Personal Constructions of Holiday Snapshots

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Ever since the emergence of the first daguerreotype camera, the development of photography has been intrinsically linked with the tourist. The value of the photographic image as a medium for understanding very different aspects of twentieth century tourism has been demonstrated in several recent issues of the Annals (Adams 1984; Albers and James 1983; Chalfen 1985; Uzzel 1984).

This research note is intended to make two contributions to the developing scholarly discussion of the relationship between the photographic image and the tourist. First, the photographic medium selected for study is the holiday snapshot. Second, in each of the three previously reported studies cited above, the authors have presented a researcher's interpretation of the meaning of the photographic image to the viewer. The methodology described here offers a more phenomenological approach whereby meanings are attributed to images by the photographer/tourists themselves.

Berger (1980) suggests that photographs belong to either "public" or "private" experiences. For Berger, a public photograph offers information, but information severed from the viewer's experience. In contrast, a private photograph is "appreciated and read in a context which is continuous with that from which the camera removed it" (Berger 1980:51). The epistemological implication is clear. If researchers are interested in understanding the meaning of private photographs then they must listen to the viewer's interpretation, rather than impose their own. We have found in our exploratory interviews that tourists are very willing to interpret their own photographs. They often provide a rich verbal account of a situation which uses the pictorial content of a photograph as a point of departure, and extends well beyond the photographic moment.

The reflective qualities of photographs have been usefully adopted in clinical psychology as an aid to verbalizing phenomenological realities that contribute to the understanding of both the patient and the therapist (Kraus and Fryrear 1984). Faced with similar difficulties of patient expression and therapist understanding, Kelly (1955) devised a technique, the repertory grid, that enables patients to verbalize and to record aspects of their personal world. The resultant grid acts as "a cognitive mirror, reflecting back to the user his models of construing" (Shaw 1980:71). The ongoing research of the authors combines both photographs and the repertory grid technique in an exploration of a tourist's experiences.

Applications of Kelly's repertory grid technique have been reported in the Annals (Pearce 1982; Stringer 1984). For a more comprehensive explanation we recommend Easterby-Smith's (1981) account of the use of the grid technique in non-clinical settings. Shaw (1980) has developed a set of microcomputer programs which complement and extend Kelly's work. PLANET (Personal Learning Analysis Negotiation Elicitation Techniques) comprises eight computer programs for the elicitation and analysis of repertory grid data from one or more people. One of these eight programs, PEGASUS, enables the respondent to develop and analyze a grid through interaction with a microcomputer keyboard. The researcher needs only to provide access to the computer, the PEGASUS software, and if the respondent so wishes, he or she can share in the interpretation of the printed output. The purpose of this note is to demonstrate the potential of the PEGASUS program.
**Personal Constructions of a Mexican Vacation**

Six months after returning from a 13-day trip to Mexico, Rosa was invited to develop a repertory grid using color prints of scenes she had personally photographed. PEGASUS initially requests the user to select six elements (in this case photographs) that represent the subject of inquiry. Rosa’s six photographs, selected to explore her thinking about her Mexican vacation, are shown in Figure 1.

In order to expose the meaning of the photographs, PEGASUS selects successive groups of three elements, following the triading procedure devised by Kelly to elicit personal constructs (for a full explanation see Fransella and Bannister 1977:14–19). The respondent is asked to distinguish between the three elements. Specifically, to identify how two of the elements are similar, and yet different from the third. The resultant bi-polar construct represents one way in which Rosa categorizes the events she has captured on film. For example, the juxtaposing of the three photographs (Popo, Museum, and Monte) resulted in a construct, Indian Rituals – Nature. Immediately following the successful elicitation of a construct,

![Figure 1. Rosa’s Selected Snapshots](image-url)
the respondent is asked to rank each element against the elicited construct. PEGASUS then determines the nature of the next prompt to appear on the screen, based upon the emerging relationships between constructs and elements (Shaw 1980:66–70). In addition to the elicitation of new constructs, PEGASUS enables the user to further define his or her thinking by the addition of elements and the elaboration of constructs. For example, during the elicitation of Rosa's grid, the PEGASUS program identified that Construct 2 Pleasant sensations–Unpleasant sensations, and Construct 6 Peaceful–Tormented were highly related. In this case, PEGASUS asks whether the user wishes to elaborate upon these constructs. As Rosa decided in the affirmative, she was asked to find a new element that either represented Pleasant sensations and Tormented, or Unpleasant sensations and Peaceful. Rosa scanned her holiday snapshots and selected Element 7, Mitla, ranking it "1" on Construct 6 and "5" on Construct 2. Rosa later explained her choice: "The photograph of Mitla conveys peacefulness, it is a quiet, sacred place . . . yet the photograph also conveys unpleasant sensations because the trip to Mitla led to the uncomfortable realization of the extent of rural poverty in Mexico." Rosa added two photographs to her original selection in this way.

The completed grid was analyzed using a two-way hierarchical clustering technique contained within the FOCUS program of the PLANET suite. Rosa's focused grid is reproduced in Figure 2. The researchers utilized the "talk-back" procedure (Thomas and Harri-Augstein 1985) to involve Rosa in the interpretation of the FOCUS output and to engage her in a conversation about her vacation. Figure 2 contains three parts: the re-ordered raw data complete with construct and element labels; the construct tree indicating the percentage match between construct clusters; and the element tree displaying the percentage match between element clusters.

The grid can be read as a matrix, noting that the first row refers to the element numbers (cf. Figure 1), and the first column refers to the order in which the constructs were elicited (i.e., Construct 7 = Nature–City). The numerals within the asterisks are the scores given by Rosa to each photograph on each construct.

The construct tree indicates that Constructs 7, 2, and 6 are clustered, suggesting that in relation to Rosa's Mexican vacation the descriptors (Nature, Pleasant Sensations, and Peaceful) are in some way related, as are the negative aspects (City, Unpleasant Sensations, and Tormented). Similarly, Constructs 8 and 4 link Poverty with Indian culture, and Culture dominance with Foreign culture. These categories seemed to make intuitive sense to Rosa.

The element tree clearly portrays a discordant theme that ran through our conversation with Rosa. Element 6 (Downtown) and Element 4 (Praca) convey the negative aspects of the vacation (City, Unpleasant sensations, Tormented, Culture dominance, Foreign culture). On the contrary, Element 2 (Museum) and Element 3 (Monte) convey the positive aspects of the vacation (Pleasant sensations, Peaceful, Indian culture, Indian rituals, Places experienced as opposed to those seen, and Historical). Thus, the display of element and construct structure in the FOCUS output enabled Rosa, and the researchers, to understand some perplexing anomalies apparent in our discussion of a "pleasure" vacation in Mexico.

Readers interested in a more extensive analysis of Rosa's grid will find Shaw's (1980) book invaluable. Our experience with PEGASUS suggests that the PLANET Software suite has much to offer researchers who are pursuing a more emic, or actor-centered, approach towards understanding tourist behavior. The authors welcome correspondence on this topic. Inquiries about the PLANET software should be directed to Dr. M. L. G. Shaw, Dept. of Computer Science, University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2N 1N4.
Figure 2. Rosa's FOCUS Output
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