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Maps of family relationships drawn by women engaged in bisexual motherhood:

Defining family membership

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1 **Maps of family relationships drawn by women engaged in bisexual motherhood:**

2 **Defining family membership**

3 **Abstract**

4 Family building by bisexual mothers is a neglected area of research, yet this is an important
5 aspect of life course development that may reciprocally influence the sexual identity
6 development of bisexual women and family processes around parenting. Family map
7 drawings (genograms) and interview data were collected from eight cis-gender women from
8 the UK and Republic of Ireland who spoke about their bisexual parenting experience and
9 family relationships. Thematic narrative analysis indicates that participants depict both
10 heteronormative (traditional) extended kinship networks radiating out from a family core
11 centering on them and their children and family of choice network features. Nonetheless
12 certain features appear to be more indirectly presented on some participants' family maps:
13 namely, complex or marginalized (erased) relationships with additional partners that may
14 sustain sexual identity but contradict both heteronormative and homonormative presentations
15 of family life. Our discussion considers the difficult issues bisexual mothers face in
16 maintaining both their family relationships and a marginalized sexual identity.

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18 **Keywords:** bisexual; family relationships; family of choice; genogram; kinship; mother

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Introduction

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Families headed by an LGBTQ parent or parents may take many different family forms (Goldberg & Allen, 2013). Some LGBTQ-parented families may appear little different in practice from families headed by a different gender couple, either because they present a traditional heteronormative image of a married mother and father bringing up children together (Warner, 1991) or because they replicate this mainstream image with a same-gender couple (Ammaturo, 2014; Duggan, 2003; Garwood, 2016). Other families led by one or more LGBTQ parents may present a more radical departure from heteronormative family configurations and deconstruct or queer the traditional heterosexual family form or the dichotomous basis of monosexuality (Gibson, 2014). A body of scholarship and research has addressed debates related to the extent of assimilation versus challenge that LGBTQ parents present to traditional (heteronormative) families (see for example Clarke, Ellis, Peel & Riggs, 2010; Park, 2013).

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Related research has found that sexual minority individuals claim a wide variety of family members since non-traditional kinship relationships (not inferred from biological connection or marriage) are often included as family of choice relationships (Weeks, Heaphy & Donovan, 2001; Weston, 1991). Thus, these may also be considered as homonormative markers of same-gender intimacies. The current study presented here considers how cis-gender bisexual mothers draw upon different heteronormative, homonormative, and unique constructions of family in representing members of their family to researchers.

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Bisexual motherhood

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Research on the experiences of bisexual men and women engaging in parenthood to date is limited both in terms of the number of studies conducted and the scope of these investigations. In their review entitled "where is the B in LGBTQ parenting?" Ross and

44 Dobinson (2013) link the lack of research on bisexual parenting to the general invisibility and
45 erasure of bisexual-specific investigations in the social sciences more generally (see for
46 example Barker & Langdridge, 2008). Thus it is perhaps no surprise that key features of the
47 wider network of family relationships surrounding bisexual parenting have not been
48 systematically explored or denoted in families led by bisexual adults. Using a family systems
49 perspective (Allen & Henderson, 2016; McGoldrick, Garcia Preto & Carter, 2015) we
50 identify two features in the lives of bisexual mothers that potentially may challenge the
51 formation of family relationships for bisexual mothers and may be reflected in how they
52 represent family relationships to researchers.

53 The first feature of the family relationships of bisexual mothers that might be
54 challenging to present in research is concerned with the variety of family relationships that
55 could be included in their definition of their family. Research on the family networks formed
56 by lesbians and gay men often highlight family of choice members unconnected by biological
57 connection or partnership (Riggs & Peel, 2016; Weston, 1991; Weeks et al., 2001). Possibly
58 bisexual individuals also develop kinship networks that affirm sexual identity. In contrast,
59 traditional heterosexual family relationships tend to be those formed through biological
60 connection (blood relatives) and marriage, or in wider more inclusive terms child bearing and
61 couple partnership (McGoldrick, Gerson & Petry, 2008). Furthermore, intergenerational
62 relationships shift with the entrance of the next generation of children into the extended
63 family, such that women's lives as mothers and carers are more closely tied into extended
64 family networks by centripetal systemic forces than they were before (McGoldrick, 2015;
65 Petersen, Kruczek & Shaffner, 2004). It is therefore plausible to suggest that heteronormative
66 pressures from intergenerational family relationships might exert more influence on bisexual
67 women's lives when women become mothers within a different gender relationship.

68 Thus it is unclear where family relationships recognized by bisexual mothers sit
69 within homonormative and heteronormative typologies of family networks. Research surveys
70 that have delineated the family of origin and family of choice relationships of bisexual
71 transgender and cis-gender men and women have hinted at the complexity of monogamous
72 and polyamorous past and present relationships formed by bisexuals both within and across
73 households (Power, Perlesz, Brown, Schoffield, Pitts, McNair & Bickerdike, 2012; Watson,
74 2014). Other qualitative research studies have described complex experiences and
75 relationships of bisexual women married to men (Moss, 2012) or bisexual parents in non-
76 monogamous poly-families (Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2006; 2010 a&b; Sheff, 2010).

77 The second feature of the family relationships of bisexual mothers that may challenge
78 representation concerns the difficulty of finding a way to present the continued relevance of
79 marginalized intimate relationships that could have been formed over the life course.

80 Qualitative research with British bisexual women has explored the social marginalization that
81 underpins this social process with bisexuals feeling socially marginalized or squeezed out of
82 both heterosexual and lesbian social worlds by negative representations of bisexuality as
83 temporary, sexually greedy and untrustworthy (Hayfield, Clarke & Halliwell, 2014).

84 Research on the life course narratives told by bisexual mothers also has indicated that
85 bisexual mothers worked hard to accomplish and maintain their identification as bisexual at
86 different points in their lives as they prioritized their children's well-being over their own
87 identification as bisexual, encountered others who dismissed the existence of a bisexual
88 identity, and questioned society's definition of relationships (Tasker & Delvoye, 2015;
89 Delvoye & Tasker, 2016).

90 **Mapping family relationships using genogram and ecomap techniques**

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91 Previous research has considered how lesbian couples (Basham, 1999; Swainson &
92 Tasker, 2005) or children born to lesbian parents (Tasker & Granville, 2011) present their
93 family relationships to others using either existing or new family mapping techniques to
94 display family relationships in a two-dimensional drawing. However, research mapping
95 family relationships has not considered the relationships formed by individuals identifying
96 with other sexual and/or gender minority groups. Thus, a key aim of the present study was to
97 explore whether drawing family maps was a useful way of collecting data on bisexual
98 mothers' perceptions of family membership.

99 Mapping family relationships has had a long history in clinical assessment both in
100 relation to interventions aimed at an individual or a family level (McGoldrick et al., 2008).
101 Within the field of systemic family therapy Bowen (1978) is widely credited as having
102 promulgated the drawing of family relationship networks (genograms) in connection with his
103 transgenerational therapy. Bowen's genograms, which were hand drawn by the therapist,
104 encompass family relationships over at least three generations and denote the emotional tone
105 of these relationships (depicted via different types of lines drawn between family members).
106 Further developments within the field of genograms have been made by McGoldrick and
107 colleagues at the Multicultural Family Institute in New Jersey
108 (<http://multiculturalfamily.org>). These developments have included a comprehensive range of
109 genogram notations to depict cultural diversity and multiple identities, including symbols for
110 individuals identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (McGoldrick, Gerson &
111 Petry, 2008).

112 In addition, other family network drawing techniques have been used in conjunction
113 with genograms to depict the multiple systems which contextualize the family. In introducing
114 ecomaps Hartman (1995) drew a distinction between genograms that depicted family
115 relationships over the generations as opposed to ecomaps that represent current family

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116 relationships and the network of social and societal systems (supportive or otherwise) within
117 which these relationships operate. Thus, ecomaps have tended to emphasize the presence or
118 absence of different types of resources for a client at a multi-systemic level. In addition, a
119 social constructionist stance has contended that family systems can be constructed by family
120 members in a variety of ways, depending upon historical and socio cultural trends, local
121 contextual pressures, opportunities within particular communities and families, as well as
122 personal preferences (Milewski-Hertlein, 2001; Iversen, Gergen & Fairbanks, 2005).
123 Milewski-Hertlein suggested that the clinician could enable a client to draw their own
124 socially constructed genogram by presenting the client with a plain piece of paper, which was
125 blank except for three rings encircling each other to represent varying degrees of closeness to
126 the center. Clients could then be encouraged to depict family members on the array of
127 concentric circles. Clients were told that family members may or may not be the same as
128 biological relatives and that they should neither feel obliged to fill all the concentric rings
129 displayed, nor feel inhibited from drawing further rings on the genogram, if they wished to.
130 While the socially constructed genogram has provided clinicians and researchers with a
131 welcome alternative to the traditional genogram, we contend that because of the inclusion of
132 the term genogram it retains an association with genealogy and genetics via a common
133 linguistic root. Further, the socially constructive genogram may be restrictive in precluding
134 some means of depicting family other than by circular layers around the client.

135 Despite their extensive use in clinical work few genograms or ecomaps have been
136 employed in research studies (Rempel, Neufeld & Kushner 2007). Yet as Rempel and
137 colleagues demonstrated in their qualitative study of older male family caregivers, family
138 mapping techniques may be valuable in increasing our understanding of social networks,
139 giving access to untapped family resources (i.e. a “shadow network” of previously
140 unrecognized supportive potential), and promoting a collaborative co-construction between

Comment [FT1]: R2 point 9 “uncover”
changed to “give access to”

141 researcher and participant. Furthermore, the researchers suggested that the act of visual
 142 representation may of itself have encouraged participants to self-reflect and then stimulate
 143 further conversations about family supportiveness and living arrangements. Rempel and
 144 colleagues described using augmented genograms to note relevant family features on the
 145 pictorial depiction. Rempel's team also established project-specific ecomap notation, for
 146 example, the use of broken-line circles to indicate people who were supportive but had
 147 drifted away and "circle out of a circle" notation to indicate friendships that had developed
 148 from formal support. Thus, in the context of an appropriately conducted family research
 149 interview a combination of creatively tailored family mapping techniques appear to be useful
 150 in validating relationships that might otherwise go unnoticed.

151 **Research aim**

152 The present qualitative study explored the unique representations and themes
 153 presented in the family maps of women engaged in experiences of bisexual motherhood. Our
 154 research aims were to first examine whether family maps can adequately reflect the family
 155 relationships of bisexual mothers: for example, would the family maps include traditional
 156 (heteronormative) relationships, family of choice relationships, and/or bisexual mothers own
 157 particular relationship configurations? Our second research aim was to explore whether the
 158 family maps of bisexual mothers would reflect the issues encountered during the ongoing
 159 identity accomplishment of bisexual mothers: prioritizing children, contending with others'
 160 dismissal of bisexual identity, and questioning traditional relationship definitions.

161 **Method**

162 **Participants**

163 Adverts for the UK Bisexuality Parenting Project were posted on internet websites,
164 social network groups and a mailing list. In order to be eligible to participate in the current
165 study women had to be over 18 years old, to be a parent of at least one child of any age, and
166 either to identify as a bisexual parent or to have experience of parenting in a bisexual context.
167 In their review of existing research on bisexual parenting Ross and Dobinson (2013) also
168 commented on the advantages of employing broad criteria to define bisexual identity and
169 experience in researching this underexplored research area. In total eight cis-gender mothers
170 (seven identifying as bisexual and one who identified as lesbian) from the across the U.K.
171 and the Republic of Ireland met the criteria above and completed a face-to-face individual
172 research interview (or in one case a skypeR interview). Details of each participant's family
173 composition and the pseudonym used for each participant are listed in Table 1. Seven of our
174 participants self-identified as bisexual and had various current partnership and living
175 arrangements. One of our participants regarded herself as having a bisexual parenting
176 experience, while she self-identified as lesbian she also had an intimate relationship with the
177 father of her children.

178 Insert Table 1 about here

179 The eight white British or Irish women who participated in the study were aged
180 between 28 to 56 years old. All were middle class college-educated professionals who had
181 completed undergraduate and in some cases postgraduate courses. Participants were birth
182 mothers to children of various ages (ranging from less than one year old through to 28 years
183 old). Thus, we gained “snapshot” representations both of bisexual mothers’ family
184 composition and of participants’ parenting experience with children of different ages.

185 **Procedure**

186 Upon contacting the authors and expressing an interest in the project potential
187 participants were provided with further information about the study. Then consent for the
188 audio recording of the interview was obtained and a single individual interview arranged
189 (usually at the participant's home). Interviews lasted between 1 and 2.5 hours and took place
190 between November 2012 and February 2013. Ethical approval for the study was given by an
191 Institutional Review Board.

192 **Individual interview session and family map exercise**

193 The information emailed to each participant prior to arranging an interview session
194 included information about the interview questions that were going to be asked and the
195 activity participants would be asked to do (i.e. the family map). Sharing our interview
196 schedule made an important contribution, not only to obtaining informed consent, but also in
197 enabling participants to reflect upon their life course and their family membership prior to
198 interview.

199 The first part of the interview session had a life course focus and asked participants to
200 tell us how they came to identify their sexual identity and their pathway to motherhood (see
201 Tasker & Delvoye, 2015; Delvoye & Tasker, 2016 for details). The family map activity was
202 always conducted in the second part of the single session. Here participants were asked to tell
203 the interviewer who they included and did not include in their family currently and to draw
204 on a blank white sheet of A4 paper a map of their family using symbols for family members
205 and their relationships. Mostly participants gave verbal descriptions of their family members
206 and network as they were drawing the family map and gave an indication of why members
207 were included and placed where they were. However, when necessary the interviewer
208 prompted for information about family map inclusion and placement decisions. When the
209 participant stopped drawing their map, the interviewer asked if they were satisfied with the

210 map they had drawn. The interviewer also asked if there was anyone they had not included on
211 the family map and explored the reasons for this, again offering the participant the
212 opportunity to re-draw their map if appropriate. Further information on the family map
213 interview and drawing exercise is available from Tasker, Malley & Costa (in press).

214 The hand-drawn family maps and the section of the interview transcript associated
215 with this activity provided the majority of the participant data that were considered in the
216 present paper. However, on a few occasions when drawing their family maps participants
217 referred back to something they had said at an earlier point in the interview session when
218 discussing their life course history. When this happened, we also considered data from the
219 previous section of the interview session in conjunction with the information the participant
220 provided on their family map.

221 All participants were given the opportunity to check the transcript of their interview,
222 to make any changes or clarifications they thought appropriate, before data analysis
223 proceeded. Additionally, participants were invited to consider their own transcript extracts
224 and narratives within a preliminary report of findings from the project. Only minor
225 clarifications were made by participants, e.g. words misheard and a chronology that we had
226 not interpreted correctly. The verbatim interview transcript extracts presented in this paper
227 use the following notation: an incomplete sentence --, text added or removed for clarity or
228 confidentiality [clarification], short pause ... and longer [pause]. Hand drawn family maps
229 were transposed into a WORD document on a single A4 sized page to protect participant
230 anonymity. The orientation of the page was either portrait or landscape depending upon the
231 original drawing. The size and spacing of the symbols, objects and lines depicted in the
232 original production was retained in the electronic version.

233 **Analysis plan**

234 Notable features from the family maps and thematic analysis of the interview
235 transcripts were considered together in the following manner, with the initial emphasize on
236 idiographic accounts of family. First, each author conducted her own initial analyses of each
237 interview (reading the interview transcript and viewing the family map multiple times to
238 explore each participant's individual understanding of their family). In each transcript
239 analysis, themes were summarized initially by highlighting the information laden content
240 phrases used by the participant and then the underlying sense of meaning behind a chunk of
241 text was noted (Riessman, 2008, p.54-63). Second, the authors met together to discuss each
242 interview and reached an agreed version of the analyses for a participant, which was then
243 considered alongside the participant's family map. Third, further discussions between the
244 authors compared and contrasted similarities and divergences in the themes presented across
245 different participants' transcripts in conjunction with the set of family maps. The thematic
246 descriptions presented below contain elements summarized across different participants'
247 accounts.

248 As the use of family maps in research interviews is a relatively new technique an
249 independent audit of the analyses was conducted by an experienced qualitative researcher
250 unconnected with the research project. The auditor noted the type of family map members
251 present, partially represented, or absent in the family maps and associated narratives of three
252 participants. Subsequently, the auditor's ratings were compared to those previously agreed
253 upon by the authors. Across all audited ratings the auditor's assessment was only different to
254 that of the authors on one case (see Table 1 for inter-rater agreement).

255 Findings

256 The themes generated at interview and visually depicted on the family maps reflected
257 family definition and the representation of those relationships to others. Generally the themes

258 generated coincided with discussion of different types of family membership and we have
259 highlighted different types of family membership below under each theme.

260 **Family Core: Caring connections and the ongoing parenting of grown up offspring**

261 Family members whose lives currently intertwined with each participant's life were
262 always the first family members to be drawn on the family map and often were identified as
263 core family members. Core family members seemed to be easy to place on the map, verbally
264 described quickly and without hesitation, and appeared to be at the heart of their family for
265 participants. All participants placed their children within this family core, even when the
266 children had grown up and were no longer living at home. As Carrie initially said when the
267 family map task was introduced: "my sort of core family is me and the three kids because
268 even when I was married to their dad, it was always me and the three kids as family". On her
269 family map Carrie drew a Christmas table around her core family (herself, her cohabiting
270 same-gender partner, and her children) who were all central to her family celebration of
271 Christmas (see Figure 1 Carrie's Family Map). Core connections emphasized caring
272 connections. For example, when asked who and what comes to mind when you think about
273 your family, Barbara replied: "I suppose the people I feel most responsible for are these
274 people [Barbara shows her children and their father]. So these are the people that, mmm, if
275 they ask me for help I'll jump to it."

276 **Insert Figure 1 about here**

277 **Thinking within and beyond heteronormative boundaries: the challenge of finding a**
278 **way to include new partners in family networks**

279 New partners appeared to need to merit inclusion on the family map and not be
280 blocked by other family members, namely participants' children or the fathers of these
281 children. For instance, after drawing a little more of her family map Carrie spoke of her
282 partner gradually starting to feel like family and said: "now that she's moved in with me [she]

283 is beginning to start to feel like family". Carrie also mentioned how they were: "now talking
284 about finances, and shared finances, and a shared future, beginning to make plans for writing
285 wills and all the sort of things that partners do." Nevertheless, a particular marker of family
286 inclusion for Carrie was the growth in connection between her partner and her children. For
287 instance, during her life course history interview Carrie mentioned a conversation between
288 herself and her grown up daughter about what were they going to call Carrie's partner if
289 Carrie's daughter had children. Carrie said:

290 [My daughter] went: "Well, of course she's going to be called Gran or something like
291 that! 'Cause she's been... she's been in my life since I was about 12 and that's six
292 years now so... She's an important person." And she was... almost telling me off at
293 thinking it might be different. And for me that was a real measure of how much it
294 changed over that five years in terms of... her acceptance of my partner as a --, ... as
295 an established family member, in that she became something more than an
296 acquaintance and was now a family member. So it kind of shifted from acquaintance
297 to friend to... family.

298 Thus Carrie's definition of core family emphasized on-going nurturing and caring
299 relationships between her and her children and the inclusion of her partner in Carrie's family
300 as she and her partner increasingly shared their life together. Carrie's definition also
301 highlighted the importance to participants of a shared or reflected definition of family since
302 Carrie referred back to the conversation quoted above when including her partner on her
303 family map in saying: "but actually it was when my -- that thing that I told you about my
304 daughter and the grandparent's names -- it was that which made me realize that my daughter
305 felt she was more family than I did".

306 When asked whether her lover who she had mentioned in her life course history
307 interview was included on her family map, Barbara said that her lover was included within a

308 group that Barbara called family friends. Barbara clarified this by saying: “That person is a
 309 family friend. But because the children’s father finds that relationship upsetting I don’t bring
 310 that person into this household. And that person is absolutely fine about that because they see
 311 themselves as single as well. Yes. I would include that in this group of friends.” Laura also
 312 indicated the difficulties of managing and negotiating new additional partnerships. On her
 313 family map Laura drew a house around her core family defined as herself, her partner who
 314 was the children’s father, and their children. Previously in her life course history interview
 315 Laura had said about her partner:

316 “He feels a lot more guarded about having other people in our house. So our rule is
 317 that we don’t have anyone--, we don’t sleep with other partners here. [Interviewer:
 318 Ok.] [Pause] Which is ok. It’s alright. It’s quite a nice division really. I mean, it’s a bit
 319 of a pain sometimes. But it’s --, it’s alright. But that’s --, that’s definitely his
 320 preference. ”

321 Suzie had brought partners home in the past and indicated on her family map that she
 322 felt that it was possible to accommodate additional partners being involved with the whole
 323 family rather just being in a relationship with Suzie (see Figure 2 Suzie’s Family Map). As
 324 Suzie drew her core family, and then added further circles on her family map, Suzie said:

325 “I suppose in the central core... So you got... essentially me and my husband and my
 326 son. Then you’ve got another circle with a girlfriend I might have at the time and... if
 327 she’s got a partner then as well... because it’s all... everybody is involved. I don’t
 328 believe in keeping secrets.”

329 **Insert Figure 2 about here**

330 In summary, our family map data indicated the complexity of including new
 331 partnerships in existing family networks. Inclusion was clearly not simply dependent upon
 332 each participant’s feelings about their new partner but also dependent upon acceptance, in

333 particular acceptance by core family members. Both participants and existing family
 334 members clearly had an eye to normative representations of family centred on two parents
 335 and adding a new partner into the family network seemed to involve careful psychosocial
 336 negotiations around this.

337 **Traditional extended family relatives included because they are good enough to be**
 338 **counted upon and share a common allegiance**

339 All participants included some traditional extended family relatives (related by blood
 340 or by marriage or even long-term partnership) in the second or third sets of people added to
 341 their family map. All participants included members of their immediate family of origin,
 342 either their parents and/or a sister, who were usually positioned after and at a greater distance
 343 from the participant than were core family members. Subsequent to the placement of
 344 immediate family of origin more distant traditional extended family members (for example,
 345 grandparents, aunts, cousins) were included by seven participants. Even deceased relatives
 346 were included as a reflection of their importance to particular participants.

347 The family map had been introduced in an open way to each participant and
 348 membership was not prompted until after the person had finished drawing and including
 349 family members spontaneously. Nonetheless, participants expressed a sense of inevitability
 350 about the inclusion of traditional extended family relatives on the map, both in terms of blood
 351 relatives on the participant's side of the family and blood relatives on their partner's side of
 352 the family. As Lynn said: "with family: you've got them. Even when you like them or you
 353 don't like them, whatever happens to your relationship, you have those people. There's
 354 nothing you can do about it. All you might do is get along with them as best as you can and...
 355 support each other." Laura also said in relation to including on her family map her partner's
 356 family (her children's paternal grandparents): "you know, I didn't choose his parents (laughs)
 357 but you know, they'll do, they'll do!" Sometimes traditional extended family relatives would

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358 be individually depicted, while others would be included in a group, because of a common or
359 shared commitment to caring. For example, Carrie said: "... and then all loads of cousins --
360 that's not an accurate drawing of them, I just put 'more cousins'. I'm not very close to them
361 but there are still parts of my extended family, people I keep in touch with... if only because
362 we share responsibilities for looking after my auntie as she gets older..."

363 In two cases blood relatives were included on the family map despite participants
364 feeling displeased with them. For example, Suzie included her mother on her family map,
365 with a direct connecting line, even though she was not on speaking terms with her mother at
366 that time. Elizabeth also had distanced herself from her family of origin given her parents'
367 reluctance to accept her non-monogamous relationship with her children's father, yet like
368 Suzie she still included these estranged family members on her family map. However,
369 Elizabeth drew hearts round her immediate family members and her siblings and parents (and
370 her partner's siblings and parents) were listed outside of the hearts on Elizabeth's family map
371 (see Figure 3 Elizabeth). Elizabeth said:

372 I think that my siblings and parents have felt much more of my immediate family
373 until quite recently. I think that's because, with the kind of conflicts that emerged with
374 their disapproval of my relationship, has meant that... hum... (laughs) they're kind of
375 pushed out of my definition of who is family, you know (laughs). They kind of are...
376 but it doesn't feel as meaningful as [my] immediate family.

377 **Insert Figure 3 about here**

378 A web of family of origin and extended family relationships that centered on
379 heteronormative motherhood was particularly evident in some interviews and this seemed to
380 crowd out recollections of bisexuality. As Elena talked about her traditional family relatives
381 she described how relationships with her immediate family of origin had become closer as
382 her parents and sisters gathered round Elena as a new mother: "I definitely feel a lot closer to

383 my family since [my son] was born ... to my parents... and my sisters as well. They're all
 384 really good... about him and... (laughs) and... Yeah... I identify... I have a lot more sympathy
 385 for my mother now! (laughs) I think it's a very common thing (laughs)." Previously in her
 386 life course history interview Elena had mentioned hazy recollections of being a teenager and
 387 coming out to her family, adding that it was not something that featured further in everyday
 388 conversations. Further, Elena's speculation that her parents dismissed her bisexuality as an
 389 earlier phase perhaps reflected a re-appraisal of sexual identity upon the pulling in and
 390 shifting of family relationships in line with heteronormative intergenerational expectations
 391 that likely took place upon Elena's marriage to her husband and the birth of their child. Elena
 392 said about coming out as bisexual to her family of origin and extended family previously:

393 A good few of them know. [short pause] I'm not really sure of who because I don't
 394 even know --, [or] remember who I've come out to and then who they've told so...
 395 [laughs]. [Interviewer: Even within your close family?] Oh yeah, my close family,
 396 yeah. I came out to them. I don't know--, it's not something that comes up in
 397 conversations much. I guess they probably... my parents probably assume it was a
 398 phase or something (laughs). Hum... yeah... hum... I don't know...

399 In her family map interview Elena then went on to talk about her ongoing
 400 relationships with members of her extended family. Elena described her cousins as quite
 401 close based upon her feelings of an underlying shared understanding and similarity. Even
 402 though they did not see each other frequently there was a strong recognition of a shared
 403 family way of doing things through having been brought up in a similar way. Perhaps Elena's
 404 evident satisfaction with this recognition served to pull family relationships further into line
 405 with traditional (heterosexual) norms.

406 "Hmm... Yeah, I'm quite close to... even if they... a lot of my extended family lives
 407 [abroad] but I'm quite close to them and even... like I see them on and off but we get

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408 along pretty well. Yeah ... I think we're all very similar and we've been brought up
409 similarly so even if we don't see each other all the time we ..., we get along very
410 well."

411 Four participants (Barbara, Carrie, Suzie and Lynn) had mentioned questioning of the
412 causes and origins of sexual orientation during their life course history interviews and in
413 doing so had alluded to other bisexual or non-heterosexual members within their families'
414 history (mainly parents, aunts and uncles). In relation to this, participants felt that "not being
415 the only one" in their family had been in some way helpful. A relative with a non-
416 heterosexual identity gave a shared point of reference with a similar person, a sense of
417 understanding and belonging within their own family, or perhaps a sense of how wider family
418 members might respond. Carrie said:

419 I've got an elderly auntie who's around 80, who... has always lived on her own... has
420 had one long term relationship with a man that I can think of... but [she] had quite a
421 funny reaction to me telling her that I got a female partner. And I actually wonder if
422 she... might be... either lesbian or bisexual but had never really... partly because of her
423 age etcetera... never fully been able of... accepting herself or be out. [] I have just
424 wondered... if maybe I'm not the only one in the family.

425 Interviewer: Would that change something for you?

426 Carrie: Hum... yeah, quite... it would be quite nice in a way... just to think... to think
427 there was someone else.

428 In summary, extended family members were rarely important in terms of every day
429 family life but they provided a deeper bedrock of shared commonality and allegiance and a
430 perhaps reference point in terms of what was expected or could be done in each participant's
431 own life. Depending up on the extended family, this could exert a heteronormative pull, or it

432 could help a participant to identify as bisexual because someone else in the family had blazed
 433 the trail to identify, or be identified, as non-heterosexual.

434 **Ex-partners mostly warranting inclusion as the children's other parent**

435 Only two participants (Andrea and Laura) listed ex-partners (both men and women)
 436 who only ever had been significant to them but who were not also their children's father. Ex-
 437 partners were generally included on the family map after both core family and some family of
 438 origin members had been placed and only three participants (who were still partnered to the
 439 father of their children) did not include any ex-partners on their family map. In four cases a
 440 particular ex-partner was mainly included on the family map because the ex-partner was the
 441 child(ren)'s father (Carrie, Barbara, Lynn and Andrea). As Barbara said: "He's been a good
 442 father to the children. He hasn't been always a good partner to me." When asked if there was
 443 anyone else that she wanted to include on her family map, Elizabeth thought about including
 444 an ex-partner (a woman) because her son might have done, but then Elizabeth decided not to:

445 "there was a time perhaps when [my son] might have chosen to include my former
 446 partner, who I was with when I had him. But I don't think he would now. That has
 447 been... enormously acrimonious... So I certainly wouldn't include her [*continues*
 448 *drawing in silence*]. But I don't think [my son] would anymore either. So no... I don't
 449 think there are other people [to include]"

450 In summary, participants sometimes represented ex-partners on their family map and
 451 sometimes did not. One aspect that seemed to influence their decision to include an ex-
 452 partner was whether they had parented together and whether the ex-partner could be
 453 considered as a "good enough parent" to their shared children.

454 **Affirming bisexuality through choosing family**

455 Family of choice members were included in some but not all participants' definition of family
 456 as five of our eight participants placed family of choice members on their family maps

457 Sometimes family of choice membership and sexual-emotional partnership coincided and
458 were related to the participant's sense of self as having attractions to another person
459 irrespective of gender. For example, Andrea included some named friends as chosen
460 intimates and her relationship with one of her woman-friends was undefinable in traditional
461 terms as the relationship crossed the friendship-relation divide as this person was listed as
462 Andrea's snogging (kissing and cuddling) partner (see Figure 4 Andrea's Family Map).

463 **Insert Figure 4 about here**

464 Sometimes the way in which family of choice members were chosen seemed to
465 indicate how significant these individuals or indeed groups were for a participant's identity.
466 For example, Suzie named only one family of choice member on her genogram, her
467 transgender friend who had adopted a mentoring role in relation to Suzie: "My best friends
468 are in there [*points*]. One of my friends, a girl I met, a trans girl, she has decided that she's
469 going to be my stepmom (laughs). [*draws in silence*] and I suppose that's really it".

470 Sometimes participants thought about including a group of LGBTQ people on their
471 family map as the group specifically supported their identity but then did not necessarily go
472 on to include them as family. These deliberations about whether to include people on the
473 family map usually denoted a difference between the role of family and friends in the
474 participant's life. For example, Laura referred to community membership in a thoughtful
475 pause as she was finishing her family map:

476 "... there's not really my old dykey community there. [Interviewer: No?] Not really,
477 no. Not if I'm --, I don't really think of them as family. [*pause*]. And I did used to
478 have a strong sense of family as --, as LGBT community. Actually, and I do have
479 some, I do have a big connection there, and an affection and a comfort, and an
480 identity there. But I, now I have this sense of family, it, that feels... family in this
481 picture are people who I can really pull on, if I need their help."

482 In contrast in Andrea's interview, family of choice relationships were personally
 483 significant in terms of affirming a bisexual identity and place in a group on Andrea's family
 484 map (see Figure 4). Andrea's bisexual family of choice members were clearly committed to
 485 supporting each other through challenging times, although this was caveated and set aside by
 486 a reference to geographical relocation. Andrea said:

487 "I suppose with the bisexual community... it's not as if I could consider all these
 488 people to be family. But I think that there is a core of people within the bi community,
 489 mmm, who we do support each other with activism and stuff like that. And I think
 490 that there is a certain understanding that goes with that about the difficulties, you
 491 know being bisexual is a quite difficult identity to manage successfully. And because
 492 emotionally it's quite challenging because there is all this fluidity and complexity and
 493 we have to manage all the stigma from the heterosexual and lesbian and gay
 494 communities as well. [] And so those people are -, you know none of them are lovers
 495 (well actually one of them was briefly) but mmm it's kind of the sense of having a
 496 long term commitment to people. Maybe that's what I mean by family, maybe that's
 497 the difference between family and just friends: With the people I consider to be family
 498 I know I'm going to know these people for the rest of my life basically unless they
 499 move to Australia. You know... I know that as long as it's practically possible my life
 500 and those people's lives"

501 In summary, chosen relationships with others who identify as bisexual, or as part of
 502 the wider gender and sexual minority community, played an important role in affirming a
 503 sense of self as bisexual. Nevertheless, these relationships need to continue to be personally
 504 significant and currently dependable to be integrated into participants' family maps.

505 **Discussion**

506 Diverse representations of family membership were depicted on the family maps and
507 spoken of during interviews with mothers who had children within a bisexual relationship
508 context. Participants revealed a complex array of both traditional kinship elements in their
509 portrayals of both immediate and extended family relationships and also highlighted radical
510 kinship concepts. On the one hand, participants' family maps and their spoken thoughts about
511 family were clearly informed by traditional heteronormative boundaries of family
512 membership. Sometimes glimpses were observed of cis-gender bisexual women being
513 trapped behind traditional boundaries of family in terms of heteronormative expectations
514 surrounding motherhood, such as keeping other partners excluded from home or family life.
515 On the other hand, cis-gender bisexual women were crossing, or attempting to cross, new
516 frontiers of family by including additional partners on their family maps or by redefining
517 family in terms of boundaries both sexual and affectionate.

518 Participants' primary or initial definition of family was of a heteronormative or
519 homonormative family core including them and their children and often just one partner as a
520 co-parent. This central definition mostly reflected the composition of each participant's
521 household whose members shared in their everyday life and experience. These core family
522 connections were displayed albeit in different ways on each participant's family map. Grown-
523 up children who had left home also were included in this first tier representation of family
524 and were regarded as central in making an event a family celebration. The priority given to
525 children as central to defining family converged with findings from the narrative analyses of
526 the life course history interviews conducted with the same sample of mothers (Tasker &
527 Delvoye, 2015; Delvoye & Tasker, 2016). Prioritizing children also concurred with Riggs
528 and Peel's (2016) conceptualization of the elevation (or taken for granted naturalization) of
529 parenthood by biological linkage as being at the centre of family definition and
530 intergenerational linkage in western societies (see also Bartholomaeus & Riggs, in press).

531 Particularly for participants who had conceived their children in a relationship with a man,
532 who had been their husband or cohabiting partner at the time, a web of heteronormative
533 kinship relationships spread out from children to the child's father and his extended family
534 too. As such the family maps of these bisexual mothers highlighted not only a privileged
535 position of being able to pass as heterosexual, but also the sense of bisexuality being
536 marginalized or erased in heteronormative family life (Ross & Dobinson, 2013). In our study
537 unless bisexual mothers took active disclosure steps, bisexuality was unlikely to come up in
538 family conversations as assumptions of heterosexuality were made by others. Possibly this
539 was particularly the case if the bisexual mother appeared to be currently partnered only to the
540 father of their child.

541 Current intimate partners not involved in the everyday family life, were not included
542 within the representation of the core family grouping. Only one participant attempted an open
543 polyamorous family map and then this was presented as a wished for solution rather than as a
544 current representation. Other participants presented additional partners on their family maps
545 in more indirect way by drawing boundaries between core family and additional partners or
546 by placing a partner within a group of friends. Participants also distinguished ex-partners with
547 whom they no longer had an intimate relationship as they were no longer placed within the
548 family core and most ex-partners were placed on the family map only because they were the
549 father of the participant's children. Thus, the networks depicted by the sample of bisexual
550 mothers in the current study were probably very different from those that might be drawn by
551 the communal polyamorous parenting families considered by Pallotta-Chiarolli (2006) and
552 Sheff (2010).

553 Beyond the core representation of family, participants included different ranges of
554 people in their family maps. Traditional extended family relatives who were related by birth
555 and marriage to the participant were often the next category beyond core family members to

556 be listed in the interview and placed on the family map. In most cases the family maps drawn
557 by the bisexual mothers in our study have confirmed the reports in other studies of lesbian
558 and gay parents who upon parenthood experience greater connection with their own parents
559 and siblings (Bergman, Rubio, Green & Padrón, 2010; DeMino, Appleby & Fisk, 2007;
560 Gianino, 2008). All participants included at least some members of their family of origin and
561 only traditional relatives who had not lived up to expectations of caring commitment had
562 been pushed out and then only to the margins of the family map.

563 Whereas participants appeared only to hesitate or think about whether to include
564 traditional extended family relatives in their family representations, relationships with friends
565 and communities were described as chosen, developed, and needing to be maintained. In this
566 respect the family maps of participants differed: some participants neither mentioned nor
567 drew family of choice members; some nominated particular chosen individuals as family
568 members and excluded community; others included community as part of their family of
569 choice definition. Rust (1996) proposed that finding a sexual identity and a bisexual
570 community to identify with were interlinked. Similarly, for the majority of mothers in the
571 current sample connection with community was important for identity (Tasker & Delvoe,
572 2015); nonetheless community was regarded for the most part as distinct from and sometimes
573 unconnected to family.

574 In this study, family map drawing has provided a picture of family networks of
575 bisexual mothers and helped to elucidate the explanations of how participants managed often
576 complex relationships. Participants' creative drawings of their own family networks, with the
577 addition of their own personal psychosocial symbols such as houses and hearts, emphasized
578 meanings of family in terms of definition and exclusivity beyond the spoken word. Our
579 findings indicated how existing family relationships may support bisexual identity
580 development, or more often directly or indirectly endorse heteronormativity, exclude new

581 family members, or silence further possible bisexual identity development. Nevertheless, our
582 study was essentially a small exploratory research project with a homogenous sample of
583 white cis-gender middle class mothers who spoke about parenting in a bisexual context and
584 as such can only begin to describe family relationships within those contexts. Furthermore,
585 women in our sample had various relationship histories and one did not self-identify as
586 bisexual, although she herself said she parented within a bisexual context in an intimate
587 relationship with the child's father (see Tasker & Delvoye [2015] and Delvoye & Tasker
588 [2016] for further sample details). Clearly the present study would benefit from replication,
589 preferably with a larger sample that was more diverse in ethnic, socioeconomic, and ability-
590 disability backgrounds. Moreover, our findings may be very specific to cis-gender bisexual
591 mothers who experience pro-natalist heteronormative family pressures in particular ways
592 (Bartholomaeus & Riggs, in press). The family relationship networks of cis-gender bisexual
593 fathers, or trans or gender nonconforming bisexual parents would be useful to consider. As
594 indeed would the family relationship networks of other individuals with non-bisexual sexual
595 identities who have more than one intimate partnership.

596 The family maps drawn by mothers who talked about bisexual experience contained
597 more than just genogram or ecomap information and indicated that family map drawing
598 might be a useful technique and psychotherapeutic tool for use when family relationships are
599 being discussed at interview. Milewski-Hertlein (2001) argued that allowing clients to
600 socially construct their own genograms enabled the clarification of intergenerational patterns
601 and facilitated the disclosure and discussion of wider patterns of family experiences. Findings
602 from our current study have pointed to further gains from participants being able to draw
603 their own family map, including their own additional psychosocial symbols. Family map
604 drawing facilitated the sharing of information about family without constraints on who
605 constitutes family or how relationships should be depicted. The family maps in this study

606 identified some of the resources that participants drew upon within their core family and
607 beyond it: namely, traditional extended family, family of choice, and bisexual community.
608 Non-family resources available to participants, such as links to schools, recreational or
609 employment connections, were not documented on the family maps as they would have been
610 on ecomaps (Hartman, 1995). Nevertheless, the perceptions of family resources, such as
611 LGBTQ relatives in the extended family, might well have been lost if an ecomap perspective
612 had been sought instead of a family map and interview that focused on family definition.

613 **Conclusion**

614 The family maps of bisexual mothers indicated both normative and radical positions
615 with respect to family relationships in their kinship networks, suggesting that bisexuality may
616 query the conceptualization of family relationships based on the assumption of
617 monosexuality. The innovative research technique of free-style hand drawn family mapping
618 enabled family relationship features to be highlighted visually as well as verbally, indicating
619 that family mapping is a useful tool for exploring family relationship networks in complex
620 non-traditional and/or new family forms.

621

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FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS OF BISEXUAL MOTHERS

Table 1

Participant and Family Map Information on Types of Family Membership Presented

Pseudonym	Children & current relationship status	Core family & traditional extended family relatives	Additional current partnerships	Family of choice	Special features drawn
Elena	Child under ten years Married to a man (child's father)	2 ₂	0 ₀	0 ₀	0 ₀
Suzie	Adolescent child Married to a man (child's father), casually dating women	2	2	2	2
Elizabeth	Two children under ten years Living with a man (child's father)	2	0	0	2
Laura	Three children under ten years Living with a man (child's father) In a casual relationship with a man	2 ₂	1 ₀	2 ₂	2 ₂
Andrea	Child under ten years Single Casual sexual relationship with a man and intimate non-sexual friendship with a woman	2	2	2	0 ₀
Carrie	Three grown up children Live in partnership with a woman	2 ₂	0 ₀	2 ₂	2 ₂
Barbara	Two grown up children Single In a casual relationship (partner's gender unknown)	2	1	2	0
Lynn	Grown up child Living with a man (not child's father)	2	0	0	0

Note. Authors' agreed rating: 0 = Members not presented; 1 = Members obscurely presented; 2 = Members presented. Numbers with subscripts within rows represent independent auditor's rating.

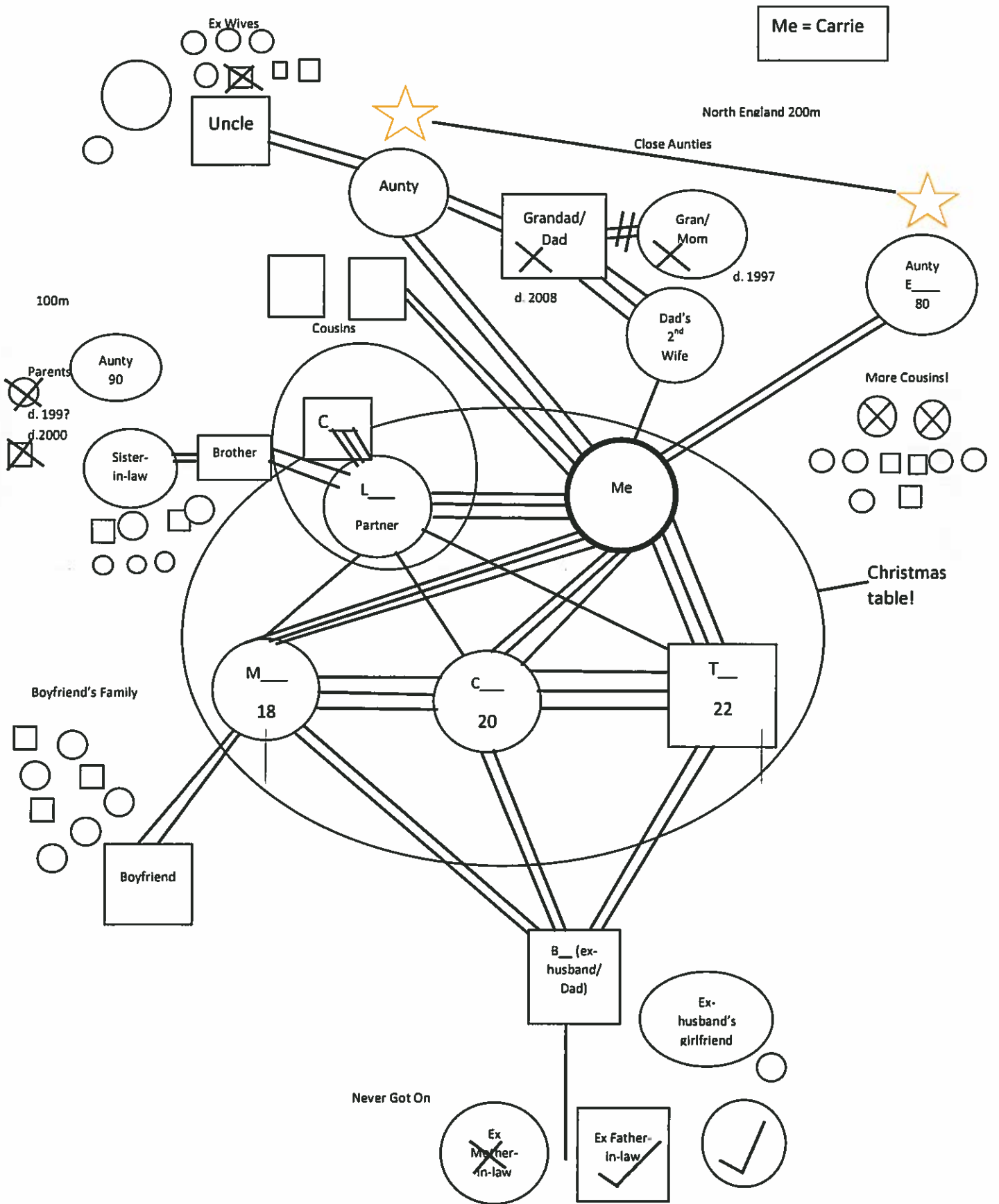


Figure 1. Carrie's Family Map

Family groups for blood relatives as all relationships are not traditional.

Me = Suzie

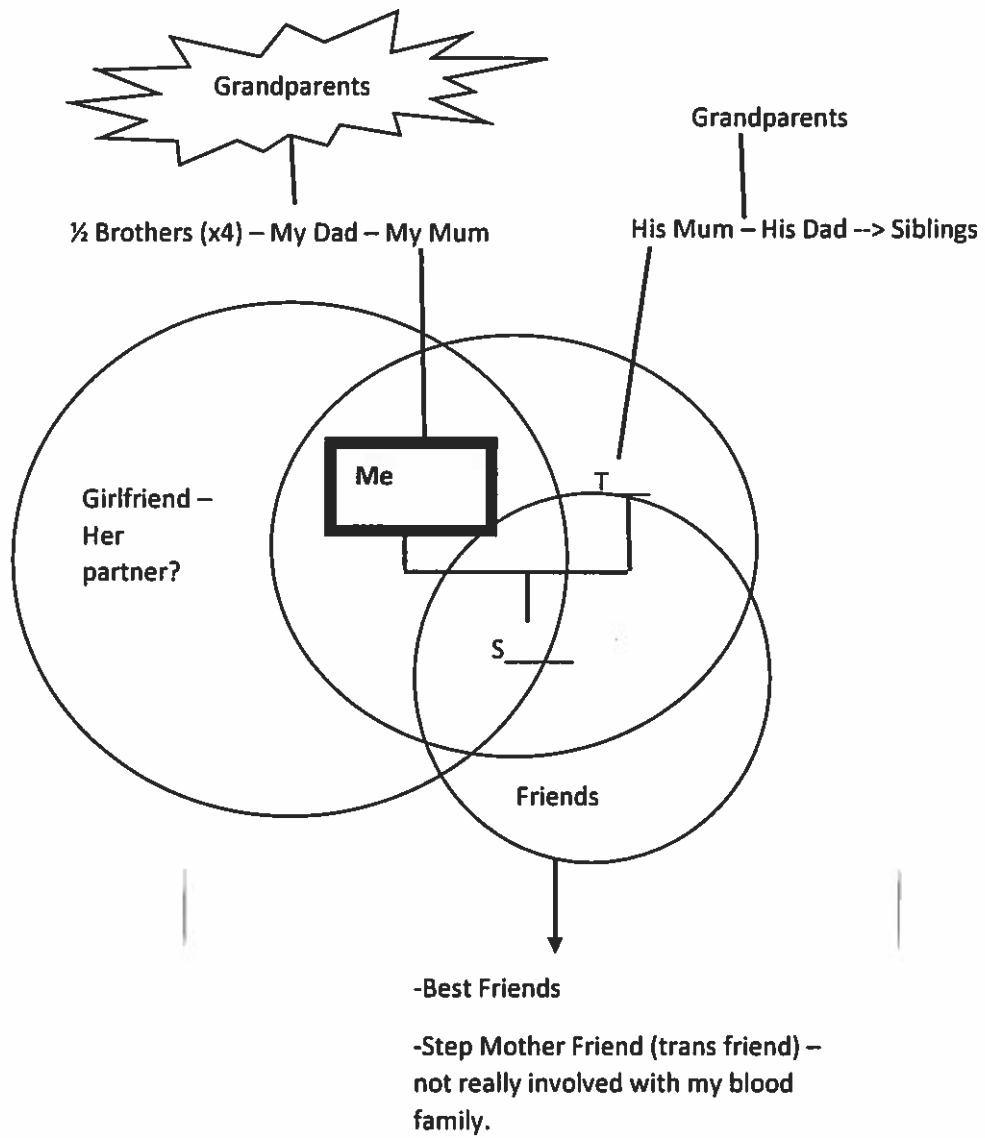
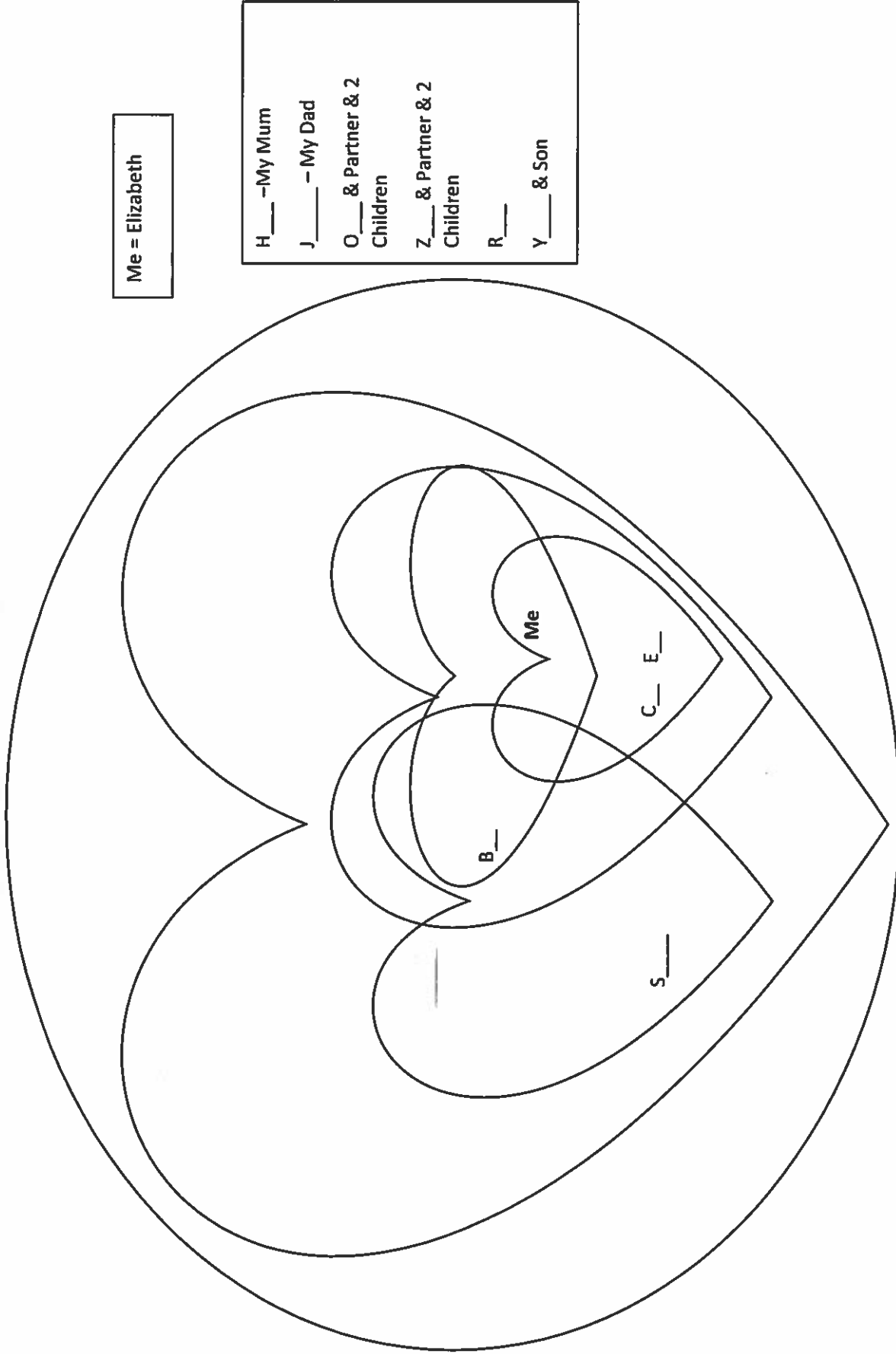


Figure 2. Suzie's Family Map



Me = Elizabeth

H__ - My Mum
 J__ - My Dad
 O__ & Partner & 2 Children
 Z__ & Partner & 2 Children
 R__
 Y__ & Son

P__ - B__'s Dad
 A__ - B__'s Mum
 D__ & Husband & Daughter
 J__ & Son
 [P__, M__]

Figure 3. Elizabeth's Family Map

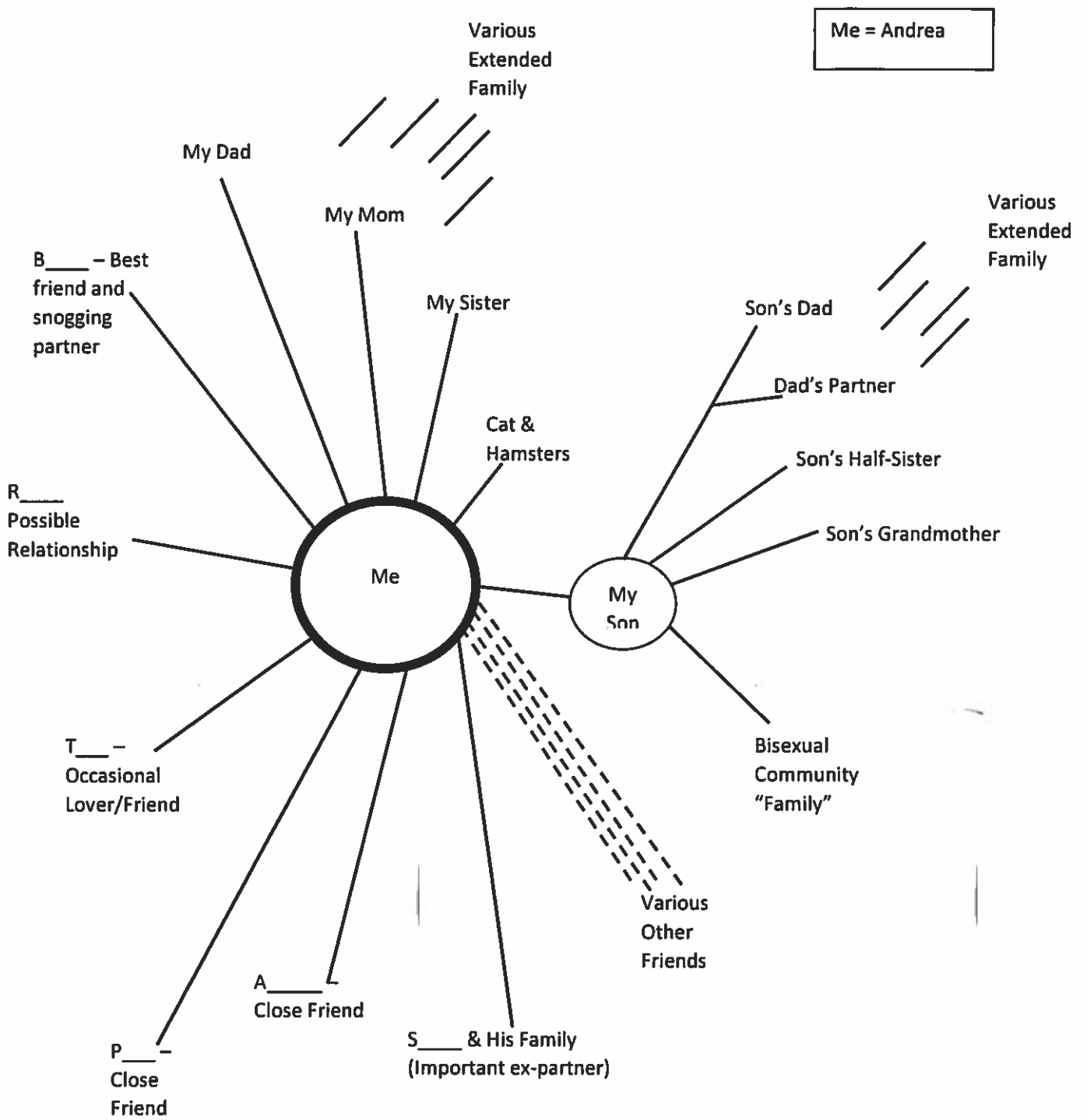


Figure 4. Andrea's Family Map