambivalence, and ambiguous loss associated with ambiguous parental reactions, parental rejection, and family transitions and adjustment. In contrast to previous studies, this study shows that trans* youth's experiences with ambiguous loss are specific to this population and reflect nuances in interpersonal relationships regarding gender minority status and a dominant cultural belief system of cisnormativity. Family therapists are encouraged to pay attention to these nuances as a way to validate trans* youth's losses that are ambiguous. Also, family therapists may consider the fact that trans* youth have varied motivations underlying their agency to adhere to parental demands for gender conformity

or not. Therefore, providers should avoid a thinking modality that suggests there is a best way to resolve conflict with parents.

Table 1. Sample demographic characteristics ($N = 90$)

	<i>n</i>	%
Ethnicity		
Irish	10	11%
Canadian	4	4%
U.S. Caucasian	43	48%
Latino(a)/Hispanic/Mexican	11	12%
African American	9	10%
Native American	6	7%
Pacific Islander/Chinese/Asian	4	5%
Another racial/ethnic background	4	5%
Age		
15 - 19	23	25%
20 - 23	43	48%
24 - 30	24	27%
Assigned Sex at Birth		
Male	38	42%
Female	52	58%
Current Gender		
Transwomen	33	37%
Transmen	28	31%
Third-gender	29	32%
Genderqueer	47	52%
Primary Sexual Attraction		
Mostly heterosexual	20	22%
Gay or lesbian	17	19%
Bisexual	6	7%
Queer	29	32%
Pansexual or fluid sexuality	15	17%
Asexual	3	3%
Family Educational Background		
More than college	11	12%
Some college	39	43%
High school or less	9	10%
Didn't know	8	9%
Didn't answer	23	26%
Academic Achievement		
More than college	1	1%
College graduate	22	24%
Some college	32	36%
High school graduate	16	18%
Some high school	19	21%

Note: the sample N = 90. Percentages for ethnicity equal great than 100 because a few participants identified as more than one ethnicity and percentages for current gender are great than 100 because current gender categories were not mutually exclusive. Third gender represents genderqueer and participants who did not want to be labeled within a gender binary.

Table 2. Ethnographic content analysis coding protocol.

ECA Steps Described in Altheide (1996)	
Step 1.	Pursue a specific problem to be investigated
Step 2.	Become familiar with the process and context of the information source
Step 3.	Become familiar with several (6 to 10) examples of relevant documents, noting particularly the format. Select a unit of analysis (e.g. each article), which may change
Step 4.	List several items or categories (variables) to guide data collection and draft a protocol (data collection sheet)
Step 5.	Test the protocol by collecting data from several documents
Step 6.	Revise the protocol and select several additional cases to further refine the protocol
Step 7.	Arrive at a sampling rationale and strategy
Step 8.	Collect the data, using the preset codes, if appropriate, and many descriptive examples
Step 9.	Perform data analysis, including conceptual refinement and data coding. Read notes and data repeatedly and thoroughly
Step 10.	Compare and contrast “extremes” and “key differences” within each category or item. Make textual notes. Write brief summaries or overviews of data for each category (variable)
Step 11.	Combine the brief summaries with an example of the typical case as well as the extremes. Illustrate with materials from the protocol(s) for each case. Note surprises and curiosities about these cases and other materials
Step 12.	Integrate the findings with your interpretation and key concepts in another draft (p. 23-24).

Note. Reprinted from “Hansen, B. (2013). *Grounding ethnographic content analysis, etic as well as emic strategies; A study of context for instructional designers*. Berlin: Universitätsverlag der TU Berlin” Copyright 2013 by Universitätsverlag der TU Berlin.

Table 3. Codebook: Parent Nodes, child nodes and meaning units with coding, definitions, and source and reference frequencies ($N = 90$)

	Definition	Source Frequencies	Reference Frequencies
Relationship outcomes			
Ambiguous losses	Type I: Physical absence and psychological presence (Physical breaks).	79	728
	Type II: Physical presence and psychological absence (Psychological breaks).		
Physical breaks	Type 1: Ambiguous physical breaks between trans* youth and family, while remaining psychologically present	41	126
<u>Parent Initiated</u>	When parents initiated physical breaks	17	25
<i>Indirect kicked out</i>	Youth were kicked out of the home due to reasons not directly related to gender nonconformity (i.e. not having a job)	5	6
<i>Direct kicked out</i>	Youth were kicked out because of gender nonconformity	13	21
<i>Withdrawn financial support</i>	Youth said that parents stopped financially supporting them	10	25
<u>Youth Initiated</u>	When youth initiated physical breaks	28	39
<i>Avoidance of family of origin</i>	Youth physically avoided engaging with parents	10	17
<i>Youth left home</i>	Youth ran away from home	18	22

	Definition	Source Frequencies	Reference Frequencies
<u>External Forces</u>	Youth and parents were not directly implicated in the decision to break, an external force has taken away their decision-making power	15	30
<i>Removed from home</i>	Child protective services removed youth from home due to unsafe environment	4	10
<i>Death of a parent</i>	One or both parents died causing a physical loss of the parent	11	20
Psychological Breaks	Type 2: Physical presence and psychological absence. Youth described estranged parent-child relationships	74	602
<u>Youth Initiated</u>	Participants took some sense of ownership over psychological breaks	58	241
<i>Perceived rejection</i>	Youth were psychologically convinced their parents would not accept gender nonconformity	32	54
<i>Grew resentful</i>	Youth experienced indignation towards parents because parents did not accept gender nonconformity	29	52
<i>Acted Insubordinate</i>	When youth said directly that their own behavior caused damage to parent-child relationships.	23	29
<i>Pulling away</i>	Youth began to psychologically distant themselves from parents	25	41
<i>Perceived disrespect</i>	Youth described instances when parents acted disrespectfully towards them	22	65

	Definition	Source Frequencies	Reference Frequencies
	or parents did not take their gender identity seriously		
<u>Parent Initiated</u>	Youth described parents decisions or behaviors which resulted in psychological breaks	67	273
<u>Abuse</u>	Youth described parental verbal and physical abuse	23	46
<i>Displayed ambivalence</i>	Youth described instances when their parents acted in a contradictory manner or displayed mixed reactions to gender nonconformity	38	76
<i>Ignore gender variance</i>	Parents ignored youth's gender-variance	27	42
<i>Displayed disappointment</i>	Youth described instances when parents were noticeably disappointed in the trajectory of the youth's life	8	12
<i>Unrealistic expectations</i>	Youth described parents as having an idealized expectation of who they and parents could not let go of these expectations	21	28
<i>Lack of intimacy</i>	You described not feeling intimately connected to parents, sometimes saying "my parents don't know me at all"	33	51
<i>Lack of emotional support</i>	Participants described instances when parents withdrew emotional support from youth	13	18

	Definition	Source Frequencies	Reference Frequencies
Adaptation	Youth recovered from ambiguous loss or learned to live with family boundary ambiguity	64	239
Tolerate Ambiguity	Youth learned to live with ambiguity regarding relationship statuses with parents	34	53
<i>Normalize ambivalence</i>	Youth normalized the fact that their relationships were ambiguous	28	38
<i>Hopefulness</i>	Youth recognized that parents needed time to adjustment to gender transition or gender nonconformity	12	15
Recovery	Parent-child relationships recovered after an adjustment period	56	185
<i>Reconciliation</i>	Youth experienced parental attempts at reconciliation after a break	26	81
<i>Understanding</i>	Youth experienced parental attempts to understand trans* related topics	22	41
<i>Attempted Acceptance</i>	Youth experienced parental attempts to accept gender nonconformity	33	63
Parental Reactions			
Alter gender	Parents attempted to alter gender expression	56	215
<i>Negative Reinforcement</i>	Parents altered gender by punishing gender nonconformity	36	48
<i>Coercion</i>	Parents altered gender through force or threat	21	33

	Definition	Source Frequencies	Reference Frequencies
<i>Normative Socialization</i>	Parents altered gender as a way to normalize gender roles	24	27
<i>Positive Reinforcement</i>	Parents altered gender expression by rewarding gender conformity	5	5
No Alter gender	Parents did not attempt to alter gender expression	34	40
Trans* youth's agency			
Mutual-compromising	Youth and parents compromised personal beliefs, focused on mutuality	61	115
<i>Acquiescence</i>	Youth reluctantly gave in to parent's demands for gender conformity	27	33
<i>Acceptance</i>	Parents accepted authentic gender expression and gender nonconformity	26	39
<i>Conflict Avoidance</i>	Youth and parents avoided discussing gender nonconformity to avoid conflict and stress	26	43
Self-Prioritizing	Youth prioritized authentic gender expression	63	202
<i>Forced independence</i>	Youth were forced to independently support themselves without help from parents	26	42

	Definition	Source Frequencies	Reference Frequencies
<i>Leaving without goodbye</i>	Youth ran away from home or moved away without contact with parents	18	22
<i>Stand ground</i>	Youth demanded acceptance and validation of trans* identity	36	57
<i>Turning point</i>	Youth become overwhelmed with trying to curb gender nonconformity and began to embrace it	17	21
<i>Dissolve relationship</i>	Youth ended relationships with parents when they believed parents would never accept gender nonconformity	29	60
Self-Subordinating	Youth subordinated the expression of gender nonconformity	41	97
<i>Suppressed</i>	Youth experienced a perpetual state of control related to parental attempts to eradicate gender nonconformity	23	38
<i>Constraint</i>	Youth personally suppressed or attempted to eradicate gender nonconformity	20	35
<i>Hybridize identity</i>	Youth lived a dual life of expressing gender conformity and gender nonconformity	19	24

Note. Parent nodes are in bold, child nodes are in regular font and meaning units are in italics. Parent nodes are aggregated, meaning all references in the related child nodes and meaning units are counted as comprising the parent node. When data is aggregated at parent nodes, sources are only counted once while references are counted for every time it is coded and who codes (i.e. if one lab partner coded acceptance and another coded the same reference as acceptance it is counted as 2 references and 1 source).

Table 4. Trans* youth's disclosure of trans* identity and parents' responses ($N = 90$).

	<i>n</i>	%
Disclosure of Trans* Identity		
Out to at least one Parent	76	84%
Out to at least one Sibling	56	62%
Out to at least some Ext. Family	54	60%
Parental Responses		
Initially positive	19	21%
Initially negative	22	24%
Initially ambiguous	35	39%
Not out	14	16%
Parental Support		
Autonomy support	40	44%
Trans* support	50	56%
Financial support	35	39%
Family Breaks		
Break in relationship	39	43%
Break in financial support	10	11%
Break in general support	21	23%

Note: Ext. signifies disclosure of trans identity to at least one extended family member.*

Table 5. Ambiguous loss relational outcomes: Subcategories, meaning units and exemplars ($N = 79$)

Psychological Breaks ($n = 74$) “It became more and more upsetting to me that there was no communication. My parents never asked me about anything. It felt like a very hands-off approach, which I appreciated in a lot of ways and like still appreciate now a lot. And you know, we all have something against our parents and that’s one of the big things for me... I felt like there was never an attempt to get to know me really. We were just like three adults inhabiting a house together (*, Other [Self-Labeled], 22, F-GQ)

Parent Initiated ($n = 67$)

Unrealistic Expectations ($n = 21$)

“I didn’t fit in ya know? I didn’t see me as a boy, ya know? The majority of the time it was in high school. Cuz in high school my mom thought well maybe it’s just a phase and to get me out of the phase she put me in the junior air force academy that came out of the school and she put me in football (Lo, 22, Latina, M-F)

Abuse ($n = 23$)

“I have got into a couple physical fights with my dad...he is usually drunk. Somehow we just get off on this track and we will start exchanging words and stuff and he says the wrong thing to me and I snap. It usually starts with pushing and it gets into shoving and then into punching and then wrestling and kicking and it has gotten pretty ugly a couple of times. Yeah, my dad and I have always fought ever since I was little. He has some control issues and he is kind of a bully at times (Amy, Native American, 18, M-F).

Disappointment ($n = 8$)

“The disappointment that she would express when I wasn’t immediately doing what she wanted. I mean, it’s weird because it was always dress issue. It was family photos. It was family reunions. It was weddings. It was any situation in which it was important that I appeared feminine (*, white, 22, F-M/GQ)

Ignore Gender Variance ($n = 27$)

“She just didn’t want to see that. It’s like having a double life growing up. In her eyes I have to be a boy. In my eyes I knew I was a girl. My sisters have known this forever... so everyone basically was in on it besides my mother and that is the sad part” (Tina, Pacific Islander, 20, M-F)

Ambivalence ($n = 38$)

“My relationship with my dad, I suppose is a bit more... when I came out to him... there’s always been an awkwardness between us basically. I think because of the way I am...I kind of sense people sense something’s not right but they can’t quite put their fingers on it. I think it was like that for him for quite a while, but particularly the last few years. Like the last two years it’s been quite

strange with him. When I came out initially as trans, things got really... like not talking and like he wouldn't look at me. Sometimes I'd be dressed feminine and sometimes not but yeah he just wouldn't look at me" (Nev, Irish, 25, M-F).

Lack of Intimacy (n = 33)

"After I came out to her, she didn't care much about me... she no longer cared what was going on in my life, she no longer cared what I felt" (Allay, Latina, 23, M-F).

Lack of Emotional Support (n = 13)

"I so badly didn't want to go to school I hid under-under a bed and stayed there until I pissed myself... To avoid going to school because of getting harassment so often. I think my dad got very frustrated with me and I was told to stand up for myself and that sort of thing. When I did it was even worse" (Girlfriend, Irish, 30, M-F).

Youth Initiated (n = 65)

Perceived Disrespect (n = 22)

"I was probably 8 years old and I said I want to do what that guy did. And she was just kind of like "oh eat your cereal, watch your cartoons", or something like that. But I don't know, I was trying to figure out a way I could convince people that I wasn't just being a little kid and saying weird stuff... Yeah. It's really hard... I think I was a pretty articulate eight year old, but I guess not convincing enough" (Dylan, Native American, 21, F-GQ).

Perceived Rejection (n = 32)

"I'm really upset that I probably won't... especially after I tell him, ya know, about me being who I am and everything... that he probably won't let me see [my siblings] or anything and I don't know, like I'm not even sure I'd even want to go visit because of if I get any kind of discrimination or anything like that" (Jamie, Pacific Islander, 17, F-GQ)

Pulling Away From Family of Origin (n = 25)

"My relationships were good for a while. I drifted away mid to late teen years. Now I am much more comfortable with my mother than my father, but I would say I am less close to both of them" (Rachel, white, 19, M-F).

Grew Resentful of Parents (n = 29)

"I'm an only child, so we only had each other to fight with. I was also a referee a lot and I still hold a lot of... whatever... I don't know what word I'm looking for. I'm still pissed that I had to do that for a long time. Resentment I guess would be the word" (Dee, white, 25, F-M)

Acted Insubordinate (n = 23)

"I was the really hard to deal with kid. When I lived at home I was like abusive towards my parents, verbally abusive and physically abusive. I drank a lot and

smoked a lot of pot. I was a huge asshole and didn't go to school and had a huge attitude problem and like self-mutilation and eating problems and everything. So I was a huge, huge handful and they didn't know what to do with me" (Jay, white 21, F-M)

Physical Breaks (n = 41) "I decided that I really didn't ever want to talk to them again. I didn't want to see them. I didn't want to have anything to do with them. Our relationship was not supportive or good or anything that I wanted from parents" (Rain, Latino, 22, F-M/GQ).

Parent Initiated (n = 17)

Kicked Youth Out Indirectly Related to Trans-Identifying (n = 5)

"My mom has kicked me out, quite a few times... Actually, not too long ago. That's why I'm living with here, cuz my mom kicked me out... Just for not getting a job and not doing anything with myself" (Raphael, white, 19, F-M)

Kicked Youth Out Directly Related to Trans-Identifying (n = 13)

"My parents had kicked me out. I went to Chicago, then came back. Because they were like, 'hey, come back.' You know? 'We want you to come back.' And the second time when I was in the mental hospital, they kicked me out again as soon as I got home" (Kayla, white, 20, M-F)

Withdrawn Financial and Concrete Support (n = 10)

"I decided when I came out that I knew I could lose my friends and family if I did that but I knew it was important to me, as someone who struggled with depression and suicide. I knew I was going to I transition or kill myself, so I transitioned. I told my parents I need to do this. So, they disowned me for two years... cut off all the support they had for me when I was in school. That was really difficult" (Jax, white, 21, F-M).

Youth Initiated (n = 28)

Avoidance of Family of Origin (n = 10)

"I remember when me and my dad use to fight a lot. We use to go to my friend's house and sleep on the couch a lot. Like it was just one friend but I use to go over there all the time and just stay the night. I would stay the night like 4 days out of a week, every week just so I could get away from him" (Turbo, white, 21, F-GQ).

Leave Family of Origin Home (n = 18)

I left when I was 16. It was fairly gradual in terms. The first place I went was that job training program and then from there just kind of stayed away. And it wasn't secretive or what not. I had plans to run away for years before that. Like bag packed for years because I was just so ready to go but I never really did" (Sam, white, 25, F-GQ).

External Force (n = 15)

Removed From Home By Child Protective Services (n = 4)

“We were on our own. My mom was seeing abusive people and stuff like that. When I would challenge anything at that point she would um...no, no, no. let's go back. There was abuse, anyway we got taken away from my mom, in fifth grade. I got taken away, all of us did” (Karina, Latina, 20, M-F)

Death of a Parent (n = 11)

“I had an identity crisis when I was 16 and I had a period...where I chose to be homeless, but it wasn't like really homeless it was like 'I don't want to go home no more.' I slept outside a lot. It was the summer. I slept at my friend's house a lot. Then I went through a period of time where I couldn't go home because after my mom died it was like that's not my house that's her house and I can't be there” (*, white, 23, F-GQ)

Note: An asterisk is the demographic label indicates that the participant skipped the question or the question was not asked by the interviewer.

Table 6. Adjustment relational outcomes: Subcategories, meaning units and exemplars ($N = 64$)

Recovery ($n = 56$) “I didn’t hear my dad’s initial reaction because my mom told him. She said that at first he was like, ‘Well, this can’t change how I think of my child, so why do I have to play along?’ When my mom told me it was obvious it hurt her. She was ready to be supportive and already thinking oh yeah this makes sense at that point and for him to say I don’t have to play along hurt her...I just thought, ‘Okay, I don’t have to go see him anymore then if he is going to be that way.’ And he never expressed that to me, I think it was pretty short lived because now he is very supportive, he calls me by the right names and pronouns, etc. etc.” (Todd, white, 23, F-M)

Reconciliation ($n = 26$)

“We have had a great relationship for the past couple of years. Things are a lot better... She had a couple of years to herself, like when we didn’t have a whole lot of contact my first years of college. But, especially in like the last two years, I think we’ve gotten on much better terms just because that power imbalance has evened out” (Antonio, 22, Latino, F-M/GQ)

Understanding ($n = 22$)

“I think that once they got it, they got it...Because I was so happy. They both were the witness at my name change and they were divorced at the time, so it was really funny, because they didn’t even want to see each other...but here they were...which was great” (Dee, white, 35, F-M)

Attempted acceptance ($n = 33$)

“Well, I only told [my parents] two months ago, so they are still kind of getting used to the idea. But, now they are at least trying to use my new name. My brother just had a couple of kids so they are saying uncle because they don’t want to confuse the kids” (Keith, white, 24, F-M/GQ)

Tolerate Ambiguity ($n = 34$) “Me and my dad had a really bad relationship when I was young. Like, really bad. And... a lot of my siblings don’t even know about it, which is surprising because I’m like the middle child, but my little sister was too young and my other siblings they were just, off in their own like teen world and weren’t really paying attention to it. But I mean, me and my dad are okay now. Somewhat. Like we still fight a lot but... other than that, we’re a dysfunctional-functional family, somewhat I guess. I guess that’s what you’d call it. Because it’s functional, but it’s not at the same time” (Turbo, white, 21, F-GQ).

Normalize ambivalence ($n = 28$)

“Our relationship is kinda...I want to say we are working into it, more so, but right now we are having like this little spat. But, my connection with all three of my parents... I never really had a connection with the male figures, and then it’s like with my mom... It’s like that don’t ask, don’t tell policy. It’s, ‘oh you are

my son I love you ,but that's it'... So yeah.. I don't see no real tight, tight close connection with my parents right now.” (Layla, African-American, 24, M-GQ)

Hopefulness (n = 12)

My mom has talked about [my gender] a lot with my boyfriend. My boyfriend was a great big help and now my mom is keeping her comments to herself. My mom used to lash out at me, not like verbal abuse, but like demeaning of what I felt. Of course after all her...verbal lashings is a little too harsh, but her comments, if it was on the phone after I hung up I would cry, cry ,cry. I would express these feelings of hurt and frustration to my boyfriend and then my boyfriend would talk with my mom...I think it was first initialized [sic] by the fact that I told my parents that my boyfriend doesn't care and they were insistent that yes he did, so my mom had to hear it from him. So that's where it started off and they talked for a long time, several times. But she's keeping her comments to herself” (*, white, 21, F-GQ).

Note: An asterisk is the demographic label indicates that the participant skipped the question or the question was not asked by the interviewer.

Table 7. Trans* youth's agency: Subcategories, meaning units and exemplars ($N = 90$)

Mutual-compromising ($n = 61$) “My grandmother was the only one that I was really worried about because she of all people was the one that I was closest with. She and I were like this [crosses fingers]! She told me she didn't support that but she still loved me and she wasn't going to stop talking to me and that was the biggest deal to me (Dandra, African American, 22, M-F)”.

Conflict Avoidance ($n = 26$)

“I have never sat them down, I have kind of talked to my mom about it .So yes, my mom explicitly knows but I have never told really explicitly anyone in my family except my brother about stuff, so I assume they know but not necessarily because I have sat down and had a talk with them. I think it is just obvious” (Jay, white, 24, F-M/GQ)

Acquiescence ($n = 27$)

“At first she didn't want to hear about it and ‘this is too much’. She kind of tried to get me to delay everything, delay treatment. When I got my medication, she pleaded with me not to take it. She had the idea that she wanted me to wait five years. At the time, I felt an awful sense of urgency, that this has to be dealt with and I couldn't wait. She was awfully persistent and I waited” (Girlfriend, Irish, 30, M-F).

Acceptance ($n = 26$)

“My parents had considered the idea that I might grow up to be gay, they hadn't considered the idea that I might grow up to be trans*. So she was sort of uh I guess, a bit freaked out at first, but wanting to be supportive. And then she sort of became really interested in transgender issues and I guess did some research and then she sort of got used to the idea” (Rachel, white, 19, M-F).

Self-Subordinating Tendencies ($n = 41$) “My transition and my retransition was all based in 2001 [when] my biological father and two of my biological siblings came back into my life... I just felt a moral obligation to show my brother and sister that I didn't want to be a freak, but they were new to the country and they were adjusting in their own new high school. I just didn't want them to... it was selfish of me to [transition]. I didn't want them to have any more work... The last thing I wanted for either of them was to have to deal with their big tranny sister” (Tia, Pacific Islander, 25, M-F).

Constraint ($n = 20$)

“When I told them, they said they never had any idea really and I think it’s true. I never really gave them an idea because I kept everything hidden. I didn’t know what they would think. I didn’t want to disappoint them that’s a big thing... I didn’t want to disappoint them or make them feel bad or make their lives harder” (*, Latina, 18, M-F).

Suppression (n = 23)

“He’d made me go change. My stepmother tried to get me to... she wanted to do a whole face of makeup on me and I kind of freaked out on her. He actually made me sit there and let her apply makeup. I found little stuff that I like to wear. I do my eyes that’s about it. But that was a horrifying experience because I’d never looked so much like a girl in my entire life. And he just made sure to break down like every possible line of respect I could have with him on gender” (Henry, white, 16, F-GQ).

Hybridized Identity (n = 19)

“My mom definitely had issues with clothes, which I mostly dealt with by taking an extra set of clothes in my backpack to school and then changing there. There were more conflicts around clothes for the sinful thing. She is very feminist. I don’t think she would ask me to change like behavior or act masculine but she had serious issue with clothing” (Antonio, Latino, 22, F-M/GQ).

Self-Prioritizing Tendencies (n = 63) “I hate, hate, hate shopping and always have. [My parents] went to the girls section looking at clothes and I would be like ‘I don’t want any of these clothes.’ They made me try on all these pair of jeans and it was horrible. I was like, ‘I want my painter pants from Value Village.’ They were like ‘No!’ Then, after, they kind of realized and were like, ‘We’ll just take this kid to Fred Meyer and buy them painter pants” (Alex, white, 16, F-GQ).

Forced Independence (n = 26)

“My mom is actually a lesbian and her family disowned her too growing up. So... But my dad, we never really got along. He just always... both my parents always favored my little brother over me. I don’t know. I have just been disowned. I’ve been on my own since I was 16. So, I don’t really have family except for my cousins” (Taylor, Native American, 21, F-M).

Leaving Without Goodbye (n = 18)

“When I was like a teenager, adolescent, I had a very poor relationship with my parents. I think, as most teenagers do, I was pretty shut off from them. I fought with them a lot. And then, once I was like seventeen or eighteen, I started to

develop much better relationships with them. Once I left home, my relationship with them became much better” (Ray, white, 22, F-GQ/M).

Standing One’s Ground (n = 36)

“I remember hearing, ‘little girls don’t do that’. Or, I would always play with the boys... and I couldn’t play with the boys, I had to play with the dolls. I didn’t want to play with the dolls. I was just really rebellious. Even if I did hear it, I wouldn’t really hear it. I just really wouldn’t have it. So, even if my mom... I think she just kind of gave up at some point too. She just didn’t want to continue arguing with me or trying to reason with me, because I just wasn’t going to do it” (Max, Latino, 24, F-M).

Turning Point (n = 17)

“I was in my kitchen. I was washing dishes and all of the sudden I get a call from my parents. They were screaming at me on the other end and saying, ‘I was messing up my life and I would be dead in ten years from injecting black market testosterone... that I was ruining myself and my future and that I needed to come back for the summer and go back, quit school, or else’. I was like well... ‘Or else’...This is something I need to do. You know, I decided when I came out that I knew I could lose my friends and family if I did that, but, I knew it was important to me. As someone who struggled with depression and suicide, I’m like I knew I was going to transition or kill myself. So I transitioned” (Jax, white, 21, F-M).

Dissolved Relationships (n = 29)

“I mean honestly, I don’t really think about why [they don’t believe I’m trans] I don’t...I mean especially at this point. The only reason why the period of not talking to them has only been 8 months is because I needed help to survive or else I would’ve been living on the streets. Otherwise, it would’ve been you know, as soon as possible. I’ve wanted to lose contact with them since I was really young. So I mean, I don’t know, I don’t exactly what it is or what their thought process is and honestly it doesn’t matter to me, I don’t care at this point...Hopefully I will never talk to them again. Or, either of my siblings” (Emma, white, 24, M-F/GQ).

Note. Categories are in bold, subcategories in italics. An asterisk is the demographic label indicates that the participant skipped the question or the question was not asked by the interviewer.

Table 8. Frequencies of trans* youth's agency in relation to relationship outcomes ($N = 90$)

	Psychological Break (70%, $n = 74$)	Physical Break (48%, $n = 41$)	Adaptation (51%, $n = 64$)
	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>
Mutual-compromising tendencies (68%, $n = 61$)	31	10	15
Acceptance ($n = 26$)	6	1	6
Acquiescence ($n = 27$)	11	1	5
Avoidance ($n = 26$)	22	9	6
Self-prioritizing tendencies (70%, $n = 63$)	39	29	22
Dissolve relationship ($n = 29$)	20	21	11
Forced independence ($n = 26$)	14	19	5
Leaving ($n = 18$)	11	9	4
Stand ground ($n = 36$)	15	2	10
Turning point ($n = 17$)	7	4	3
Self-subordinating tendencies (44%, $n = 41$)	23	7	7
Constraint ($n = 20$)	10	0	2
Hybridize identity ($n = 19$)	10	3	3
Suppressed $n = 23$)	14	5	3

Note: Using a matrix coding query, this table shows the frequency of agency responses as they intersect with various relationships outcomes.

Table 9. Agency responses in relation to relationship outcomes: Subcategories, meaning units and exemplars (N = 90)

	Psychological Breaks (n = 65)	Physical Breaks (n = 45)	Adaptation (n = 64)
Mutual-compromising Tendencies (68%, n = 61)	My dad, my dad is just kind of lets people be what they want to be. He has never expressed any investment in me being gender queer or gender nonconforming, but also has never tried to influence anything (Maya, white, 22, F-GQ)	My mom tries to make me really femmy. I moved out she's controlling. She doesn't actually think I'm gonna go through [transitioning].... She tries to get me to wear jewelry. But dresses and stuff... My dad doesn't care he kind encourages my tomboy ways really. He spends a lot of time playing sports with me (Tobias, White, 19, F-M).	I assume they completely accepted it because they paid for my surgery. My parents told me they'd pay for 4 years of college. I finished in 2 and a half. The cost of surgery was less than the cost of having gone to school, so I asked if they'd pay. They discussed and came back to me with yes (Casey, White, 24, M-F).
Acceptance (n = 26)	I'm trying to get them to admit that I'm at least part of a trans community but it seems like they're still in denial (*, White, 21, F-GQ).	I struggled a lot with depression and anxiety and during a lot of those periods I just cut off contact with my parents and didn't talk to them for a couple months... My politics were radicalized and I came home and got caught shoplifting glitter and tried to defend myself and was also coming out as genderqueer and Trans and all of those things went awfully,	My parents didn't go out of their way to support me but maybe, I don't know what they could have done anyways. But I feel like I did a lot of that without any of their input at all, ..., I think I get along with my parents when I see them but we're not particularly close. We're maybe slowly getting closer now that we're adults but
Avoidance (n = 26)			

	Psychological Breaks (n = 65)	Physical Breaks (n = 45)	Adaptation (n = 64)
Acquiescence (n = 27)	<p>My mom would always tell me to please compromise with the clothing, cuz she didn't want me dressing like a dude. She'd be like, 'Okay. At least get this; it's not as feminine, but it's for girls.' And I'd always get pissed at her and like, 'what's the difference? If I'm gonna get those girl jeans in 3 sizes than what my size is, it's like the equivalent of getting guys pants cuz they're both gonna be baggy'. She just wanted, I don't know, the clothes is really [the primary issue]... I usually compromised. For a while I didn't mind. (Habib, White, 18, M-F)</p>	<p>like really badly. (Batboy, White, 23, F-GQ)</p> <p>When I wanted to start changing pronouns and things like that, my name, It was like 'oh uhmm' [signally hesitation]. And even then it was a little more, he was a little more detached and kind of let things happen. I think the part that's been hard for him, has been over the last couple of years since I've been [transitioning] I don't know... Like we were estranged for a bit too and then when we started hanging out more it's building that father-son relationship that I think he struggles with it because he's looking for...ya know, some kind of stereotypical whatever, and that's just not the kind of guy I am. (Dee, White, 25, F-M)</p>	<p>not that close (Margaret, White, 26M-F/GQ)</p> <p>I mean my parents and I have a lot of love for each other and I think that like that is actually what makes it really difficult. Again, this in this moment of life I have a lot of privilege because this is difficult... if I could just cut off contact it would probably be a lot easier for me emotionally but I love my parents and I know they love me and I know a lot of this stuff is coming from a place of love not coming from a place of hatred or bigotry. It is coming from this place of real concern because they think they know what is best for me, problem is what they think is best for me, it's probably not (Justin, White, 26. F-GQ/M).</p>

	Psychological Breaks (n = 65)	Physical Breaks (n = 45)	Adaptation (n = 64)
Self-Prioritizing Tendencies (70%, n = 63) Dissolved Relationship (n = 29)	<p>With my mom, it's like that don't ask, don't tell policy. It's, 'oh you are my son. I love you, but that's it'. We don't talk about my personal life. We didn't do it when I was younger and I don't see why we should do it now. (Layla, 24, African American, M-GQ).</p>	<p>I really don't know I have tried to give up a lot of my expectations about what my family is going to do so that when it happens it will be a really awesome surprise. But for now I just accept that this is where they're at and if I want to try to have a relationship with them I have to meet them where they're at and I'm not entirely sure If I want to do that so I'm still trying to figure it out. (Jax, White, 21, F-M)</p>	<p>I liked living with my family. Like if it's like 2 weeks at a time. No more than that! I love hanging out there on the weekends, but I can't be at my families more than 10 or 20% of the time. I can't do it. Ugh! (Jamie, White, 21, M-F).</p>
Leaving Without Goodbye (n = 18)	<p>I was scared and yeah I was closeted for a very, very short point in my life...I only was doing that because I was scared of-which eventually happened- my family's reaction and how people would handle it and, you know, being bullied and stuff like that. But all of that still happened. So I was just like "hey fuck it!" If everything's gonna happen anyway, I might as well just be me. I mean, I</p>	<p>I don't remember exactly what the context of our argument was, but She no longer cared what was going on in my life. She no longer cared what I felt. I told her that if it was best that I would just leave, and that was just more to see what she would react to. She told me that if I left that she would thank god. And I left. So I pretty much took it upon myself to grant</p>	<p>When I was like a teenager, adolescent, I had a very poor relationship with my parents. I think, as most teenagers do, I was pretty shut off from them. I fought with them a lot. And then, once I was like seventeen or eighteen, I started to develop much better relationships with them. Once I left home, my relationship with them became much better" (Ray, Canadian, 22, F-GQ/M).</p>

	Psychological Breaks (n = 65)	Physical Breaks (n = 45)	Adaptation (n = 64)
	don't need to keep getting beat up and keep lying to myself. (Nikki, African American, 22, M-F)	her, her wish. (Allay, 23, Latina, M-F)	
Standing Ground (n = 36)	When I used to go to synagogue I used to wear basketball shorts and my basketball jersey under my dress and my skirts. So then she found out and she would ground me. I mean She wasn't very happy. I don't know if it was disrespecting the temple or wearing boy's clothes underneath the dresses because I said I wasn't going to do it (Jay, White, 21, F-M)	Every single time I've gone home, my parents still are not understanding and won't let me live as a girl. So um, I decided, 'well, ok, whatever. I don't care.' (Kayla, White, 20, M-F)	I always got Barbies for Christmas. But the only things I played with were like the horses and like the dogs and stuff like, the dolls were like a toss... I mean, they bought me girl toys and I just ignored them. I don't know if that's like influencing or that's like, 'I have a girl, I buy girl toys.' You know, that's just common sense...they've always just known I was like a wild child (Emily, White, 22, F-GQ),
Forced Independence (n = 26)	My mom is actually a lesbian and her family disowned her too growing up...But my dad, we never really got along...Both my parents always favored my little brother over me. I don't know. I have just	I came out to them and uh, they stopped financially supporting me for quite a while. I lived in my friend's kitchen... right next to the oven (Rain, Latino, 22, F-M)	My parents never really raised me. I mean, myself and my siblings, we pretty much raised each other, 'cause my mom just let us do whatever. So... my uh, friends and siblings were the ones that

	Psychological Breaks (n = 65)	Physical Breaks (n = 45)	Adaptation (n = 64)
	<p>been disowned. I've been on my own since I was 16. So, I don't really have family except for my cousins (Taylor, Native American, 21, F-M).</p>		<p>really influenced my growing up. (Tanya, White, 19, M-GQ)</p>
Turning Point (n = 17)	<p>I just got to the point where I was so miserable, I was so depressed that I just had to come out and I just had to do it for me. It wasn't for anybody else, it wasn't to hurt my family, even though they were hurt by it. You know I couldn't not do it. (Jane, Irish, 29, M-F)</p>	<p>I get a call from my parents, they were screaming at me on the other end and saying I was messing up my life and I would be dead in ten years from injecting black market testosterone. That I was just like ruining myself and my future and that I needed to come back for the summer and like go back, quit school, or else. I was like, 'well, or else'...this is something I need to do. You know, I decided when I came out that I knew I could lose my friends and family if I did that but I knew it was important to me as someone who struggled with depression and suicide (Jax, White, 21, F-M)</p>	<p>Both of them [imposed gender conformity]. Yeah definitely both of them. It continued up until I was fifteen, sixteen, where I got to boarding school and I was more free to do stuff. It continued up until then... I obviously got pissed at them. I've just forgiven them afterwards, they didn't know better. It was this small community they didn't want any rumors, they didn't want anyone bad-mouthing them. (Sandra, Irish, 24, M-F)</p>

	Psychological Breaks (n = 65)	Physical Breaks (n = 45)	Adaptation (n = 64)
Self-Subordinating Tendency (46%, n = 41) Constraint (n = 20)	One thing that was hard for my mom was during family pictures when I started to wear the clothes I was more comfortable with. Wearing guy clothes—she didn't like that at all. Would beg, you know, please wear, You know, this cute outfit. You know, pink, you know, whatever it be- anything (*, White, 21, F-GQ)	<i>No References</i>	I feel I have sort of been compensating [sic] trying to get my family to be proud of me, like doing this stuff, trying to get my middle name back. I have been learning Chinese. I can speak and listen but I can't read or write. But I have been online furiously trying to learn Chinese again. Just hoping, somehow hoping, if I disgrace them by being a girl, maybe I can make them proud of me by learning all of this stuff. (Faceblur, Pacific Islander, 26, M-F/GQ)
Suppressed (n = 23)	Several years before I had attempted suicide, twice... It was just I knew I was different than everyone else. And I couldn't really live the way I wanted to. I was always told by my dad, 'are you a man or a mouse? And I was like, 'I'm a mouse!' and I'd continue to cry and then he'd slap me, or	She was awful upset...I had spoken to her about uhm...that I kind of wanted to go see somebody. And I think when it sunk into her-when it had really sunk in for her, that it was what I wanted to do was to transition. I-I don't think she handled it to well. And I kind of...she had said something to me, where uhm she said her exact	I was warring with you know...I felt like my family, really expected me to be a girl and to be very feminine and I didn't feel that way. And there was a lot of worry that I was gonna be shunned or something by my family, which ends up dissolving into relief when they were just kinna like, 'yeah we figured

	Psychological Breaks (n = 65)	Physical Breaks (n = 45)	Adaptation (n = 64)
	punch me, or kick me, or whatever. (Kayla, White, 20, M-F)	words ' I think it would be best if we went our separate ways' which was pretty horrific (Girlfriend, Irish, 30, M-F)	that' . But it started off with a lot of fear and a lot of worry that like I was gonna be rejected by my family. (Henry, White, 16, F-GQ).
Hybridizing Identity (n = 19)	I really want to have facial hair...I put it on...I go through like spurts of it. I've done it daily for as much as like well I don't do it when I go to church. I don't do it on Sundays and My parents don't let me wear it in the house, which is a huge nuisance cuz than I have to put it on in the car. (Avery, White, 22, FM)	I liked to cross dress in hiding...I would-this is embarrassing-I use to pet sit and if there was somebody there who was female or something like that I would try on their clothes...When I had guy friends come over, didn't want to play the kinds of games they wanted to play with toys. So I mean those some pretty early things... I feel like they've always known, but they claim that they didn't. In fact that's the main reason why they, wouldn't accept my transition. They would've been okay with me being gay, but they wouldn't accept me as being Trans because they didn't see me as being girly when I was younger (Emma, White, 24, M-F/GQ).	I mean, I'm open about it with everyone else except my f-my mom pretty much and my family because I just feel like... there's no need in explaining it because... I mean they're getting to the age where they're old and I don't want to like... I don't know when she's going to be gone kind of thing, so I just let her leave happily. Let her be okay. (Turbo, White, 21, F-GQ)

Figure 1. The Contextual Model of Family Stress Adapted from Boss (2016; 2002)

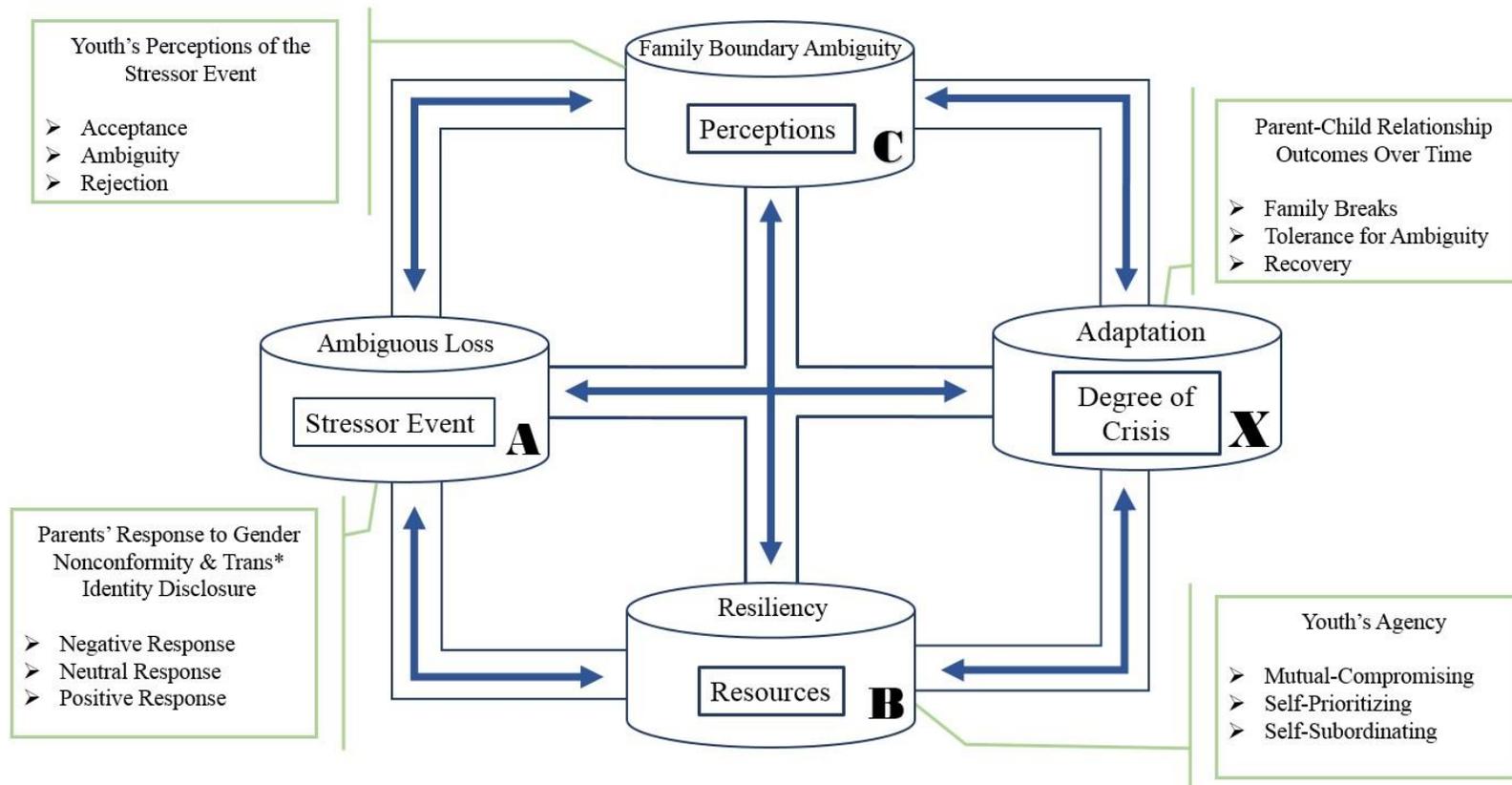
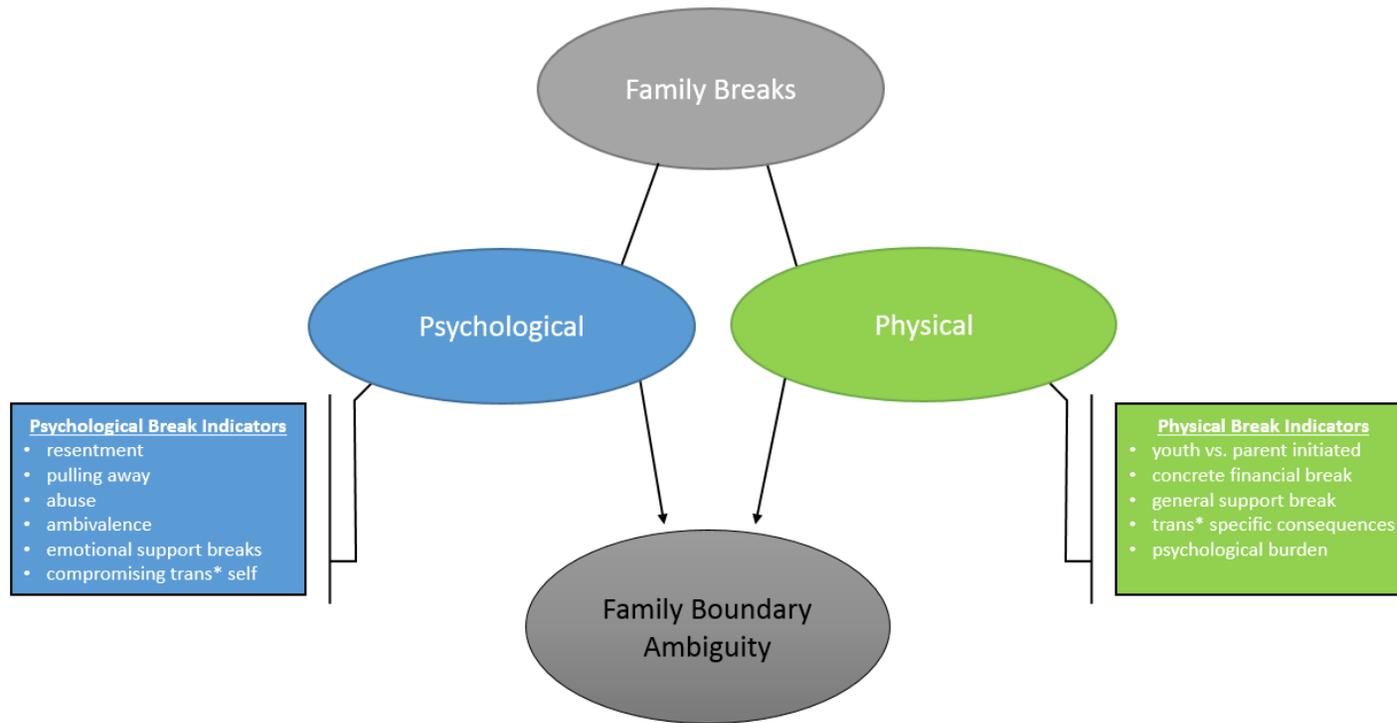


Figure 2. Model of Family Boundary Ambiguity for Transgender Youth after Family Breaks Due to Gender Nonconformity ($N = 90$)



Note: Demonstrates transgender youth's familial experiences after parents' response to gender-variance.

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Appendices

Appendix A

List of Interview Questions

Interview Questions for transgender youth (age 15-18) and young adults (over age 18)

Demographics

1. Please start by telling me:
 - a. How you identify yourself on the gender spectrum
 - b. A pseudonym you'd like us to use
 - c. Your age
 - d. Your pronoun preference
 - e. How you identify racially/ethnically
 - f. Level of education parents education

Development & Status: Where were you, now, & future?

1. Do you feel you were born as a transgender/genderqueer person or that it developed over time?
2. At what age did you realize that there might be a discrepancy between your assigned gender and the gender you felt like inside?
3. At what age did you learn the term "Transgender?" How did you learn this?
 - a. *If applicable:* At what age did you learn the term "Genderqueer?" How did you learn this?
4. When you realized that you were transgender/genderqueer: What were your initial feelings? What are your current feelings
5. When you realized that you were transgender/genderqueer: Who did you tell first? How did that person respond?
6. What are your plans for gender identity in the future? Are you planning to transition (or transition any further (*as applicable:*))
7. What do you think are/will be the positives about being a woman/man
8. What do you think are/will be the negatives about being a woman/man
9. What do you think are/will be the positives about being genderqueer?
10. What do you think are/will be the negatives about being genderqueer?

11. If you fully transition (or have already) are you/ will you be open about your status?

Family Relationships

1. Please reflect on your relationship to your parent(s)/ guardians.
2. Are these relationships warm?
3. What is the level of conflict?
4. In what ways do they support you?
5. Do they advocate for you as trans, or in other ways?
6. When did your parent(s)/ guardians first realize that your gender was atypical?
7. How did they respond?
8. Have they ever attempted to alter your gender expression or identity? Please explain.
9. What were the outcomes of those efforts?
10. Have you come out to your parent(s)/ guardians as transgender/genderqueer? How did they respond?
11. Have you come out to your extended family?
12. How did they respond?
13. Do you have siblings? Are you out to them? How is your relationship?
14. Have you had any other trusted adults in your life with whom you could talk

Appendix B
Progression of Qualitative Nodes

Open Coding (Parent and Child Nodes)		Open Coding (Child and Grandchild Nodes)		Axial Coding (Compromise Self)		Selective Coding (Finalize)	
Identity	Out Not Out Stealth	Physical Break (Parents)	Avoidance (Family) Direct Kick Out Indirect Kick Out Removed from home Youth left home Split acceptance Parent Died	Compromise Self	Acquiescence Avoidance (gender) Constraint Hybridize Suppressed	Tolerate Ambiguity	Normalize Ambivalence Work in progress
Non Resilience	Ambivalence Externalizing Internalizing Perceived Rejection Unbalanced Mastery		Psychological Break (Parents)		Abuse Ambivalence Compromise-self Reputation Loss/Grief Pathology Perceived Rejection Resentment Pulling Away Secrecy Inauthenticity Rebellion Youth Damage Expectations	No Compromise Self	Acceptance Turning Point Dissolve Relationship Forced Independence Leaving Stand Ground
Relationship Breaks	Phys. Break • Ext. Fam • Parents • Siblings Psych Break • Ext. Fam • Parents • Siblings	Resilience (Social Support)		Family LGBTQ Community Others Partners Peers	Self-Determine Trans* Youth Responses	Self-Compromise Self-Subordinate Self-Prioritize	Physical Break
Properties of Break	Social Context Initiated by whom Clean vs. Complicated		Parental Reaction to GN		Alter Gender No Alter	Resilience Social Support (Family)	Autonomy support Effortfulness Understanding Work in progress Attempt Acceptance Reconciliation
Resilience	Contradictory Resilience Discover Hope Meaning Making Networking Normalize Ambivalence Reconstruct Identity Social Support Temper Mastery Tolerate Ambiguity	Parental Reaction to GN		Alter Gender No Alter		Personal Resilience	Normalize Ambivalence Tolerate Ambiguity Alter (Controlling)
						Parental Reactions to gender nonconformity (GN)	• Negative • Positive • Coercion • Normative No Alter (Autonomy)
						Self Prioritize	Dissolve Relationship Force Independence Leaving Stand Ground Turning Point

Note. Items in bold are nodes that were further analyzed to refine and reorganize data based on coding protocol. Gender nonconformity is GN

Appendix C

Detailed View of Kappa Coefficients

Node	Source Size	Kappa	Agreement (%)	A and B (%)	Not A and Not B (%)	Disagreement (%)	A and Not B (%)	B and Not A (%)	ΣEF	TA	TU	Weighted A and B (%)	Weighted Not A and Not B (%)	Weighted A and Not B (%)	Weighted B and Not A (%)
Relationships Break Physi Family Break Parer	135089	0.9682	99.95	0.74	99.21	0.05	0.05	0	98.48	99.95	100.00	99965.9	13402179.7	6754.5	0.0
Relationships Break Physi Family Break Parer	34426	0.968	99.75	3.99	95.75	0.25	0.01	0.25	92.10	99.75	100.00	137359.7	3296289.5	344.3	8606.5
Relationships Break Physi Family Break Parer	97338	0.99	99.97	1.55	98.42	0.03	0.03	0	96.92	99.97	100.00	150873.9	9580006.0	2920.1	0.0
Relationships Break Physi Family Break Parer	77559	0.8817	98.16	7.55	90.61	1.84	1.83	0.01	84.48	98.16	100.00	585570.5	7027621.0	141933.0	775.6
Relationships Break Physi Family Break Parer	64893	0.8697	99.33	2.32	97	0.67	0.67	0	94.81	99.33	100.00	150551.8	6294621.0	43478.3	0.0
Relationships Break Physi Family Break Parer	32174	0.7339	98.59	2.02	96.57	1.41	0.52	0.89	94.70	98.59	100.00	64991.5	3107043.2	16730.5	28634.9
Relationships Break Physi Family Break Parer	90254	0.9208	99.47	3.18	96.3	0.53	0.12	0.4	93.36	99.47	100.00	287007.7	8691460.2	10830.5	36101.6
Relationships Break Physi Family Break Parer	32020	0.886	99.53	1.85	97.68	0.47	0.27	0.19	95.91	99.53	100.00	59237.0	3127713.6	8645.4	6083.8
Relationships Break Psych Family Break	135089	0.8775	99.3	2.6	96.7	0.7	0.7	0	94.27	99.30	100.00	351231.4	13063106.3	94562.3	0.0
Relationships Break Psych Family Break	34426	0.8396	98.72	3.51	95.22	1.28	1.28	0	92.06	98.72	100.00	120835.3	3278043.7	44065.3	0.0
Relationships Break Psych Family Break	97338	0.8769	98.31	6.55	91.76	1.69	0.87	0.81	86.29	98.31	100.00	637563.9	8931734.9	84684.1	78843.8
Relationships Break Psych Family Break	77559	0.8147	95.17	13	82.17	4.83	1.47	3.36	73.90	95.17	100.00	1008267.0	6373023.0	11401.7	260598.2
Relationships Break Psych Family Break	64893	0.7902	97.63	4.81	92.81	2.37	2.37	0	88.68	97.63	100.00	312135.3	6022719.3	153796.4	0.0
Relationships Break Psych Family Break	32174	0.8132	97.75	5.29	92.46	2.25	2.25	0	87.97	97.75	100.00	170200.5	2974808.0	72391.5	0.0
Relationships Break Psych Family Break	90254	0.8398	97.52	7.19	90.33	2.48	0.69	1.78	84.55	97.52	100.00	648926.3	8152643.8	62275.3	160652.1
Relationships Break Psych Family Break	32020	0.8208	98.56	3.46	95.1	1.44	1.42	0.01	91.97	98.56	100.00	110789.2	3045102.0	45468.4	320.2
Resilience Social Support Family	135089	0.756	98.32	2.73	95.59	1.68	0.15	1.53	93.11	98.32	100.00	368793.0	12913157.5	20263.4	206686.2
Resilience Social Support Family	34426	0.6078	99.41	0.46	98.94	0.59	0.44	0.15	98.48	99.41	100.00	15836.0	3406108.4	15147.4	5163.9
Resilience Social Support Family	97338	0.5618	98.96	0.68	98.28	1.04	1.04	0	97.62	98.96	100.00	66189.8	9566378.6	101231.5	0.0
Resilience Social Support Family	77559	0.9809	99.7	8.35	91.35	0.3	0.29	0.01	84.44	99.70	100.00	647617.7	7085014.7	22492.1	775.6
Resilience Social Support Family	64893	0.9057	98.47	8.15	90.32	1.53	1.5	0.03	83.75	98.47	100.00	528878.0	5861135.8	97339.5	1946.8
Resilience Social Support Family	32174	0.6871	95.8	5.13	90.68	4.2	1.2	3	86.59	95.80	100.00	165052.6	2917538.3	38608.8	96522.0
Resilience Social Support Family	90254	0.7658	98.11	3.27	94.84	1.89	0.75	1.14	91.92	98.11	100.00	295130.6	8559689.4	67690.5	102889.6
Resilience Social Support Family	32020	0.6991	98.55	1.74	96.81	1.45	1.45	0.01	95.19	98.55	100.00	55714.8	3099856.2	46429.0	320.2
Average for node "relationship break physical" (unweighted)		0.8948	99.34	2.90	96.44	0.66	0.44	0.22	93.75	99.34	100.00				
Average for node "relationship break physical" (weighted by Source Size)		0.9047	99.45	2.72	96.72	0.55	0.41	0.14	94.18	99.45	100.00				
Average for node "relationship break psychological" (unweighted)		0.8335	97.87	5.80	92.07	2.13	1.38	0.75	87.20	97.87	100.00				
Average for node "relationship break psychological" (weighted by Source Size)		0.8401	97.92	5.96	91.96	2.08	1.19	0.89	86.97	97.92	100.00				
Average for node "resilience" (unweighted)		0.8335	98.42	3.81	94.60	1.59	0.85	0.73	91.213	98.415	100				
Average for node "resilience" (weighted by Source Size)		0.8401	98.54	3.80	94.74	1.61	0.73	0.89	915004	98.5398	100				
Average for all nodes & sources (unweighted)		0.8437	98.54	4.17	94.37	1.46	0.89	0.57	90.68	98.54	100.00				

