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Photos and Children: Using Photo-Elicitation Interviews While Researching Children

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Abstract: Photo-elicitation interviews (PEIs) have emerged as an important visual method in qualitative research either to obtain additional data or to prompt and guide verbal interviews. Images are used in PEIs either from the researcher or participants, depending upon the research goals and fieldwork practicalities. Despite the increasing use of PEIs in qualitative research, their potential as a qualitative tool for studying children's perspectives remains under-explored. In this paper, I explore the effectiveness of PEIs in research involving children, particularly in studies related to the social organization of space. Drawing on my reflections from conducting ethnography, I aim to highlight the significant interest children showed in PEIs. I used photographs, provided by me from different places of the area, to prompt and guide verbal qualitative interviews, which helped to study the social organization of space from children's perspectives. I argue that researchers can apply this type of PEIs with children, particularly those unfamiliar with social research, to understand their perspectives in an effective way.

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1. Introduction

Researchers and policymakers have acknowledged the critical importance of incorporating children's perspectives in research, particularly on issues directly affecting their lives (CLARK & STATHAM, 2005; COOPER, 2023). However, qualitative researchers face several challenges while involving children in research because validity or reliability of results differs when different methodologies are applied (CHRISTENSEN & JAMES, 2017; CREMIN, MASON & BUSHER, 2011; DARBYSHIRE, MacDOUGALL & SCHILLER, 2005). For example, some researchers have found conducting in-depth verbal interviews with children often impractical due to linguistic constraints, particularly when dealing with subjective concepts in a limited amount of time available during fieldwork (BARKER & SMITH, 2001; EINARSDÓTTIR, 2007; PUNCH, 2002). Similarly, complications arise from power imbalances between adult researchers and child participants (BODÉN, 2021; LANE, BLANK & JONES, 2019). Maintaining children's engagement during lengthy conversations is another

significant challenge that researchers face while conducting in-depth verbal interviews (GRAHAM & FITZGERALD, 2010). To overcome these challenges, mapping, drawings, games, or storytelling methods have been used by researchers (e.g., DEN BESTEN, 2010; KOGLER, ZARTLER & ZUCCATO-DOUTLIK, 2021; LEHMAN-FRISCH, AUTHIER & DUFAUX, 2012). However, applying these methods with children pose some challenges in terms of logistics during fieldwork and subsequent data analysis. Some inherent issues in verbal interviews with children can be effectively addressed by using PEIs, such as maintaining their interest in the conversation and facilitating the generation of data which they can appropriately analyze (BEILIN, 2005; BRIGGS, STEDMAN & KRASNY, 2014; CAPPELLO, 2005; EPSTEIN, STEVENS, McKEEVER & BARUCHEL, 2006). [1]

BEILIN (2005) and BRIGGS et al. (2014) found PEIs particularly useful for understanding participants' attitudes toward space and the environment. Similarly, researchers study the relationship between children and their surroundings regarding their socialization, safety, and mobilities (CHRISTENSEN, MYGIND & BENTSEN, 2014; KRAFTL et al., 2022; RASMUSSEN, 2004; VEITCH, SALMON & BALL, 2007). Most researchers prefer using PEIs while investigating children's perspectives on socio-spatial relationships. Using PEIs not only addresses the constraints of using in-depth verbal interviews particularly with children but also because spatial experience is difficult to study only through verbal interviews (BEILIN, 2005; BRIGGS et al., 2014; JORGENSON & SULLIVAN, 2009; RASMUSSEN, 2004). Anthropologists in their studies on children faced similar challenges and have adopted similar solutions, just as other qualitative researchers did (BLUEBOND-LANGNER & KORBIN, 2007; CHRISTENSEN & JAMES, 2017). [2]

In this paper, I aim to demonstrate that PEIs, when used as a visual prompt and to guide verbal interviews, work as an effective method for researching children to mitigate their lack of interest and other aforementioned methodological constraints. I present my reflections from conducting an ethnographic project in a Pakistani village. This paper is based on data from my doctoral project using ethnography to explore cultural perceptions of time and space in relation to social change in rural Pakistan (MUGHAL, 2014). Here, I discuss how PEIs helped me to study children's perceptions of space—otherwise under-studied in the cultural context of rural Pakistan. [3]

I start with a literature review on the critical aspects of researching with children and the use of PEIs with children as used by researchers, often to mitigate the constraints of other methods (Section 2). I then discuss the study setting and the methodology to provide a context of this study (Section 3). This will be followed by a sample of results that I generated using PEIs with children, including my reflections on them (Section 4) which will lead to the last section of the paper in the discussion and conclusion (Section 5). [4]

2. Literature Review: Researching Children and Using Photo-Elicitation

The history of anthropological research related to children dates back many decades (e.g., CHILDS, 1949; JUNOD, 1927 [1912]; MEAD, 1932; RAUM, 1940). Over time, researchers from psychology, sociology, and geography have carried out studies regarding children and their lived experiences. However, Children's Studies, Childhood Studies, or New Childhood Studies as a formal domain emerged relatively recently (also see distinctions between them in ALANEN, 2014; CORSARO & EVERITT, 2023; GOTTLIEB, 2018; LESNIK-OBERSTEIN, 2011). In the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child, children's right to freely express their opinions on all matters affecting them are supported, with their views given fair attention based on their age and maturity. Therefore, over the last few decades, researchers and policymakers have encouraged the inclusion of children's perspectives in decision-making (BESSELL, 2011; BLUEBOND-LANGNER & KORBIN, 2007; CHRISTENSEN & JAMES, 2017; JABEEN, 2009; LUNDY, McEVOY & BYRNE 2011; MASTEN, 2018; ROGERS, SHEARER, HRYNIUK, RAY & REMPEL, 2021). Consequently, researchers now involve children in research as respondents or even co-researchers to include their perspectives in research concerning them (e.g., ALANEN, 2014; COYNE & CARTER, 2018; HONKANEN, POIKOLAINEN & KARLSSON, 2018; JOHNSON, PFISTER & VINDROLA-PADROS, 2013; MASON & WATSON, 2014; MILSTEIN, 2010; POKU, CARESS & KIRK, 2019). [5]

Involving children in research requires careful consideration of research methodologies. Researchers develop and adapt different methods through interdisciplinary crossover because "methods belong to all of us" (BERNARD, 2006, pp.1-2). The interdisciplinary studies on children are carried out from diverse perspectives in arts, humanities, behavioral and social sciences, educational studies, natural sciences, law, and medicine. Therefore, different researchers use different methods for conducting field research related to children. Their choice of methods depends on various factors, including research objectives, budget, ethical considerations, and the practicalities and logistics of fieldwork. They mostly use methods such as observations, interviews, and informal discussions, for collecting data about children and the issues concerning them (EINARSDÓTTIR, 2007; LANGE & MIERENDORFF, 2009; TICKLE, 2017). [6]

Children of ages 5-7 years and above are considered to be able to give interviews (GALE, POWELL & CARLTON, 2025). However, several limitations exist for children below 10-12 years old due to their cognitive, linguistic, and interactive skills, subject to other factors like socialization, education, and culture (DOCHERTY & SANDELOWSKI, 1999; LeVINE & NEW, 2008; VOGL, 2015). [7]

Since vocabulary is fundamentally important in interviews, children less than seven years of age, and in some cases 10-12 years of age, may struggle to grasp complex words and ideas due to linguistic constraints, and may lose interest in long and in-depth verbal interviews (CLARK, 1999; MacLEOD et al., 2017; PONIZOVSKY-BERGELSON, DAYAN, WAHLE & ROER-STRIER, 2019;

PUNCH, 2002). Additionally, the power imbalance between adult researchers and child participants has been a major methodological and ethical issue in conducting interviews with children (BODÉN, 2021; KAY, CREE, TISDALL & WALLACE, 2003; MAYALL, 2017; MAYEZA, 2017; MORROW & RICHARDS, 2007; POWELL, GRAHAM & TRUSCOTT, 2016; WATER, 2024). Adult interviewers often face hinderances during the conversations with children participants due to this power imbalance in which children are reluctant to engage in conversation. Therefore, many researchers have applied visual approaches such as photographs, arts-based methods such as drawing, or toys and games to engage children in research and to overcome these ethical issues (e.g., CAPPELLO, 2005; CLARK, 1999; COLLIER, 1987; DARBYSHIRE et al., 2005; EINARSDÓTTIR, 2007; HICKEY-MOODY, HORN, WILLCOX & FLORENCE, 2021; JADUE ROA, WHITEBREAD & GARECA GUZMÁN, 2018; LEE & ABBOTT, 2009; LEONARD & McKNIGHT, 2015; SMITH, GIDLOW & STEEL, 2012). [8]

Visual methods are used by anthropologists and other researchers for various purposes, such as attracting participants, providing evidence of fieldwork, and explaining phenomena (BANKS, 2001; EL GUINDI, 2008; SMITH et al., 2012). Over time, researchers in visual anthropology, sociology, marketing research, and public health have used images as a central tool in their methodological frameworks while researching children. BALLESTEROS-MEJÍA and MADERO (2024) analyzed the use of visual methods in diverse research areas and found that researchers employ different visual methods to achieve different research objectives, considering the practicalities of their fieldwork. [9]

A PEI is a qualitative research method where researchers incorporate images into interviews to generate additional data, to prompt and guide verbal interviews, or to evoke reactions from participants (HARPER, 2002; LEONARD & McKNIGHT, 2015). PEIs have been applied in diverse research contexts in different fields. Researchers aim to use a PEI to collect participants' responses to images, the social and personal meanings they attribute to these images and their content. In this way, they use images or visual impulses to stimulate emotions, memories, reflections, and discussions, which are not typically convenient to achieve through verbal conversations alone (EL GUINDI, 2008). FINSON and PEDERSON (2011) demonstrated that the meanings and reactions elicited through PEIs are significantly different from those produced by conventional in-depth verbal interviews for a range of cognitive, emotional, and social reasons. Consequently, researchers obtain different types of information by using PEIs, leading to varied analyses and discoveries about participants' perspectives. [10]

In PEIs, various types of images are utilized, including photographs, paintings, cartoons, videos, hand sketches, and graffiti, depending on the study's objectives (COWAN, 1999; HARPER, 2002; PEARSON & MISENER, 2024). In most cases, researchers provide photographs (known as researcher-driven PEI) and pose pertinent questions to participants about their views relevant to research objectives, or request them to organize photographs according to various themes

(COLLIER, 1987; WALSTRA, 2020). Alternatively, participants may be asked to provide photographs themselves and then discuss their content with the researcher (known as participant-driven PEIs). [11]

Despite their many advantages, BIGNANTE (2010) and BRIGGS et al. (2014) have also identified some limitations using PEIs, which pose challenges in data collection. The length of interviews and the nature or types of questions asked are among the critical aspects of conducting PEIs, particularly with children. While children are often attracted to photographs, they become bored during lengthy conversations. Therefore, using photographs does not necessarily make a difference in such situations. Moreover, there is also a risk of distraction from the research questions, as children tend to focus on certain aspects of the photographs that interest them but which may be irrelevant to the research objectives (BIGNANTE, 2010). At times, it can be difficult for adult researchers to guide or direct children to remain focused, considering ethical dimensions. Furthermore, the quality and specific view captured in the photograph are crucially significant. Children usually do not find a poor-quality photograph appealing and this is counter-productive in terms of time and resource management. Similarly, a researcher may struggle to obtain information relevant to the research objectives by using a photograph of the same landscape or view from a different and angle that is unfamiliar to children participants in space related studies. However, most researchers do not completely rely on photo-elicitation as a single source of information due to its limitations. They often integrate these data with observations or other tools to achieve valid and reliable results (BEILIN, 2005; FORD et al., 2017; PINK, 2007). [12]

In another version of PEI, known as photovoice, participants take photographs to discuss and document their lives and experiences, as actionable knowledge (RAYNA & GARNIER, 2021; SHAW, 2021; WOODGATE, ZURBA & TENNENT, 2017). It is usually applied in community-based projects. In this reflexive photography technique, researchers engage participants in actively producing and interpreting photographs (ALACA, ROCCA & MAGGI, 2017; ROMERA IRUELA, 2023). In this way, researchers gain insights into the interviewees' preferences and perspectives (CLARK, 1999; EL GUINDI, 2008; HARPER, 2002). BEAZLEY (2008), BUTSCHI and HEDDERICH (2021) and VAN AUKEN, FRISVALL and STEWART (2010) found it helpful in empowering children as well. However, researchers face some constraints in this method with children, such as their inability to properly use cameras and ethical concerns from the community regarding privacy (BURNINGHAM et al., 2020; POKU et al., 2019). To overcome the limitations of PEIs, researchers implement modifications when working with children, depending on the research's requirements, context, and logistics (CLARK, 1999; CREMIN et al., 2011; DREW, DUNCAN & SAWYER, 2010; EPSTEIN et al., 2006). For example, to address some constraints related to children's lack of interest in in-depth interviews, I employed a specifically designed quantifiable method involving photographs (MUGHAL, 2021). I asked children to identify photographs and recorded the time taken to recognise each one, in order to study their perception of social boundaries through the familiarity level of the places. [13]

3. The Study and Methodology

Most ethnographers and other researchers have traditionally focused on topics like kinship, ethnic boundaries, group relations, gender, education, and marriage customs in Pakistan, mainly from adults' perspectives (e.g., HOLDEN & CHAUDHARY, 2013; LYON, 2004; USMAN, 2016). Although there has been growing interest in studying children in Pakistan (ALI, YASEEN, MAKHDUM, QUDDOOS & SARDAR, 2021; BHATTI, SALEEM & MIAN, 2021; JABEEN, 2009; JALALZAI, 2004; JILLANI, 1997; SHAH et al., 2022), their perspectives are not typically considered. Social research is relatively novel to most children in Pakistan, especially in rural areas, making it challenging to include their perspectives using traditional methods. Therefore, I argue that there is a need to develop and use methodologies that help study children's perspectives in Pakistan effectively. [14]

In anthropology, space is conceptualized as a cultural construct that transcends mere physical dimensions (LOW, 2009; PINXTEN, VAN DOOREN & HARVEY, 2018). Space is intertwined with social practices, symbols, and ideologies. It acts as a symbolic medium through which a culture articulates its values, identities, and power dynamics (AUCOIN, 2017). The social organization of space can significantly influence social interactions and hierarchies. Therefore, cultural perception of space provides insights into people's lived experiences and social realities (KOKOT, 2007). Children perceive their social and physical environment as they are socialized into the socio-spatial organization (HOLLOWAY & VALENTINE, 2000; LOEBACH & GILLILAND, 2010; RASMUSSEN, 2004). I studied people's perception and use of domestic space, village space or layout, and other places to understand their perception and social organization of space. [15]

For example, in rural Pakistani, the houses of a *biraderi* [kinship and social network] are closer to each other than to different *biraderis*. A *biraderi* is a social network, mainly based on kinship ties, whose members are related by blood or through conjugal relations (LYON, 2004; USMAN, 2016). However, this network may be extended to other relationships such as neighborhood (MUGHAL, 2015a). My ethnographic fieldwork was conducted in a village in 2010. This village had multiple *biraderis.* It was divided by a road into two settlements. People from different *biraderis* usually did not enter each other's settlements unless necessary, as most everyday exchanges of rights and obligations, such as participating in ceremonies or exchanging food, occurred normally within a *biraderi* (MUGHAL, 2018). Their differential access and perception about various parts of the village are shaped by their age, gender, and *biraderi*. This aspect of social organization was an important way to study socio-spatial relations, including social boundaries, in the village. I used various research methods in this project, including rapport building, participant observation, photography, and interviews that are common to ethnographic studies (BERNARD, 2006). Social connotations around spaces, assessing differential access to places through difficulty in recognizing it in photographs, and significance of different places were some of the goals of these PEIs. The project aimed at interpreting these responses within the cultural context of the rural social organization. [16]

Involving children in the research was challenging. Children in rural areas of Pakistan are unfamiliar with social research. To explore children's perceptions of space, including socio-spatial relations and their surroundings, I used many methods considering the practicalities of the field and children's age and interest. Like many studies elsewhere, there were constraints with methodologies such as using in-depth verbal interviews. Some children studying in local schools were interested in drawing, mapping, and other methods, and were able to participate in interviews or discussions easily. I have explained elsewhere the children's perceptions of socio-spatial relations in terms of social boundaries, drawing on the information from these different methods in the same project (MUGHAL, 2021). However, the children who could not be engaged in other methods effectively, such as in-depth interviews and mapping, were found to be particularly interested in photographs. [17]

In this paper, I discuss my reflections on using semi-structured, qualitative PEIs with these children to understand their perceptions of space. The description here is generally based on PEIs conducted from a sample of interviews of 15 children, girls and boys, ages about 8 to 12. These children had not been previously engaged in any social research. I, as the researcher, provided and selected the photographs. To do so, I used a digital camera of high resolution to take photographs of different places in the area during the project and used those color prints to prompt and guide the PEIs. I also noted children's reactions whether they were happy or intrigued to see these photographs. These interviews were audio-recorded and were then transcribed into text, which was used in analysis together with other data from this project. [18]

Ethical concerns were always discussed with parents and teachers beforehand, including how and where the interviews would be conducted, the types of questions that might be asked, and how the information would be used. Informed consent was obtained from the children and their parents or guardians regarding their participation in the research. All interviews were conducted in the presence of children's parents, adult siblings, or relatives. Ethical approval for the project was obtained from the departmental ethics approval committee. [19]

I faced several challenges in this research such as people in rural areas being largely unaware of social research, my positionality as a researcher, and other fieldwork practicalities. I have explained elsewhere different aspects and challenges of doing this ethnographic study (MUGHAL, 2015b). Here, I reflect on a few of them briefly to provide some context. One main aspect of my positionality was that I was conducting this study as "anthropology at home" (PEIRANO, 1998, p.105), which is a specific context of anthropology in which researchers study their own culture. I am native to the province but from another city. Two languages, Saraiki and Urdu, are spoken in the village by different social groups. I have native-level fluency in both languages, which helped me communicate easily with the local people in the village. In this way, I was considered an insider by the locals. However, as I belonged to a different city and was pursuing my PhD at a British university at that time of fieldwork, I was also considered an outsider. As a male researcher, my data were mostly based on

male participants due to gender segregation in the cultural context of rural Pakistan. However, this segregation is not rigid for children. This helped me to involve both male and female children in this study. [20]

4. My Reflections on Using PEIs With Children

The children involved in these PEIs were not familiar with using cameras and mobile phones at the time of the fieldwork. During these interviews, I showed them printed photographs and asked various questions about the locations; for example, which features helped them identify the place or how often did they visit this place? [21]

As BARKER and SMITH (2001) asserted, researchers must take great care when working with children by being aware of their own positionality. I was aware of my positionality and adopted my research methodology accordingly (MUGHAL, 2015b, 2021). Some dimensions of my positionality, as mentioned before, included me being an adult male, native to the region but not from the village, and not familiar with these children prior to the project. To minimize the effects of power relations between the children and me, I adopted various strategies considering the cultural context. For example, I conducted PEIs by sitting at the same level as the children to address the power imbalance between children and me as an adult and male researcher. I opted for this because being a native to the area, I understood that children consider adults as mostly strangers accompanied by their teachers, as persons of authority who need to be respected and they normally do not talk freely to them. Remarkably, many children became interested in talking to me when they found me interviewing their parents or teachers as part of this project. Additionally, I interviewed these children in a group setting, where teachers, parents, siblings or other relatives were also present to maintain a comfortable social environment for the participants. [22]

Although anthropologists use various approaches to analyze different phenomena, they generally focus on the cultural context using ethnographic descriptions (BERNARD, 2006). The children's responses provided me with insights into how they perceive space and social relationships. Through these PEIs, I used anthropological analysis to understand how the children from a biraderi have more frequent everyday mobility and understanding of their surroundings, such as agricultural fields, streets, schools, market, playground, and houses of their relatives in the cultural context of social organization in the village (MUGHAL, 2014). [23]

During the PEIs, I presented photographs taken from various locations in and around the village, as well as from Lodhran city, to the children. Irrespective of age, gender, or *biraderi*, the children showed great interest in these photographs and were keen to describe the locations and indicate whether they had visited them previously. For instance, while looking at Figure 1, one child responded:

> "This is Milad square. It is Lodhran. I go there with my father on a motorbike. There are many shops in this square" (Boy, 11).

Figure 1: Milad Square in Lodhran City [24]

As the place shown in Figure 1 is one of the famous landmarks in Lodhran, almost all the children recognized it easily. It also provided an opportunity to gather additional information, such as the time it takes to reach that place by using different modes of transportation. This helped me to understand their mobilities. [25]

When shown a photograph of a sewage sump in the village (Figure 2), children from the *biraderi* whose homes are closer to this area recognized it easily. They mentioned that it was in their part (settlement) of the village. Conversely, children whose homes are in a different settlement did not recognize it as readily. However, after being given some hints or prompts, they were able to recognize it. This difficulty was also caused by the specific angle from which the photograph was taken. [26]

In addition, there was no significant difference in the age and gender of children in responses to this photograph. One child said:

> "I know this place. I have seen it. It is near the house of my uncle. I go there many times with my family" (Girl, 9).

Figure 2: Sewage sump [27]

The photograph of the village entrance along the road, shown in Figure 3, was easily recognized by all the children, despite the apparent lack of significant landmarks. As they crossed this part of the village regularly on their way to school, the market, and their relatives' houses, they recognized the photograph easily. One child remarked:

> "I know this is in front of the mosque. It is near my house, and we play on the roadside. There is a cricket ground near that too" (Boy, 10). [28]

The same child was asked if he played on the cricket ground every day. He replied that he played there whenever he and his friends were free and when the older boys were not using the field. Little girls also recognized the photograph and responded to several questions related to the road. This interaction helped me to understand their perceptions of space in the village and mobilities, which contributed to the comparison of different concepts and perspectives across different ages and genders in the project. For instance, I noted that the girls of smaller age had greater mobility in the village space compared to adult women (MUGHAL, 2019).

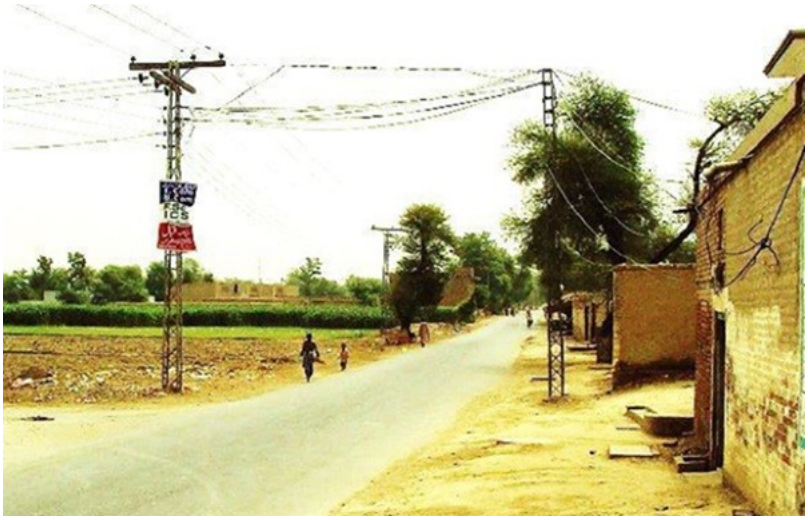

Figure 3: The road passing through the village [29]

Figure 4 shows bricks stacked in a brick-furnace. There are several local furnaces in the area (MUGHAL, 2014), and it is very difficult to recognize them by just looking at the view of the bricks in this photograph, as all furnaces look similar. Not a single adult or child during the project could recognize this photograph due to this specific view, including 12 children between the ages of 8 to 12. They mentioned that if this photograph had been taken in their own village, they would have known where the furnace was located. However, the children were asked about the brick-furnace and if they knew the process of making bricks. In this way, although the children could not recognize the place, the exercise proved useful for asking several questions about their perception of space and knowledge about the environment.

Figure 4: Brick furnace [30]

Similarly, in other photographs where no prominent landscape feature was visible, children were unable to recognize the place (such as Figure 5). However,

they were able to explain other aspects of the photographs, such as different landscape features and the use of space. In Figure 5, a tractor with an agricultural machine was shown to the children. Some children could explain how the harvesting machines work and where the harvested crops are stored in the fields.

Figure 5: A tractor in the agricultural field [31]

In these PEIs, the children were not always focused on the research objectives. For example, if the photographs included people, written text, or images on walls or billboards that interested them, they were often led to many diversions. Some children were also shy at the beginning of the conversation, even with photographs. However, flipping through photographs to find ones that interested them helped engage the children. Additionally, keeping the interviews semi-structured and open-ended encouraged the children to take an interest and participate in these PEIs. [32]

Since these interviews were audio-recorded, these recordings were transcribed into text and then interpreted using content analysis within the cultural context of the rural social organization. This was mainly done by extracting relevant information from the interview text to inform the anthropological analysis of the larger project that aimed at studying the cultural perception of time and space. Common constraints and issues associated with PEIs were also noted, such as in the example of Figure 2, where children were given hints to get deeper and meaningful insights. I have not provided a detailed analysis of the information presented here. Instead, I have referred to other publications from the project that this paper is based on to show how the results have been interpreted in detail as I have mainly focused here on my own reflections of using PEIs with children. [33]

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Anthropologists study space as a cultural construct (AUCOIN, 2017; PINXTEN et al., 2018). The idea of space is not merely a physical dimension, such as a built environment or landscape, it is also associated with ideas, social practices, social boundaries, and symbols. Some aspects of the social organization of space in this paper have been studied through different dimensions including differential access to places and culturally perceived notions in the context of rural social organization. In particular, studying the social and physical layout of the village has been vital to understanding the social organization of space. This layout of Pakistani villages reflects kinship networks (i.e., *biraderi*) and other social and economic configurations and hierarchies (LYON, 2004; MUGHAL, 2015a, 2023; USMAN, 2016). I conducted PEIs with children to understand their perceptions of space. To further expand on questions related to children's perspectives of socio-spatial relations such as those related to *biraderi*, mobility, and landscape, I prompted them with more questions to obtain meaningful information about their social worlds. [34]

Several researchers have found that PEIs can be effectively used with people of all age groups, particularly in research related to space and place (BANKS, 2001; BEILIN, 2005; EL GUINDI, 2008; HARPER, 2002). Despite several merits of using PEIs, it is certainly not the only method to use with children in fieldwork-based research. Participant observation, unstructured verbal interviews, spot checks, videography, drawings, participatory GIS, and many other methods are also used by researchers to study children's experiences and document their perspectives (BARKER & SMITH, 2001; CHRISTENSEN & JAMES, 2017; TISDALL, DAVIS & GALLAGHER., 2008). The choice of specific methods, including visual ones, is informed by the researcher's experience, the practicalities of fieldwork, and research objectives (TICKLE, 2017). However, as discussed earlier, PEI helps researchers overcome some of the constraints posed by questionnaires and in-depth verbal interviews when researching children (MacLEOD et al., 2017; PONIZOVSKY-BERGELSON et al., 2019; PUNCH, 2002). [35]

Social networks, *biraderi*, patronage, politics, and other sociocultural aspects of rural Pakistan are important parts of social organization (HOLDEN & CHAUDHARY, 2013; LYON, 2004). However, children have not typically been a focus of these studies, often due to specific research objectives or the methodological and ethical constraints of studying children (JABEEN, 2009). Issues such as the power imbalance between researchers and child participants and the challenge of engaging children in research are common in different countries and cultural contexts. Acknowledging these constraints has always helped qualitative researchers to better address these issues by learning from diverse experiences (FORD et al., 2017; HARVEY & LAREAU, 2020). In this study, while not undermining the strength of in-depth verbal interviews or other conventional methods, I explored children's perspectives on the social organization of space by using PEIs. I have shown here that PEIs can be useful

for researching children in rural Pakistan, and can also help overcome some of the methodological constraints of in-depth verbal interviews. [36]

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