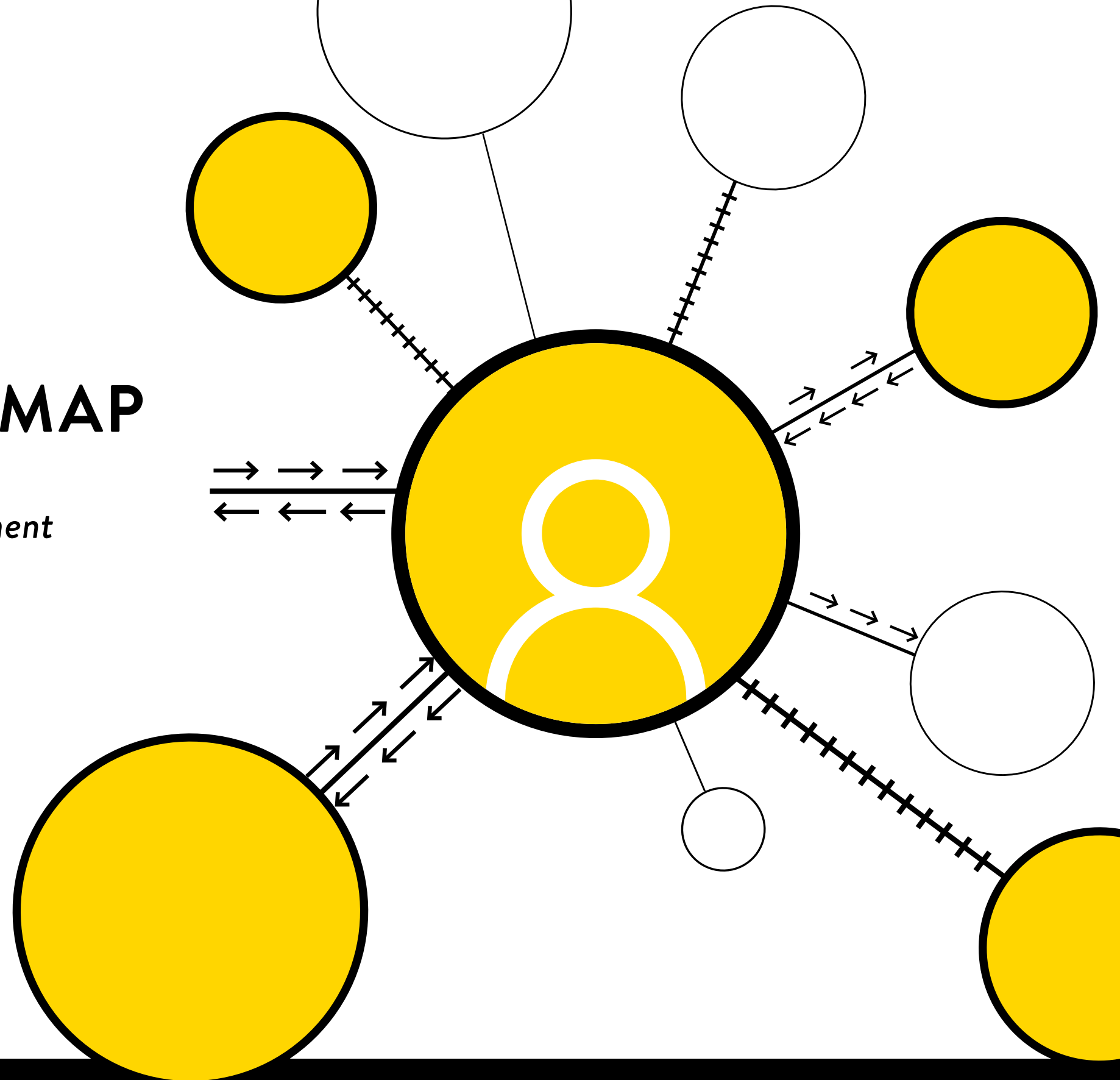


# FAMILIES OF CHOICE: CONSTRUCTING AN ECO-MAP

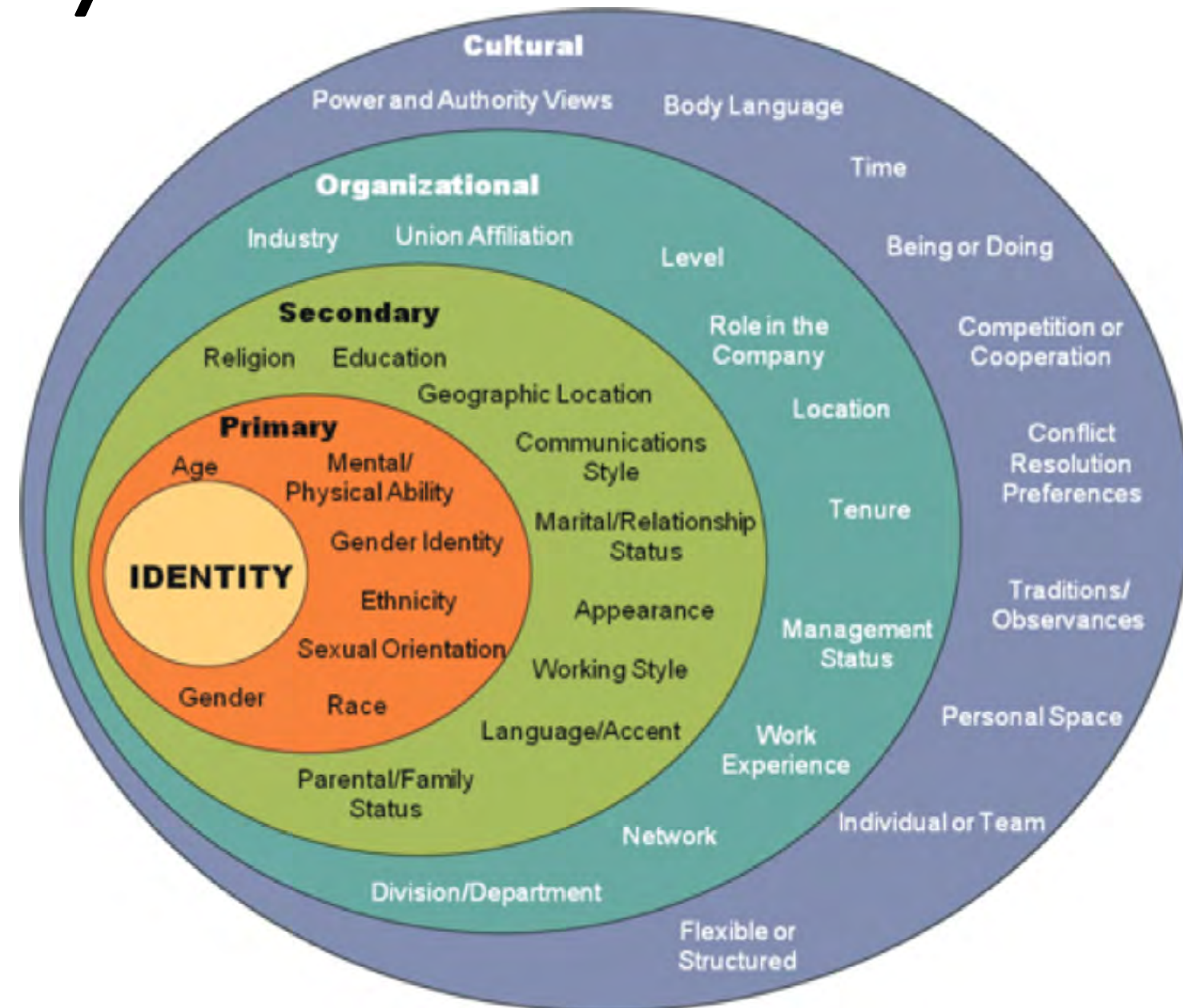
*A tool to “map” a family from all levels of the environment*



# The Impact of Systems on Identity

Individuals construct their identities in four different spheres:

- Primary
- Secondary
- Organizational
- Cultural



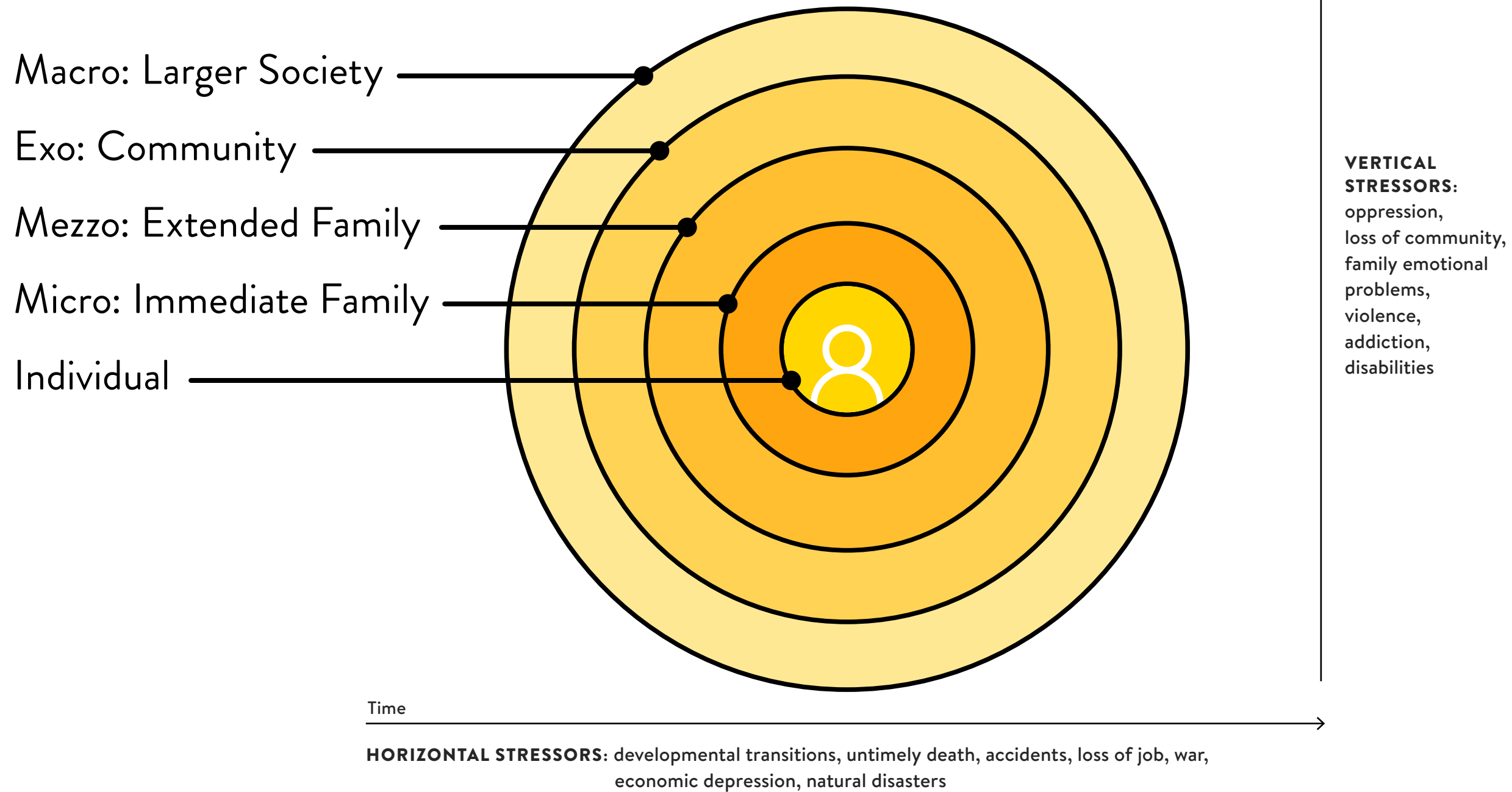
Ladd, 2014

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# Systems

- Systems theory: all elements of our environment impact who we are as individuals and families.
- There are four levels in our environment:
  - » The Micro System: Immediate Family & Self
  - » The Mezzo System: Extended Family
  - » The Exo System: Community
  - » The Macro System: Larger Society & Culture

# Family Systems Map

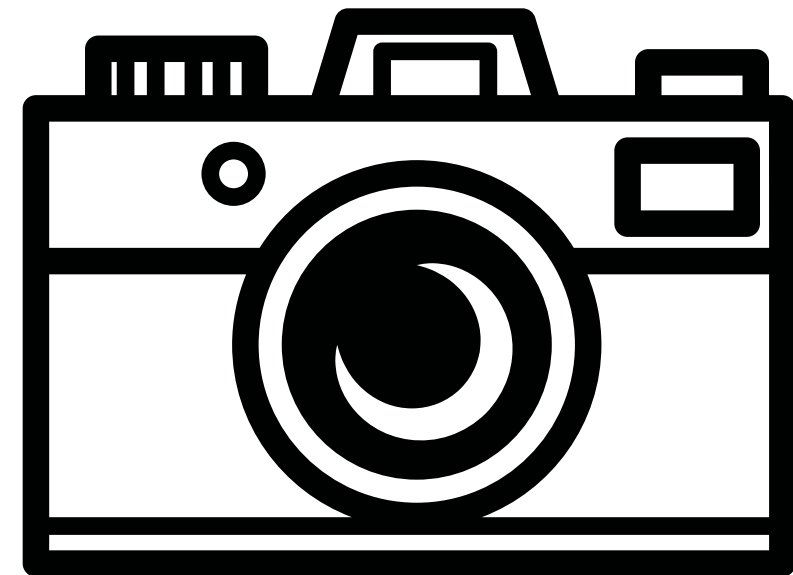


Adapted from:  
Bronfenbrenner  
& Crouter, 1983;  
Bronfenbrenner &  
Morris, 1998

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# A 3-D Eco-Map to Map Families of Choice

- The Eco-Map identifies family resources using pictures.
- Areas of concern and strength are constructed to assist in crafting a picture of the family's world.
- Information is drawn using circles as a snapshot in time.
- This includes natural familial and community resources.



From: [www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/groups/children/documents/pub/dhs16\\_178770.pdf](http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/groups/children/documents/pub/dhs16_178770.pdf)

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# Eco-Map Factors

## **Extended Family**

- Who is in the area that can be a support for you
- What kind of relationship

## **Income**

- Financial status
- Sources of income
- Budgeting

## **Friends**

- Close—Supportive—Conflictive
- Where located
- What kind of contact - frequency

## **Recreation**

- What do you do for fun
- What do you do for relaxation
- What would you like to do
- Interests and/or hobbies
- What have you done in the past

## **Religion/Spirituality**

- Spirituality &/or religious affiliation growing up
- What kind of experiences did you have
- With what activities were you involved
- Current spiritual beliefs & religious affiliations

## **Medical/Health Care**

- ALL family members: physical illness or disease
- Effects of chemical use
- What kind of insurance
- Effects of chemical use
- Access to medical care
- Psychological illness, disease

## **Social Services/Resources**

- County or Tribal/Financial Services/Child Welfare
- Names of workers
- Neighborhood centers
- Agencies/counseling involved with in the past
- Positive or negative experiences

## **Work/School**

- Employment—past/present
- What work are you interested in pursuing
- What type of skills, vocation
- Degree or school until what grade
- Positive or negative experiences

## **Neighborhood**

- How long at present home
- What is your neighborhood like
- Do you feel safe in your home/neighborhood
- Where did you grow up, and what was it like

From: [www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/groups/children/documents/pub/dhs16\\_178770.pdf](http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/groups/children/documents/pub/dhs16_178770.pdf)

# Eco-Map Example

- The primary circle reflects immediate family and influences.
- The size and location of the other circles reflect the importance of external influences.
- For Families of Choice, the primary circle may reflect non-biological members, including romantic partners, sexual partners, friends, and community members.

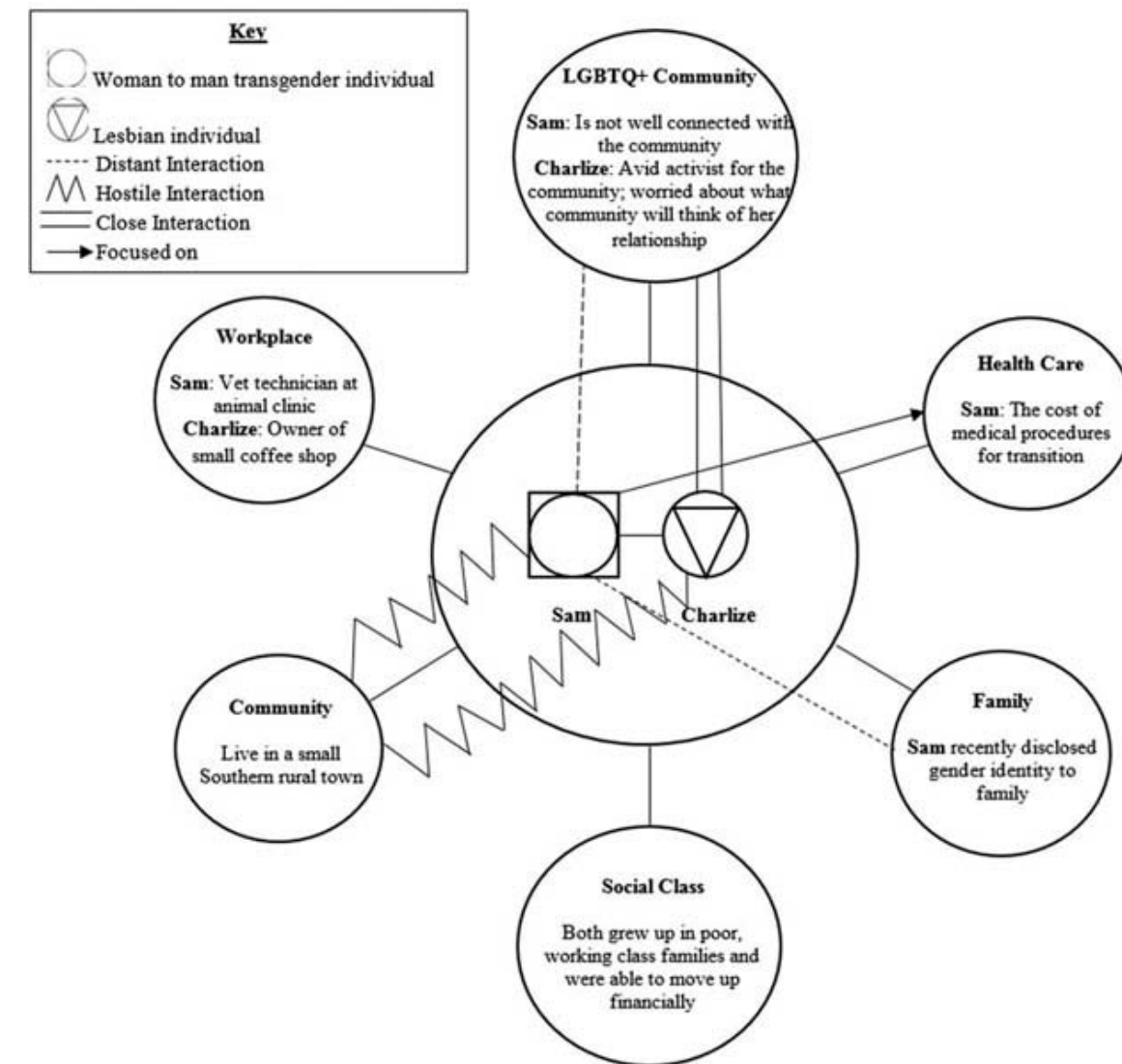


Image from: Hoa N. Nguyena, H. N., Erika L. Grafskya , E. L., & Munozb, M. (2016). The use of ecomaps to explore sexual and gender diversity in couples. *Journal of Family Psychotherapy*, 27(4), 308–314 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08975353.2016.1235433>.

# Map Your Family of Choice!

• Red Yarn = Stressful Relationships



• Green Yarn = Strong Relationships



• Yellow Yarn = Tenuous Relationships



H1 [ CONTINUED ] Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

HANDOUT

Neighborhood

Work/School

Extended Family/  
Significant Others

Social Services/  
Resources

Medical/  
Health Care

Income

Friends

Recreation

Religion/  
Spirituality

STRENGTHS:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

CONCERNS:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

14 ISRC Future Families & Families of Choice



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# Process

## FOR THE PARTICIPANT

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- What was this like?
- Are there areas of strength that you noticed in your Family of Choice?
- Are there gaps that you noticed that you would like to fill?
- Consider what kind of family you might like to create in the future, your “Future Family,” what aspects of your Family of Choice would you like to replicate and/or nurture in your Future Family?

## FOR THE LARGER GROUP

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- What did you notice about areas of strengths in their Family of Choice?
- Were their gaps you identified that they didn't? If so, what were they?

# Now It's Your Turn!

## Extended Family

- Who is in the area that can be a support for you
- What kind of relationship

## Income

- Financial status
- Sources of income
- Budgeting

## Friends

- Close—Supportive—Conflictive
- Where located
- What kind of contact - frequency

## Recreation

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## Neighborhood

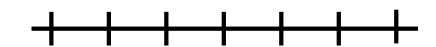
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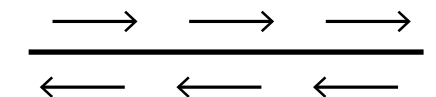
**Strong connection**



**Tenuous connection**



**Stressful connection**



**Resource/Energy Flow**

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# References

- Bronfenbrenner, U., & Crouter, A. C. (1983). The evolution of environmental models in developmental research. In P. H. Mussen (Series Ed.) & W. Kessen (Vol. Ed.), *Handbook of child psychology, Vol. 1: History, theory and methods* (4th ed., pp. 357–414). New York, NY: Wiley.
- Bronfenbrenner, U., & Morris, P. A. (1998). The ecology of development processes. In W. Damon (Series Ed.) & R. M. Lerner (Vol. Ed.), *Handbook of child psychology: Vol. 1. Theoretical models of human development* (pp. 993–1027). New York, NY: Wiley.
- Hoa N. Nguyena, H. N., Erika L. Grafskya , E. L., & Munozb, M. (2016). The use of ecomaps to explore sexual and gender diversity in couples. *Journal of Family Psychotherapy*, 27(4), 308–314 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08975353.2016.1235433>.