Moving from social networks to visual metaphors with the Relational Mapping Interview:

An Example in Early Psychosis[1]

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This chapter describes how to undertake a Relational Mapping Interview (RMI; Boden, Larkin & Iyer, 2018) and how to analyse the visual data created in this approach. We will illustrate our method with data from an experiential research project that explored the relationships of young people (18-25 years) under the care of Early Intervention Services for Psychosis, which are community outreach services providing biopsychosocial interventions for First Episode Psychosis. Everyone in the study had experienced a mental health crisis within the last three years and we were interested to understand what it is like and what it means to be connected with others at times of distress and instability, and during recovery. The study received ethical approval from the necessary research ethics committees, all participants gave their consent, names are pseudonyms and some details have been obscured or redacted.

Visual imagery as experiential research

How we use visual methods depends on our theoretical and methodological frameworks (Reavey, 2012, Rose, 2001). We work from a hermeneutic-phenomenological perspective that privileges participants' subjective experience of what-it-is-like and what-it-means (see Boden et al., 2018 for a detailed discussion of this method in the context of Interpretative

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[1] An earlier version of this chapter, which focuses on using this approach within the context of IPA, was published as Boden, Z.V.R., Larkin, M. & Iyer, M. (2018). Picturing ourselves in the world: Drawings, IPA and the Relational Mapping Interview, *Qualitative Research in Psychology,* doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2018.1540679

Phenomenological Analysis). However, we believe the RMI is flexible enough to integrate with other theoretical perspectives that take an experiential approach and this chapter will take this broader view.

The RMI emerged out of empirical and methodological work that sought to use the phenomenological and hermeneutic power of image creation as part of a multi-modal approach to understanding emotional and relational experience (Boden, 2013, Boden & Eatough, 2014, Attard, Larkin, Boden & Jackson, 2017). Drawing, as one type of visual method, expresses subjective experience by spontaneously capturing the texture of an experience. This approach can support participants to share experiences that are difficult to language, complex, diffuse or ambiguous. Drawing, like any method of communication, is not a direct 'representation' of the participant's experience. Instead meaning is *impressed* upon the paper (Schneier, 1989), leaving behind a subjective residue (Hustvedt, 2006) of the person and their experience. Drawings are not only visual, they tap into several sensory registers at once, and the resulting pictures can be rich with meaning (Malchiodi 2005). Additionally, drawing requires the participant to be bodily engaged with their tangible lived experience, as they creatively explore how to communicate it (Malchiodi, 2005; Merleau-Ponty, 1964a/1964). Looking at the drawing-as-object *and* observing the drawing-as-process also involves the *viewer* at a bodily, multi-sensory and non-sequential experience (Hustvedt, 2006). Both participant and researcher are engaged bodily in a drawing methodology.

Drawings have a tangibility and stability that verbal accounts do not (Hustvedt, 2006), meaning they can provide a vehicle through which parallel or subsequent verbal discussion can take place. For some researchers, drawing is solely a method of eliciting verbal data, and it seems that drawing does encourage participants to explore less familiar aspects of their experience. Participants often switch to more metaphorical and poetic language, as they try out ways to communicate the aesthetic qualities of their experience (Todres & Galvin, 2008). Thus visual methods do seem to deepen the quality of the verbal data. However, drawings can go beyond this, providing the "thick depiction" that complements the 'thick description' of verbal data (Kirova & Emme, 2006, p2). Drawings are a source of meaning both independently of, and in dialogue with, the verbal narrative, and as such they are deserving of additional interpretative analysis (Boden & Eatough, 2014). For this reason, we have included a framework below to support analysis of the visual data so that it can be understood as data in its own right, providing a secondary mode through which to interpret the participants' experiences.

Exploring relational experience through drawings

Intersubjective and social experience is a key aspect of our lives and fundamental to our wellbeing (e.g. Baumeister & Leary, 1995). However, traditional psychological research interviews tend to overlook this, perhaps taking an overly individualistic and internalistic approach to understanding lived experience. Social experience has not been neglected within the quantitative paradigm, and some of this research does result in visual imagery. For example, Social Network Analysis and Sociomapping techniques produce visual diagrams that picture quantitative data-sets reflecting density and connectivity in large networks. However, there is less research on how individuals subjectively experience the *quality* and *texture* of their relational lives, and qualitative tools are needed to support this work.

The complexities of relational experience are particularly suited to visual-spatial representations, and this has long been exploited by practitioners and researchers in the fields of psychology and sociology who have attempted to capture relational life. From the field of psychotherapy, there are genograms (Bowen; Jolly, Froom & Rosen, 1980), and sociograms (Moreno, 1951), which are systematic and standardised approaches to capturing objective' and some 'subjective' information about social groups. Extending this, the RMI supports participants to map their relational experience subjectively and idiosyncratically. The participant is the expert in their relational life, and in the RMI it is up to them to determine how they wish to present and explore that with the researcher.

The Relational Mapping Interview

The RMI is a semi-structured in depth interview protocol that incorporates a drawing activity (Boden, Larkin & Iyer, 2018). Unlike a traditional semi-structured interview, RMIs follow an 'interview arc' and use the format of 'draw-talk-draw-talk'. The RMI aims to be an encounter not an interrogation, and so is not a linear set of questions but a framework for communicating relational experience in non-linear ways. The RMI provides a skeleton interview structure, and supports the creativity of the interviewer and participant. The interviewer is not required to prophesy the most significant aspects of the experience under investigation, as the RMI supports emergence and novelty, whilst providing some scaffolding to 'hold' both researcher and participant. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, p48) suggest that

interviews are an opportunity to 'wander together with' the participant, and the RMI draws on that ethos.

The interview arc: Touchstones for navigating the relational world of the participant

Researchers using semi-structured interviews typically take into account concerns such as building rapport and the sensitivity of questions when developing their interview schedule. The RMI emphasises the importance of this type of higher-order structuring of the interview encounter. Interviews – like films, music or novels – seem to be most satisfactory when they follow an arc. The touchpoints described below help create an 'interview arc' that guides the interviewer and participant to create something together that feels ethically and methodologically 'whole'.

In an RMI, the interviewer's contribution is predominantly spontaneous and focuses on enquiring into the participants' emerging image of their relational experience and their account of that. To aide both interviewer and participant to navigate the participant's experience, the RMI consists of four touchpoints: (i) mapping the self, (ii) mapping important others, (iii) standing back, and (iv) considering change. These touchpoints can be applied to any research topic that centres on relational experience, without the need to create a new interview schedule each time, although researchers may want to think about preparing prompts or probing questions to help explore their particular research question.

The draw-talk-draw-talk process as a way of getting experience-near

It is important that people are not caught unawares about the drawing task, so information sheets should clarify the request that participants draw/diagram/map their relational networks. The RMI should begin with a preamble (see appendix A) to reassure and orient the participant. Some people can find a drawing task, or the appearance of a blank piece of paper, to be intimidating, and we wanted to avoid raising any shame or embarrassment in our participants. We set up the task as informally as possible, and supported the participants to find their own ways to engage with it, however, simply or creatively they wished.

1. Mapping the self

The participant is invited to 'represent yourself on the map in any way you wish'. Sometimes this instruction was enough to enable the participant to start the drawing process. Sometimes participants hesitated and so we added 'you can use words, symbols or images – whatever you prefer', to support them to find their own way forward. Once they come to a pause, the interviewer's task is to simply explore what they have drawn. One way to do that is to state what you see. This type of observational comment, that carefully notices the colour, position or content of the drawing, is typically enough to elicit more detail. For example: 'you have drawn a heart; 'you have put musical notes around this'; 'I see you are now adding something else', etcetera. It is important not to interpret here. For example, a heart may not necessarily mean a loving relationship to this participant. Allow the participant to lead the way in their relational world. Typically this part of the interview is brief, but comments made at the start, often seem to resonate with later narratives, and may provide interesting insights for analysis. For example, Hari drew himself a small circle that he described as a sun or star, linking this with his spirituality. Later he drew his mother as a huge swirling universe, naming the infinite love he had for her. Jake drew himself at the corner of the page as a tiny figure with his mouth sewn together. Later, he described his distrust of others and his reluctance to speak out about his distress because he was not well supported.

2. Mapping Others

The second touchpoint typically takes most of the time and involves mapping relationships with important others initially, then anyone else the participant wants to include. Participants are invited to start by mapping the relationship that is most important to them. A similar process follows, of stating what you see, prompting and enquiring. In our approach this draws on phenomenological principles, for example, bracketing, or better, "bridling" (Dahlberg, 2006, p16) our assumptions and interpretations, and instead asking open questions or making reflective statements. Our prompts centred around understanding the quality and texture of the relationship, how it was sustained (i.e. activities, interests, means of communication), and how it had been impacted by the participants' life situations (e.g. experiencing psychosis). This process of draw-talk-draw-talk continues with the participant adding further important people to the map, and with the interviewer's support, describing those relationships in as much detail as they can. Our participants described and represented a wide range of relationships, including friends, family, professionals and faith/community figures. They also included pets, the deceased, deities, organisations, and

also occasionally creative activities (specifically music and art). Some participants used more than one page. We think it is imperative that researchers are open to how participants interpret the task and to be equally curious about each named relationship, regardless of its type. After mapping the important relationships in the person's life, the interview can then enquire into other people the participant may know. This could include people who are part of the participant's social landscape, but who may be less well known (e.g. shop-keepers, teachers, receptionists or anyone with whom there are regular interactions). We found that some participants named significant others but did not want to them to their maps, and we respected that, asking instead whether they would still like to say something about those connections, or not.

3. Standing back

Standing back involves a shift from the 'close', experience-near, idiographic and phenomenological enquiry of the mapping stage, to a more reflective, explicitly integrative and interpretative stance, where the participant is supported to make meaning from their map. The participant is invited to (metaphorically) 'step back' from their picture in order to absorb the map-as-a-whole. Image making can enable people to experience themselves and their life narratives differently, hence its use in art therapy (Gladding, 1992), so in this moment, the participant may experience themselves in a new or unfamiliar way. The drawing though can also act as an anchor through which the participant can gain some distance or explore a new perspective on their familiar situation (Malchiodi, 2005). The standing back phase enables participants to integrate and interpret their experience, and to make 'big picture' statements. For example, Karina counted everyone she had drawn and exclaimed "that's many people actually!" whereas Manu, who felt like the map reflected his "whole life", seemed less positive: "to see all the relationships with everyone. I don't know, it's quite… It doesn't feel like a lot."

At this point, the interviewer can explore specific 'themes' that may have reoccurred during the interview, but which have not yet been fleshed out. Jake, for example, had mentioned trust several times in regard to individual relationships. When we looked at the map as a whole he made the link that all three of his 'important' people had "betrayed my trust once, so I don't think I can fully trust, ever."

For Hari, who had initially drawn himself as the star/sun, he looked at the relative sizes of the separate images he had used to represent all his important people:

Hari: Yeah, it's more that, I dunno, I feel like the size, the size is like, I should have done that [the sun/star], I should have done that a little bit smaller.

I: Why would that be smaller?

Hari: Because I probably don't really care for myself or love myself as much as I should.

4. Considering change

The final touchpoint explores what has changed in the past. In the case of the psychosis study, this focused on the participants' crisis, hospitalisation, and so on. The interview concludes by exploring what changes, if any, participants would like to make in an *ideal* future. If there is a significant event on the horizon, either specific to the individual (in our case this included discharge from the service, return to study and moving home) or specific to the sample, then this phase of the interview could also explore those.

The ideal future question allows participants to explore how they would like their relational lives to be – their expectations, beliefs, fantasies and hopes – however, this also brings new information about how things are presently. Hari suggested he would want to "maybe to love myself more" indicating an awareness of self-neglect and low self-esteem. Ceri wanted her deceased relatives to still be alive and her ex-partner to have disappeared. She added: "my dad might be on the map if he changed his ways." This seems to point to her loneliness, frustration and ambivalent hope for future reconciliations.

The interview closes by asking the participant whether there is anything else they want to tell the interviewer, and exploring how it has been for them to share their relationships in this way. This is both substantively interesting and an opportunity to check the impact on the participant's wellbeing before the interview is completed.

Why analyse drawings? A framework for an interpretative experiential analysis

Images, like metaphors, are ambiguous, polysemous and emergent (Dake & Roberts, 1995; Reavey, 2011). From our hermeneutic-phenomenological perspective, the maps created in the RMI are data in their own right, deserving of as much analytic attention as the verbal

accounts. Given our interpretative stance, we are not suggesting that any one 'truth' that can be revealed through analysis of the drawing, but rather explore the dialogic possibilities of bringing the visual, verbal and reflexive material of the interview together, to deepen the analysis as a whole. In this vein, Kirova and Emme (2006, p22) argue for an "*expanded hermeneutic phenomenology*" that takes into account any and all relevant data sources, including imagery and bodily experience. Drawing on their work, and the multi-modal method described by Boden & Eatough (2014) for use with abstract drawings, we have provided a framework (Box 1) to help guide analysis of the visual material. We approach this analysis with the theoretical lens of hermeneutic-phenomenology, but it is possible that this framework could be adapted to suit other experiential approaches.

	Analytic questions	Examples of some possible analytic comments on Karina's image (see Figure 1)
1.	What type of map has been created? (e.g. shapes, hierarchy, list, mind map, extended visual metaphor, visual narrative, unconnected metaphors, unconnected representations, etc.)	*A line drawing of a portrait picture with literal and symbolic elements.*
2.	How is the participant represented in the map? (location, colour, shape, texture, participant's and researcher's ascribed meanings)	*Centrally in portrait style, sitting down, surrounded by relationships. Sitting down = "because I'm getting much better now". The participant is surrounded by butterflies, musical notes and the sun because she says likes these things. Butterflies could be interpreted as indicative lightness, beautiful, love, freedom, transformation, femininity, fragility, happiness/summery quality, etc.* *Music could indicate creativity, playfulness, expressiveness, tonality, etc.* *The sun here seems to represent optimism, positivity, recovery, hopefulness, happiness.* *She notes she is "putting just a little bit about me" – these elements are chosen to represent just some aspects of her personality. (What is hidden/not represented?)*
3.	How many people are included in the map? Is anyone left out but named?	*Seven. The participant seems to relate ambivalently to the cousin she draws on the map last. She names two further cousins who she is less close to and doesn't include in the map.*
4.	In what ways are other people represented? (literally, metaphorically, named or not)	*People are represented literally with details of their personalities and interests figuratively and literally represented around them. Each person was named and her relationship with them was discussed in some detail.*
5.	In what order were elements	*1) herself and the sun, butterflies and musical*

	drawn?	notes, 2) her sister (drawn sitting close) and the ball, 3) her mother (further away) with a bag and speech bubble, 4) her goddaughter, separately but close by with musical notes, 5) two school friends were drawn – one by her mother, and 6) one behind her and her sister with a heart. 7) Finally her cousin, further away, with an easel and brush. She adds grass tufts as she goes along. The last element to be drawn is the raindrops.
6.	In what ways are the relationships and their qualities represented? (e.g. symbols)	Everyone is drawn sitting or standing on the same grass, suggesting a shared perspective or ground. They face the same way, perhaps also indicating shared direction.
		Relationships are also represented spatially. Those closest to the participant occupy the space closest to her and people with whom she has more ambivalent or distant (emotionally and geographically) relationship are further away.
		The relationship between the participant and her sister is represented in their physical overlapping quality, and also the flower symbol, which represents the transformation of their relationship from anger and conflict during her psychosis to being "really close" now: "from a tiny, tiny flower it became a really big and beautiful flower."
		Her school friends are described as "like family" and they are drawn overlapping with her sister and mother respectively. The participant reports never arguing with the friend who she positions directly behind her and her sister. This relationship was unaffected by her psychosis. She draws a heart on this person as she is her "bestest friend". In contrast, her relationship with her mother and the friend positioned there were both marked by conflict during her psychosis. This may indicate residual emotional distance between the participant and those with whom there has been conflict without full reparation as they are positioned slightly distantly. The participant describes conflict and full resolution with her sister and no conflict with her friend, and these are drawn closest to her.
7.	In what ways are people interrelated? (i.e. location, density, fluidity, separation, hierarchy, contained, overlapping, relative size, relative positioning - and how does this relate to their emotional or geographic accessibility)	People are clustered. The participant, her best friend and sister are interconnected. Her mother and friend make a second cluster to the right. Her God-daughter and cousin are separately to the left. Her cousin is "very far away" geographically, but also seems to represent an ambivalent relationship – they were close, but less so since she visited during her psychosis.
8.	What kinds of relationships	Family members and friends only. [details could be

		and types of people are represented? (identity, role, age, longevity, category, status, etc.)	listed here]
9.		How can the overall tone and impression of the image be characterised? (e.g. style, strength of expression, expressive/affective content, effect upon viewer).	*Naïve, childlike drawing style and portrait setting give a nostalgic and idealised childhood and familial impression. The effect is normalising and reassuring. (Something that seems to affect the participant too, when she sounds surprised and reassured to notice how many relationships she "trusts in" at the end of the interview). There is something sweet and non-confrontational about the image. I also experienced the participant herself in a similar way.* *The raindrops are the only hint of anything 'negative' or troubling in the image, and are added right at the end.* *Another perspective on the picture is that everyone is facing the viewer as if posing for a camera. This implies there is something staged or performative in this image. Perhaps it is not entirely authentic.* *The whole drawing is a black line-drawing. Nothing is filled in or coloured. This leaves me feeling there is something insubstantial, hollow or delicate about the image. However, simultaneously the lines are confidently made and not sketchy. There is something definite and precise about them.* *There is a cartoon or graphic-novel quality to the image that gives it a slightly fantastical quality. The people are real and unreal at the same time. This is echoed by the mix of literal and figurate imagery.*
10.		How can any metaphorical content be categorised? (normative symbols, spontaneous/idiosyncratic metaphors, personal metaphors/visual representations of nicknames etc., narrative metaphors, relational metaphors).	*Normative symbols (weather = emotion) and pictorial representation of personal characteristics (artistic, musical, chatty) and habits (keeps vitamins in her bag).*
11.		What are the meanings associated with any metaphorical content?	*The sun and raindrops represent the happy and difficult times the participant has been through – they are the emotional tone of the relationships. The sun is drawn right at the start of the picture, whereas the rain is an afterthought (when asked if she wants to change anything). The rain represents: "when things aren't easy, and we don't have an umbrella".* *Other figurative elements (the easel, notes, ball, speech bubble and handbag represent the activities and personalities of each person.*

Box 1. Framework for analysing the relational maps (extended from Boden, Larkin & Iyer, 2018) and examples of the type of analytic comments that can be made.
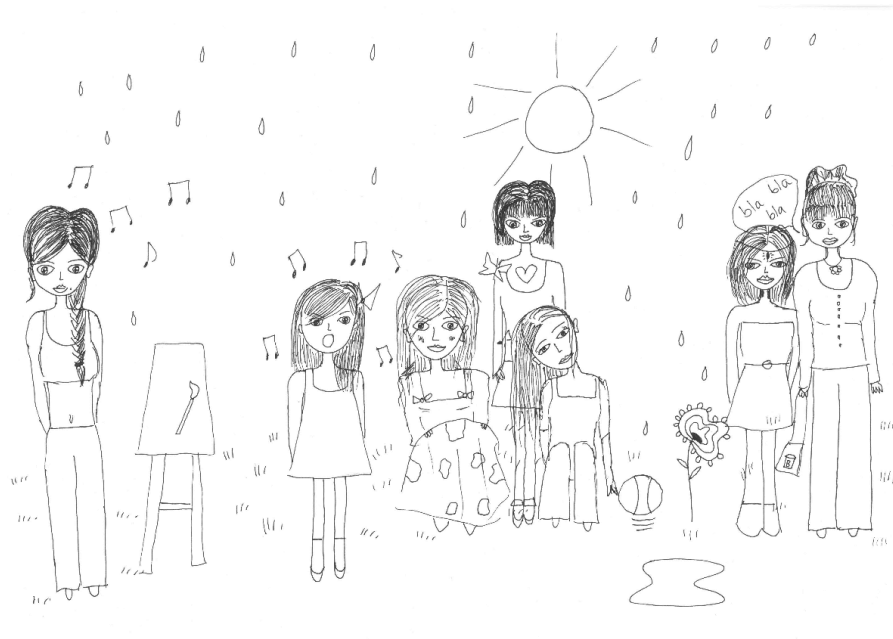

Figure 1. Karina's relational map using figurative and metaphorical elements

Metaphorical imagery: imagination as experience

In our example, there were many ways that participants chose to map their relationships. There were several structures, spider-diagrams, and visual lists, often using names and sometimes decorated, for example with hearts, or connected by lines or dashes. Karina (Figure 1) chose to create an image akin to a family portrait. Each person was represented literally but she added symbols, including raindrops, butterflies and musical notes to describe their personalities and her relationships to them. There were several participants who used symbols or metaphorical images to represent individual people in their lives. Sometimes there were connections between these, such as in Hari's drawing of the star and universe.

After himself, the first person Hari added to the map was his girlfriend (Figure 2). He drew an amethyst crystal to represent her. He described how he had once given an amethyst to his mother, and when a piece had broken off, he had given that fragment to his girlfriend. From this symbol, which was beautifully drawn, Hari explored themes of support and dependence. The mother/girlfriend connection in his image of the crystal indicates Hari's attempts to reconcile his image of his girlfriend as simultaneously a mother-like carer:

Hari: […] I chose to represent because right now she's like the main, she's basically like the main focus in my life that's holding me together and who's always caring for me and who's always, who does everything for me basically, to make sure, to make sure I'm alright. She just looks after me really.

I: So she's really there for you, she's looking after you.

Hari: Yeah, always. […] It's almost like I'm a little child and she needs to make sure, make sure, make sure that I'm on time for things like this, makes sure I'm eating well and stuff like that really, just general caring things.

A theme of breaking up/holding together is echoed in the narrative about the broken piece of the crystal, and in Hari's metaphorical language. Here it is his girlfriend who holds him together. Later he expresses his sadness about his family break up (his siblings and mother are living in different places, he is essentially homeless) and, when asked about his ideal future, he states his wish that he could bring his family back together.
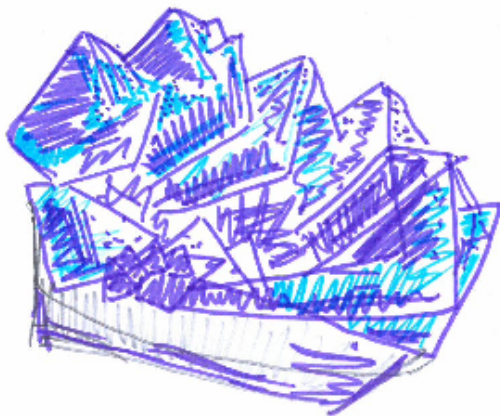

Figure 2. Extract of Hari's drawing. An amethyst crystal to represent his girlfriend.

The talk-draw-talk-draw process: Supporting narrative integration at a metaphorical level

Two further participants took the invitation to map their relationships as an opportunity to draw an integrated visual metaphor. Aaliya created a garden metaphor and Robert drew a series of interrelated objects. His family was represented as an apple tree, with himself as a fallen apple, lying in the grass. The branches of the tree were full of mirrors ("I see myself in my family, you know, it's like I'm helping them. I'm trying to help them, but it's like I don't know which way round it is") and question marks ("It's so confusing"). He added arms hugging the other apples ("I need to like keep people feeling good in some way.") The tree trunk sprouted a leg that kicked out at him (the fallen apple), aiming him either towards a target, or towards "a vast ocean" full of sharks. Each of these narrative elements was drawn as Robert was talking and telling his account of his relational experience. This was not a completed narrative. Robert was uncertain how this story was going to end. When asked what he would like to change, he crossed out the target and drew a new one much closer to the tree. He also drew a curved line around the shark-infested water, sectioning it off from the rest of the picture. His image draws on many normative metaphors and cultural symbols, such as the religiosity of the apple tree and the fallen fruit. The developmental and recovery targets he was felt pushed towards by his family and the service, which were associated with expectations around heteronormative masculinity, were concretely represented as an archery target ("you have to become a man, you have to get a job, you gotta get healthy, you know, you gotta be a contributing member of society and you know, [his care-coordinator] mentioned like, um, girls and I'm just like I can't even think about that right now"). In our (British) cultural landscape, the image of a shark-infested sea is a normative metaphor for danger, and Robert was trying to stay safe when it came to his relational life.

Aaliya drew herself as a flower (Figure 3 shows how Aaliya developed her drawing through four phases, adding new elements to represent different relationships and new layers of her relational experience). She describes the flower as something "innocent" and vulnerable to the threat of others:

> *Aaliya:* It's something like that people would usually say 'oh like it's quite nice', but it's quite like a simple flower, like it can be easily crushed and like I guess some people kind of like, erm, would underestimate it.

Figure 3. Aaliya's drawing. The first three images (left to right) indicate her steps towards creating the final drawing (the larger image).

Next, she drew sun and raindrops, describing these as her friends. Aaliya has minimal family support, but valued her friendships. Her friends seem to be a powerful influence on her wellbeing and she is ambivalent about maintaining contact with them:

> *Aaliya:* They give me like the kind of like support I need, so they're the sun and the rain, but, like I guess if you get too much sun or too much rain it can also be like negative for a flower. [...] Like I can't always have them around, otherwise it'll be a bit over-powering, and I guess sometimes they don't really understand that, or sometimes they'll like back off too much and I won't have the support I need.

Thirdly, Aaliya adds grass and ground under the flower:

> **Aaliya:** It's just going to be the grass, erm…[drawing] maybe the ground beneath that as well and that would probably be my mum, and someone that I kind of like rely on for support and [pause, looking emotional …]
>
> [...] to an extent the grass also needs the sun and the rain, she needs me to be stable for like beauty to grow underneath her and stuff.

Aaliya's emotionality, her tentativeness about naming her mum ("probably"), and the confusion in her language regarding who supports who ("she needs me to be stable"; "beauty to grow *underneath* her"), and her consideration that her mum (the grass) also needs the support of others (the sun/rain) were indicative of the complex interwoven and reciprocal relationships she had with her mother, who also experienced mental health problems, and her friends.

When we turned to the fourth touchpoint, 'considering change', which was towards the end of our interview, Aaliya added the word 'animal' next to the flower and drew an arrow pointing towards it:

> **Aaliya:** I would rather be in the food chain or something, the animal eating the flower, rather than the like weak flower being trampled on underneath.

By adding a final element to her drawing, Aaliya shifts her visual narrative into a hopeful and more empowered future image. Taken as a whole, Aaliya's drawing indicates the tensions inherent in her relational life – being trampled underfoot versus being underestimated, the heat of the sun and the drowning rain, being eaten or doing the eating. These aspects seem to encapsulate her psychosocial struggle to survive relationally, to recover, and her hopes to flourish in the future. Both Robert and Aaliya's drawings – as simplistic as they may first appear – illuminate not just their own, idiosyncratic experiences, but key relational tensions apparent within the whole psychosis project, specifically the challenge to negotiate intersubjective boundaries.

Conclusions

To date the RMI has been used in research about relational experience in young people with psychosis, international students, care-leavers, and recipients of peer-support interventions. In all cases participants appear to find the method acceptable and enjoyable. At the least, this approach helps make something intimate, complex, and taken-for-granted into something that can be shared and explored within an interview context. In some cases, the RMI exceeded this by enabling participants to share their troubling, ambivalent or uncertain relational experiences in a way that does not require a near, linear narrative – or even a verbal account. It positions the participant as the 'expert' in their relational lives, and supports a sense of empowerment within their relational context (for example with who is and is not included on the map).

The RMI and the multimodal analysis of the drawings helps researchers grasp the complexities of relational experience. It also offers the potential to be adapted in several ways. For example, the method is suitable for exploring relational experience with other important factors in the participants' lives, such as in the doctoral work of Sarah Bögle, who uses the approach to map her participants' experience of mental health services and psychiatric medication. The RMI provides data that is rich and polysemous, whilst also being experience-near and subjective in focus. When both the verbal and visual data are analysed, researchers are supported to produce accounts that go beyond the linear and rehearsed accounts of relationality, and to tap into the multiple sensory registers of hard-to-articulate relational experience, that which is idiosyncratic, ambivalent, ambiguous and often emotionally charged.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Example of the Preamble from a Relational Mapping Interview from the project 'Disrupted Relationships: Psychosis, Connectedness and Emerging Adulthood' (2015-16). In this project the participants were young people (18-25) who were under the care of Early Intervention in Psychosis services.

Preamble *(after briefing has taken place and consent has been gained)*

What I'd like us to do today is to make a kind of map together that shows all the relationships you have with different people in your life, and how your experience of psychosis might or might not play a part in those relationships.

If it's ok with you, I will ask you some questions to help you think about different people you might want to put on the map. There's lots of different pens, crayons and stickers you can use to show different aspects of your relationships if you want to, and it's completely up to you how you choose to put them on to the map. You can draw pictures, or use shapes, or just write names – it's completely up to you how you represent them. There's no right or wrong way to do it. And I'm interested in what you tell me about your relationships as well as what you draw on the map, so it doesn't matter if it gets messy or if you can't capture exactly what you want to say about the relationships. As long as you can also tell me about your drawing, that will be great.

Do you want to ask me any questions about it before we start?

Appendix B: Possible prompts to support the mapping and standing back phases in a Relational Mapping Interview

Exploring specific relationships

- In what way are they important to you?
- How do you feel about them?
- How do you think they feel about you?
- Has this relationship always been like this? Or has it changed at any point over time?
- How did you meet them? Where did you meet them? How long have you known them? (if appropriate)
- How do you keep in touch with them? How often are you in touch? Do you keep in touch any other way?
- What kinds of things do you do together/speak about together?
- What kinds of things do you have in common? What kinds of differences do you have?
- Is there anything you look forward to about spending time with them?
- What do you get out of spending time with them? How does it make you feel? How does it affect you?
- What do you think they get out of spending time with you?
- Do you think you'll stay in touch in the same way with this person in future? Do you think they'll stay in your life?
- Do they know any of the other people you've drawn on the map?

Exploring the map-as-a-whole:

- Are these people clustered together/separated for a reason?
- How does your relationship with these people differ from these people?
- Is there anyone else that we've not spoken about yet? Do you want to add them or not? Why?
- Looking at your map now as a whole, do you notice anything about it?
- What are you feeling/thinking/remembering now, looking at this map of your relationships?
- Where are you in relation to the other people on your map?