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PERSONAL CONSTRUCT PSYCHOLOGY AS A FOUNDATION FOR COGNITIVE AND COMPUTATIONAL KNOWLEDGE REPRESENTATION

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ABSTRACT

Personal construct psychology has been recognized as providing a fundamental framework for both theoretical and applied studies of knowledge acquisition and representation. However, most of the studies have utilized only the repertory grid, instantiating Kelly's dichotomy corollary. This paper develops a systemic basis for the full structure of PCP that shows its foundational role in cognitive and computational knowledge representation, and provides a basis for future theoretical developments.

INTRODUCTION

The repertory grid has become a widely used and accepted technique for acquiring knowledge. The grid itself dates back to Kelly's (1955) clinical applications of the *personal construct psychology* that he had developed on the basis of his clinical and teaching experience. The first widely-used computer-based elicitation and analysis system for repertory grids was developed by Shaw (1979) with applications mainly in educational, clinical and management studies. Gaines and Shaw (1980) suggested that repertory grids would provide a useful development technique for expert systems, and later published a validation study of the elicitation of the BIAIT methodology from accountants and accounting students using computer-based repertory grid elicitation and analysis (Shaw & Gaines, 1983). Boose (1984) in an independent parallel study reported success in a wide range of industrial knowledge-based system developments using computer elicitation of repertory grids, and since then many knowledge acquisition systems have incorporated repertory grids as a major knowledge elicitation technique for knowledge-based systems (Boose & Bradshaw, 1987; Diederich, Ruhmann & May, 1987; Gaines & Shaw, 1987; Garg-Janardan & Salvendy, 1987; Shaw & Gaines, 1987; Ford, Stahl, Adams-Webber, Novak & Jones, 1990).

The 'repertory grid' methodology has itself evolved in the light of application experience and now has major differences from that described by Kelly. Shaw (1980) took advantage of the processing power and interactivity of computers to introduce on-line analysis and feedback to the person from whom the grid was being elicited. Shaw and Gaines (1979) introduced new forms of analysis of the repertory grid based on fuzzy sets theory which became the basis of rule extraction for knowledge-based systems (Gaines & Shaw, 1986). Bradshaw, Boose, Covington and Russo (1988) showed how many problems that did not seem appropriate to repertory grids could be formulated in terms of them.

The repertory grid was an instrument designed by Kelly to bypass cognitive defences and give access to a person's underlying construction system by asking them to compare and contrast relevant examples (significant people in their life in the original application). However, the repertory grid itself is based primarily on only one aspect of Kelly's personal construct psychology, his *dichotomy corollary* that, "A person's construction system is composed of a finite number of dichotomous constructs." The standard grid is a flat structure of elements described in terms of dichotomous constructs that does not represent the hierarchical structure of

Kelly's organization corollary that, "Each person characteristically evolves, for his convenience of anticipating events, a construction system embracing ordinal relationships between constructs." Hinkle (1965) developed a technique of *laddering*, based on "why" and "how" questions, for investigating ordinal relations between constructs, but ordinal relations between constructs have not been the primary focus in applications of repertory grid tools.

Ordinal relations are a primary focus in tools that use some form of semantic network to build an overall domain ontology directly, such as MOLE (Eshelman, Ehret., McDermott & Tan, 1987), KNACK (Klinker, Bentolila, Genetet, Grimes, & McDermott, 1987), SALT (Marcus, 1987), ONTOS (Monarch & Nirenburg, 1987), Cognosys (Woodward, 1990), KEATS (Motta, Eisenstadt, Pitman & West, 1988), CODE (Skuce, Shenkang & Beauville, 1989), CAMEO (Jones, 1989), and in techniques based on domain ontologies such as KADS (Breuker & Wielinga, 1987). The tools vary in their interfaces, sources, emphasis on declarative or procedural knowledge, and domain dependence, but all result in domain models based on a network of directed relations between concepts. These knowledge acquisition tools are different in approach from those based on repertory grids, but as the trend towards the integration of tools and techniques continues it is becoming important to understand the relationship between them.

This paper develops cognitive and computational foundations for current knowledge representation in terms of Kelly's personal construct psychology. It uses a systemic analysis of the psychology in terms of a calculus of distinctions (Gaines & Shaw, 1981) to provide a framework for knowledge representation that is both psychologically and logically well-founded, and which has direct, operational interpretation in terms of knowledge acquisition tools and techniques.

PERSONAL CONSTRUCT PSYCHOLOGY

Kelly (1955) put forward the idea of an individual using "personal constructs" as filters through which he perceives events: "Man looks at his world through transparent templets which he creates and then attempts to fit over the realities of which the world is composed." (pp.8-9) He continually emphasizes the epistemological status of these constructs in predicting and controlling the world and their ontological status as personal conjectures rather than reality-derived absolutes: "Constructs are used for predictions of things to come, and the world keeps on rolling on and revealing these predictions to be either correct or misleading. This fact provides the basis for the revision of constructs and, eventually, of whole construct systems." (p.14)

Kelly was acutely aware of the psychologist as an observer modeling a person and objected to the introduction of theoretical constructs such as "learning" and "motivation" as if they were causal variables. Hence, he was extremely careful in the exposition of his own system to make its underlying presuppositions minimal and overt by developing personal construct psychology as a semi-formal system based on a postulate and corollaries. He made minor but significant changes to the corollaries after the publication of his book, and those below are updated from Bannister and Mair (1968).

"**Fundamental Postulate:** A person's processes are psychologically channelized by the way in which he anticipates events."

This was stated as a postulate to emphasize that it was presented as a convenient viewpoint from which to understand human behavior, not imputed to an underlying physiological or psychological reality. This is consistent with modern views of the role of theory in science, but was a fairly radical position in Kelly's time. The basis of Kelly's approach to psychotherapy was that this was also a convenient viewpoint from which someone could understand, and modify, their own behavior. He saw all people as "personal scientists" in anticipating the world, and attempted to develop techniques where this anticipatory modeling activity was reflexively applied to the self.

This fundamental emphasis on the role in behavior of a view to the future is what distinguishes Kelly's approach to psychology. He saw man as driven by the need to cope with coming events in the world and all other aspects of behavior as deriving from this. He notes in expanding upon this point that "a person's processes, psychologically speaking, slip into the grooves which are cut out by the mechanisms he adopts for realizing his objectives." (Kelly, 1955, p.49)

"**Construction Corollary**: A person anticipates events by construing their replications."

Construction involves two basic operations, slicing out an "event" and interpreting it by "construing." Kelly notes "we look at the undifferentiated stream of circumstance flowing past us, and we try to find something about it that repeats itself. Once we have abstracted that property, we have a basis for slicing off chunks of time and reality and holding them up for inspection one at a time...this is done by construing" (p.120) "By construing we mean placing an interpretation: a person places an interpretation on what is construed. He erects a structure, within the framework of which the substance takes shape or assumes meaning." (p.50). "When one abstracts replicated properties in the events he has already experienced, it becomes possible for him to chart events to come in terms of these same properties. ... What one predicts is not a fully fleshed-out event, but simply the common intersect of a set of properties. If an event comes along in which all the properties intersect in the prescribed way, one identifies it as the event he expected." (p.121)

It is these "slices of circumstance" that we elicit from an expert as "critical cases", and these "interpretations" that we elicit as "relevant constructs."

"**Individuality Corollary**: Persons differ from each other in their constructions of events."

Kelly stresses the personal nature of construing but he emphasizes also that "persons can find common ground through construing the experiences of their neighbors along with their own", although "individuals can be found living out their existence next door to each other but in altogether different subjective worlds." (p.56) In knowledge-based system terms it is the personal, non-overt, nature of expertise that makes knowledge elicitation from experts a necessary developmental technique.

"**Organization Corollary**: Each person characteristically evolves, for his convenience of anticipating events, a construction system embracing ordinal relationships between constructs."

Kelly notes that "man systematizes his constructs by concretely arranging them in hierarchies and by abstracting them further" (p.58) He saw the hierarchy as one in which the stability of the upper levels allowed for change in the lower ones and that the arrangement of constructs in a particular hierarchy was more a determinant of personality than the constructs themselves. In knowledge-based system terms, hierarchies and abstractions are the material of semantic nets and software engineering. Kelly's approach emphasizes that they are constructs of the modeling system and characterize its particular "expertise."

"**Dichotomy Corollary**: A person's construction system is composed of a finite number of dichotomous constructs."

Kelly's emphasis on the dichotomous, bipolar nature of constructs is what most distinguishes them from what are conventionally called "concepts." "The construct, of itself, is the kind of contrast one perceives... while constructs do not represent or symbolize events, they do enable us to cope with events, which is a statement of a quite different order...They also enable us to put events into arrays or scales, if we wish." (pp.13-14) Kelly saw the linked concepts of *similarity* and *contrast* between elements forming the two "poles" of a construct. This does not necessarily involve a binary evaluation of elements since they may lie somewhere between the poles.

Kelly emphasizes that the opposition between the poles of a construct is not that of logical negation—"Now conventional logic would say that black and white should be treated as separate concepts. Moreover, it would say that the opposite of black can only be stated as not

black, and the opposite of white can only be stated as not white. Thus the person whose field we mentioned would have shoes which would be just as much not white as the time of day, and he would write on paper which would be just as not black as the distance to his office." (p.106)

The notion that dichotomous pairs of concepts are fundamental to human mental process is an ancient one, strongly present in Greek philosophy (Lloyd, 1966), and found in many anthropological studies of the concepts defining a culture (Maybury-Lewis & Almagor, 1989). Eliciting dichotomous constructs by asking in what way are two elements in a domain alike and different from a third is the basic technique used in repertory grids. Semantic net elicitation focuses on unipolar concepts, although the meta-concept that two concepts are *disjoint* from one another can be significant.

The relation between constructs and concepts is both psychologically and theoretically important, and the next section analyzes it in detail.

"**Choice Corollary**: A person chooses for himself that alternative in a dichotomized construct through which he anticipates the greater possibility for the elaboration of his system."

This is Kelly's basis for human action which he saw as an alternative to concepts of motivation—"there is a continuing movement toward the anticipation of events, rather than a series of barters for temporal satisfactions" (p.68).

"**Range Corollary**: A construct is convenient for the anticipation of a finite range of events only."

This may be thought of as introducing a concept of relevance into the definition of construct systems.

"**Experience Corollary**: A person's construction system varies as he successively construes the replications of events."

This expresses the essential fallibility and conjectural nature of constructs. They are hypotheses to be judged by their utility and updated as they fail in anticipation. This updating is what the observer construes as "learning."

"**Modulation Corollary**: The variation in a person's construction system is limited by the permeability of the constructs within whose ranges of convenience the variants lie."

Kelly sees a "permeable" construct as one "so constituted that new experience and new events can be discriminatively added to those which it already embraces." (p.81)

"**Fragmentation Corollary**: A person may successively employ a variety of construction subsystems which are inferentially incompatible with each other."

Through this corollary Kelly allows for the operations of different psychological systems and hence different methods of inference and forms of rationality within a single individual. Pask (1975) sees "roles" within a person in similar terms, as forming separate psychological individuals, "P-Individuals." In these terms, an "expert" is not a person but a specialized and valued role within a person.

"**Commonality Corollary**: To the extent that one person embraces a construction of experience which is similar to that employed by another, his processes are psychologically similar to those of the other person."

This is complementary to the individuality corollary and allows for the "fact that certain groups of people behave similarly in certain respects." (p.93)

"**Sociality Corollary**: To the extent that one person construes the construction processes of another, he may play a role in a social process involving the other person."

Kelly is here allowing the construal processes of one person to become elements for construal by another and hence to model the process by which we anticipate the actions of others.

MAKING DISTINCTIONS

A theoretical framework that encompasses personal construct psychology, knowledge representation and acquisition for knowledge-based systems, and the relations between these topics, can be based on a single fundamental primitive, what Brown in his *Laws of Form* terms "making a distinction."

> "The theme of this book is that a universe comes into being when a space is severed or taken apart... By tracing the way we represent such a severance, we can begin to reconstruct, with an accuracy and coverage that appear almost uncanny, the basic forms underlying linguistic, mathematical, physical and biological science, and can begin to see how the familiar laws of our own experience follow inexorably from the original act of severance." (Brown, 1969 p.v)

Formally, a *distinction* is taken to be a primitive notion, but its connotations of cutting out something for some purpose, or because it satisfies a criterion, are informally intended. The connotations that there may be an agent making the distinction, and that something is distinguished are also informally useful. However, it should be noted that closed-world assumptions are specifically excluded, it is not assumed that what is *not* distinguished is meaningful or has the same categorial status as that which is distinguished. Informally, only that which is distinguished is known, new distinctions can be made indefinitely, and the world is assumed open to novelty. Formally, this affects the way relations between distinctions are defined. Extensional forms, such as "for all", are avoided because it is not reasonable to assume that statements can be made about an indefinite extension whose members are not yet identified and may never be known.

Distinction are the only primitives. One might ask "what is distinguished?", but the answer will be "distinctions." This corresponds to deriving the two phenomena in Kelly's *construction corollary* from a single primitive, that we distinguish events in the undifferentiated stream of circumstance, and then we further distinguish among the distinguished events by construing.

We have shown that a wide range of psychological and philosophical frameworks are characterized by the systems of distinctions underlying them, and that there are a number of basic distinctions common to such systems (Gaines & Shaw, 1984). The frameworks included that of Kelly's personal construct psychology, and the following sections defines those parts of a calculus of distinctions adequate to do this.

A CALCULUS OF DISTINCTIONS

One distinction will be said to *subsume* another if it can always be applied whenever the other can. This notion of subsumption turns out to be adequate to capture Kelly's use of the term that one construct subsumes another, and also the use of the same term in knowledge representation, that one concept subsumes another. It can be represented formally as:

"**b** subsumes **a**" $\quad \mathbf{a} \rightarrow \mathbf{b} \Leftrightarrow \vdash \mathbf{xa} \Rightarrow \vdash \mathbf{xb}$ (1)

That is, **b** subsumes **a**, if and only if whenever one asserts **xa** one also asserts **xb**. Note that the form $\forall \mathbf{x}$ is avoided for the reasons given above, that the notion of all the distinctions to which **a** and **b** may be applied is not well-defined. However, if this extension is well-defined then the intensional formulation of (1) implies the extensional formulation in terms of $\forall \mathbf{x}$.

The definition in (1) is best read intensionally in terms of a *commitment* to the way in which distinctions will be made, such that if **a** is made then there is a commitment to **b** being made also. Subsumption corresponds to increasing generality since the subsuming distinction can be applied to at least as many things as that subsumed. It is an asymmetric, transitive relation, a partial pre-order, over distinctions, that supports the ordinal relations of Kelly's *organization corollary*.

There is a second relation definable in similar terms which is equally important, that one distinction is *disjoint* with another in that one can never be applied whenever the other can. This definition of a disjoint relation turns out to be adequate to capture Kelly's notion of a dichotomy, and also the notion of disjoint concepts in knowledge representation. It can be represented formally as:

"**a** disjoint **b**" $\quad \mathbf{a}—\mathbf{b} \Leftrightarrow \vdash \mathbf{xa} \Rightarrow \neg \vdash \mathbf{xb}$ (2)

That is, **a** is disjoint with **b**, if and only if whenever one asserts **xa** one does not assert **xb**. The definition is again best read intensionally in terms of a commitment to the way in which distinctions will be made, such that if **a** is made then there is a commitment to **b** not being made. Disjoint is a symmetric, intransitive relation over distinctions, and supports Kelly's *dichotomy corollary*.

The $\rightarrow$ and — relations are complementary in establishing four possible binary relations between distinctions, that $\mathbf{a}\rightarrow\mathbf{b}$, $\mathbf{b}\rightarrow\mathbf{a}$, $\mathbf{a}—\mathbf{b}$, or none of these. The two subsumption relations can hold together giving an equivalence relation on distinctions. The disjoint relation is incompatible with the subsumption relations, and is *inherited* through subsumption, that is:

$$\mathbf{a}—\mathbf{b} \text{ and } \mathbf{a}\rightarrow\mathbf{c} \Rightarrow \mathbf{c}—\mathbf{b} \qquad (3)$$

These notions are sufficient for the definition of concepts and constructs. A *concept* is defined to be *that mental entity imputed to a distinction making agent as enabling it to make a particular distinction.*

Note that concepts are separated both from the distinctions they support and the entities they distinguish. This definition corresponds to Anglin's (1977, p.3), "a concept is all of the knowledge possessed by an individual about a category of objects or events", "Concepts mediate categorization but concepts are not the resultant categories." The notion of an agent and its mentality are deliberately introduced at this stage because they are part of the connotations of a concept. However, consistent with Kelly's position, concepts are defined to be *imputed* to an agent rather than as a mental structure. They are themselves distinctions made by an observer, possibly a reflective observer. This is equivalent to Zadeh's (1964) introduction of the notion of the *state* of a system as an imputed parametrization accounting for a system's behavior. Concepts are state variables we impute to a knowledgeable agent.

A construct is defined formally to be a triple of two disjoint distinctions mutually subsumed by a third as shown in Figure 1, and psychologically as the triple of concepts assumed to underlie the distinctions.

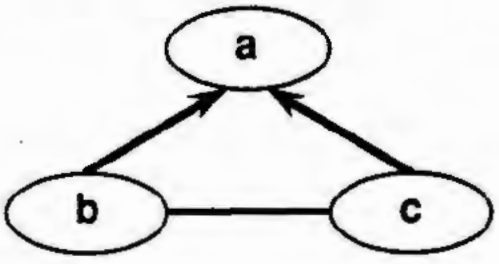

Fig.1 The triple of distinctions generating a construct

The triple captures the notions of *similarity* through the shared subsuming concept, **a**, and *contrast* through the disjoint subsumed concepts, **b** and **c**. The pair of disjoint concepts, **b** and **c**, captures Kelly's *dichotomy corollary*, that a person's construction system is composed of a finite number of dichotomous constructs. The concepts **b** and **c** characterize what Kelly terms the *poles* of the construct. A minimal subsuming concept captures Kelly's *range corollary*, that a construct is convenient for the anticipation of a finite range of events only. Such a minimal concept **a** characterizes what Kelly terms the *range of convenience* of the construct. The

importance of such triples derives from the restricted closed world semantics generated, that the world carved out by concept **a** is divided by the disjoint concepts **b** and **c** into two parts that are now at the same categorial level.

The construction of Figure 1 can be simplified by noting that a subsuming concept **a** can be constructed for a pair of disjoint concepts **b** and **c**, and it is the disjunction which primarily defines the construct. In the graph of the disjoint relation between concepts, concepts are nodes and constructs are arcs.

CONCEPT AND CONSTRUCT STRUCTURES

The subsumes and disjoint relations, → and —, can between them characterize a wide variety of concept and construct structures. The left hand structure in Figure 2 shows that a given range of convenience can be construed through a number of unrelated constructs. The pairs **b**—**c** and **d**—**e** are two different dimensions of the domain characterized by **a**. If **a** characterizes a domain of people then **b**—**c** might be **young**—**old** and **d**—**e** might be **short**—**tall**.

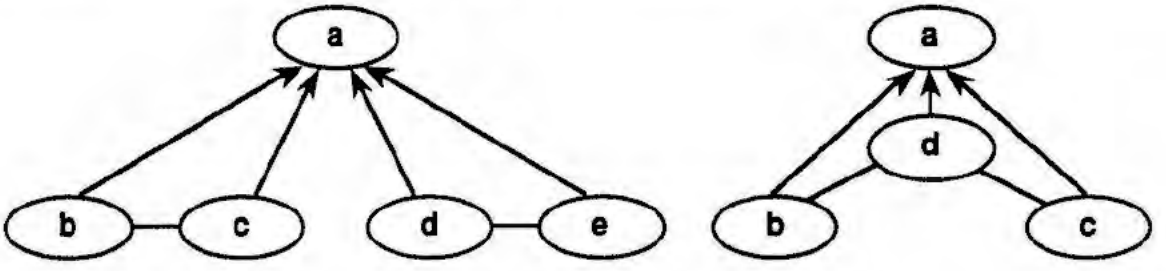

Fig.2 Alternative constructs and alternative poles

The right hand structure in Figure 2 shows that a pole of a construct may be paired with alternative poles that are not mutually disjoint. The pairs **b**—**d** and **c**—**d** are two different dimensions of the domain characterized by **a** that have some commonality through the shared pole, **d**. If **a** characterizes a domain of people then **b**—**d** might be **young**—**old** and **c**—**d** might be **fun**—**old**. It was because different contrasts were possible for the same concept that Kelly saw the concept pairs that form constructs as being a more stable chararacterization of psychological structure, that the way in which we react to something falling under a concept is dependent on what we see as the contrasting concept.

If the concepts **b** and **c** on the right of Figure 2 are also disjoint as shown on the left of Figure 3 then the structure may either be regarded as a *trichotomy* or a triple of dichotomous constructs.

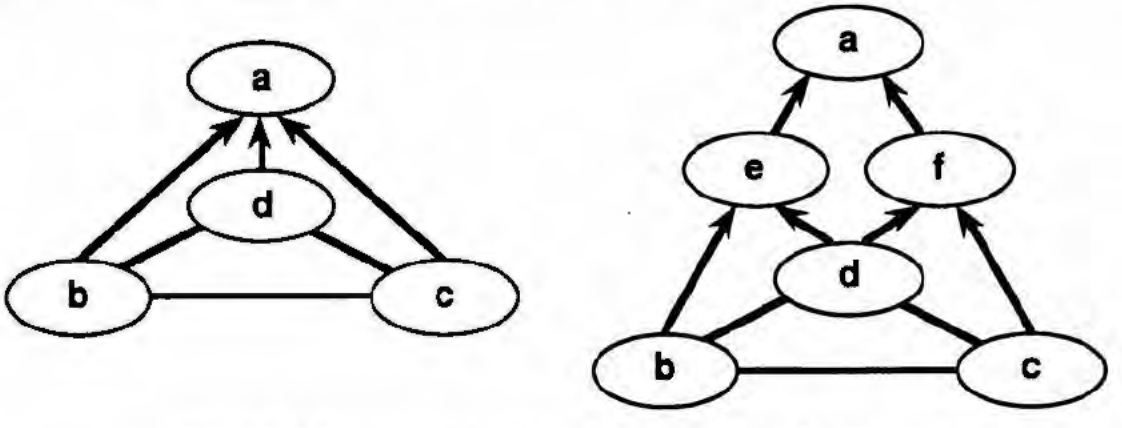

Fig.3 Trichotomous construct and a scalar trichotomy

In knowledge representation terms, **b**, **c** and **d** might be seen as alternative values along some dimension such as young, old and middle-aged respectively. In personal construct terms one can see that the contrasts **young—middle-aged**, **middle-aged—old**, and **young—old**, might all be used in different situations.

What the structure on the left of Figure 3 does not capture is the possibility of putting events along scales which Kelly mentions in his dichotomy corollary. Middle-aged is not just an alternative to young and old, but an intermediary possibility between them. The structure on the right of Figure 3 extends that on the left to show how scales may be developed. The concepts **e** and **f** are not disjoint and **d** inherits their commonality while **b**, since it is disjoint with **d**, inherits a different part of **e**, and **c** similarly inherits a different part of **f**. For example, suppose that **b** is young interpreted as an age range [0, 35], **c** is old as an age range [50, 100], **d** middle-aged [35, 50], then **e** might be the age range [0, 50] and **f** [35, 100].

It is possible for the pair **e f** to be used as if it were a dichotomous construct even though the concepts are not disjoint. This generates the underlying infrastructure shown in Figure 4 where **d** captures the borderline cases (Sanford, 1975) that come under both **e** and **f**, **b—c** is a dichotomous construct underlying **e—f**, and **g—h** is a dichotomous construct characterizing that part of the borderline under **b** and that under **c**. The structure **b**, **c**, **d** is the basis for a fuzzy sets (Zadeh, 1965) characterization of the pseudo-construct **e f**, with, for example: **b** characterizing a membership of 1 to **e** and 0 to **f**; **c** a membership of 0 to **e** and 1 to **f**; and **d** 0.5 to **e** and 0.5 to **f**. Distinguishing more concepts subsumed by **d** allows for finer grades of membership (Gaines, 1976).

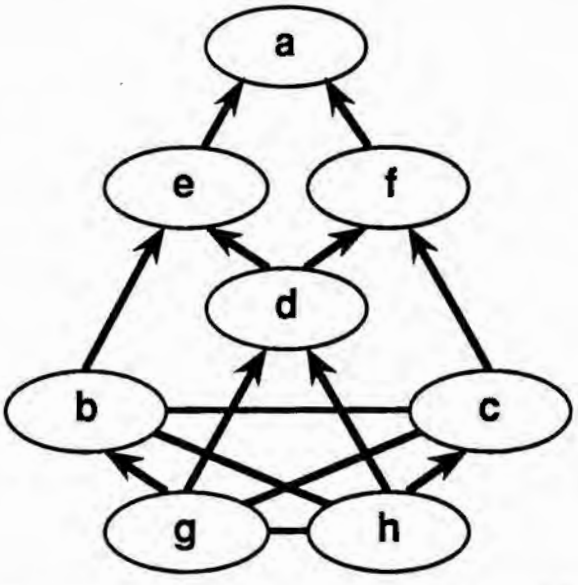

Fig.4 A non-dichotomous pseudo-construct, borderline and fuzzy infrastructure

The relation of **g—h** to **b—c** in Figure 4 is an example of an ordinal relation between constructs as described by Kelly in his *organization corollary*. Figure 5 shows two such ordinal relations discussed by Kelly. On the left, the concept characterized by the triple **d**, **e**, **f**, is subordinate to that characterized by **a**, **b**, **c**. For example, **b—c** might be **good—bad**, and **e—f** might be **fun—boring**. When the upper construct is evaluatory, such as **good—bad**, its subordinate constructs inherit the evaluatory connotations and typically have a *preferred pole*.

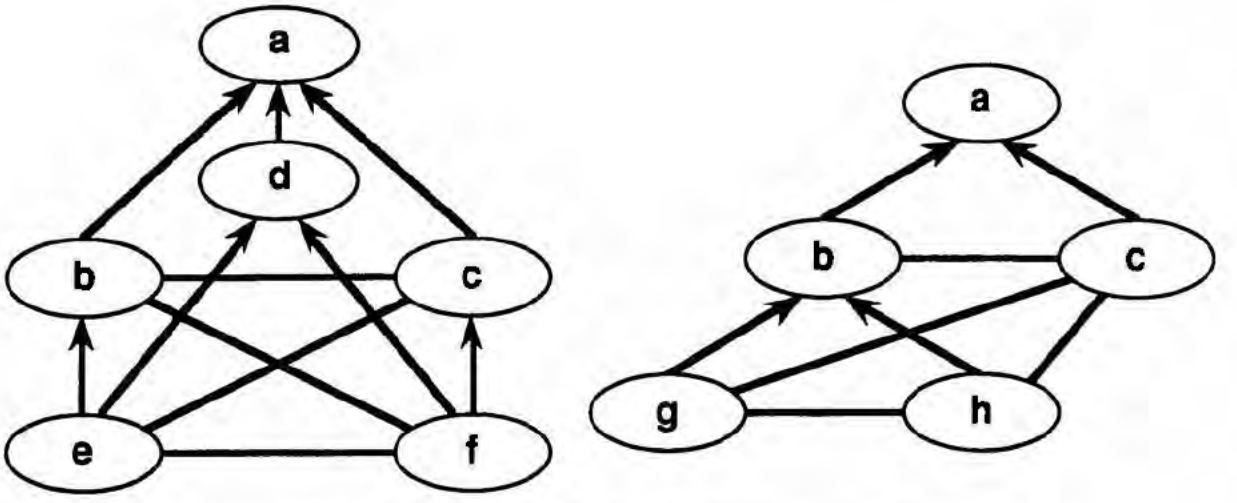

Fig.5 Some ordinal relations between constructs

On the right of Figure 5, the concept characterized by the triple **b, g, h**, is subordinate to that characterized by **a, b, c**. For example, **b—c** might be **good—bad**, and **g—h** might be **dancing—swimming**. The ordinal relations between constructs derive from the ordinal relation of subsumption between the underlying distinctions and an indefinite number of subordination structures are possible.

KNOWLEDGE REPRESENTATION

The calculus of distinctions developed above and discussed in terms of its cognitive connotations in personal construct psychology also provides computational foundations for knowledge representation schema such as those of KL-ONE (Brachman & Schmolze, 1985) and CLASSIC (Borgida, Brachman, McGuinness & Resnick, 1989). These schema involve concepts, primitive concepts, disjoint concepts, individuals, roles, constraints upon roles, individuals filling roles, rules, subsumption between concepts, and recognition of individuals by concepts. They encompass semantic nets, frames, and rule-based systems, as well as relational and post-relational databases. This section shows how such systems may be derived from primitives underlying systems of distinctions.

A *concept* in a computational context is defined to be *that data structure used by a distinction making algorithm to enable it to make a particular distinction*. No imputation is necessary because we are not dealing with identification of a black box from its behavior, but rather with the internal structure of an accessible white box. The *disjoint* relation between concepts already defined corresponds precisely to the disjoint relation in knowledge representation schema. Similarly, the *subsumption* relation between concepts already defined corresponds precisely to the "is-a" subsumption relation in knowledge representation schema. The interpretation of subsumption in terms of commitment above corresponds to the definitional form of the "is-a" relation. The computed form of "is-a" requires some further structures which are developed below, and also allow primitive and non-primitive concepts to be defined.

Individuals in a computational context are defined to be *those distinctions which are initial in that they cannot be preceded by other distinctions*. This corresponds to the notion of an *initial object* in category theory and also to the analysis of individuals in metaphysics. Gracia (1983) notes that traditionally individuals are characterized by five properties; they are entities which:
(a) lose their fundamental character if they are divided into parts;
(b) are distinct from all other entities, even those that are of their same type or kind;

(c) are part of a group type or class which has or can have several members;
(d) remain fundamentally the same through time and various changes;
(e) are the subject of predication but not predicable of other things.

Gracia argues against each of these in turn as being a necessary or sufficient feature to characterize individuals and suggests instead that it is *non-instantiability* that characterizes an individual; that is we cannot instantiate an individual. This corresponds to an initial distinction which cannot have another, an instance, to its left.

Thus, while a distinction is the sole primitive, the difference between initial distinctions and non-initial ones is an important one. Individuals are concepts that cannot be applied to other concepts and hence have no extensions or instances and cannot subsume one another. However, since individuals are concepts it is possible to have knowledge representation schemas which do not make the distinction explicitly. It is also possible to treat non-initial concepts as *abstract individuals* that represent all the individuals that might be distinguished by them. When such an abstract individual has no extension, that is, there are not, or cannot be, any individuals that it distinguishes, then the paradoxes of sense and reference studied by Frege (1892), Meinong (1910) and Russell (1905), can arise.

Brachman and his colleagues use the term *role* in a slightly more restricted way than Kelly but quite similarly — an individual gains properties by playing a role in relation to another individual, for example *friend*. Kelly's definition is: "a psychological process based upon the role player's construction of aspects of the construction systems of those with whom he attempts to join in a social enterprise." He goes on to elaborate: "a role is an ongoing pattern of behavior that follows from a person's understanding of how the others whoare associated with him in his task think." (Kelly 1955, pp. 98-99)

A *role*, *property*, *attribute* or *relation* arises naturally by an important construction as shown in Figure 6. The triple of concepts defining a construct on the upper left may be used to generate that on the right by *defining* the concept **d** to be precisely the union of concepts **b** and **c**, in the sense that **d** subsumes a distinction if, and only if, it is subsumed by **b** or subsumed by c:

"**d** internalizes **b—c**" $\quad \mathbf{d \leftarrow b—c} \Leftrightarrow \vdash \mathbf{xd} \Leftrightarrow \vdash \mathbf{xb} \vee \vdash \mathbf{xc}$ (4)

The definition in (4) reads as a commitment to making the distinction **d** if and only if there is a commitment to either **b** or **c** being made also. As shown in the lower left of Figure 6, the concept **d** is uniquely minimal in the subsumption ordering as a range of convenience for the construct defined by **a** , **b**, and **c**. Thus, the construct defined by **d**, **b**, and **c** precisely and uniquely captures the essence of the original construct.

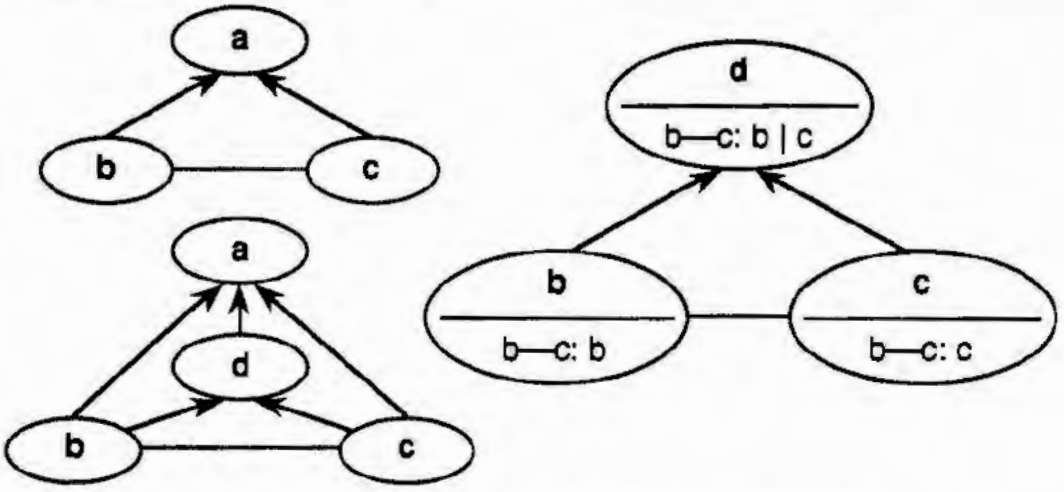

Fig.6 A role as the internalization of a construct

The notation shown in the definition of **d** indicates that it is defined as subsuming the construct **b—c** and subsumes what is distinguished by **b** or by **c**. The construct **b—c** becomes a *role* and the alternation of the concepts **b** or **c** becomes a *constraint* on the role. This internalization process can be applied to other structures also such as the trichotomies of Figure 3 in which case the role can take more than two values, as a categorical role (left of Figure 3) or scale (right of Figure 3). Non-dichotomous pseudo-constructs, such as that of Figure 4, may also be internalized giving multiple-valued roles or relations. It is natural also, particularly as more complex structures are internalized, to name the role in its own right rather than through its poles.

Multiple constructs with the same range of convenience may be internalized to define a concept with multiple roles as shown in Figure 7. The concept **i** may not be precisely superordinate to the constructs **b—c** and **d—e** because they may not cover the same range, but it does arise as the subordination of **g** and **h** which are the precise forms of **b—c** and **d—e**.

The internalization of constructs to form roles and constraints provides a natural coordinate system specifying individuals in terms of the concepts that distinguish them. The assertion of **xb** may be represented as the individual **x** having the value **b** on the role **b—c**. Note that, as individuals cannot subsume concepts, it is not possible to use the internalization construction. The coordinate system appears similar but is generated through a different construction.

The internalization construction of Figures 6 and 7 gives some concepts a defined internal structure in which constructs define coordinate axes named as roles and constrained by the concepts forming the poles of the construct. Individuals have values on these axes and the values are themselves concepts or individuals. There is an important distinction between concepts that results from this construction: the subsumption relation between concepts defined completely in terms of their internal structure is determined by that structure rather than by a separate commitment. Such structurally defined concepts are said to be *non-primitive* and the others *primitive*.

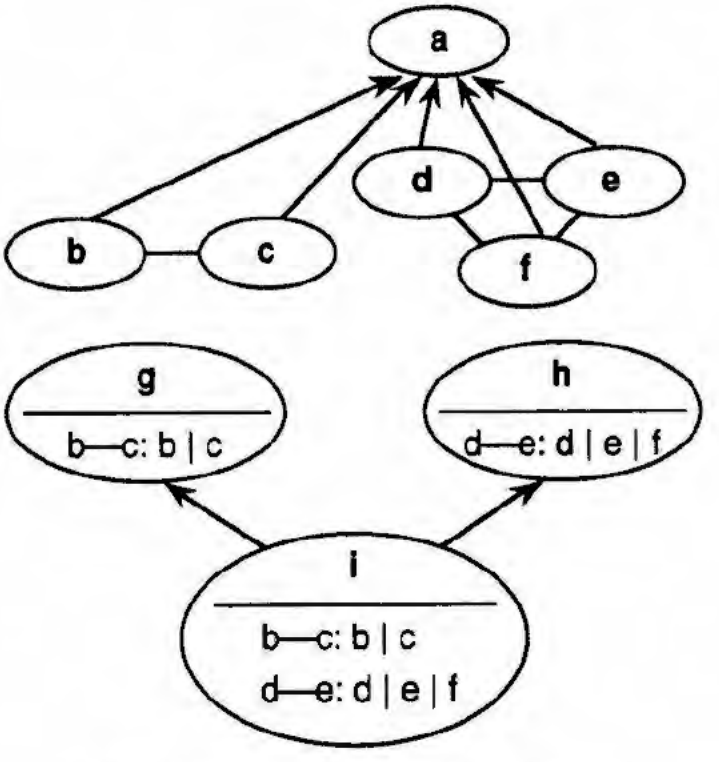

Fig.7 Multiple roles defining a concept

Thus the "is-a" relation for non-primitive concepts is computable rather than definable, the commitment to their definition in terms of their structure entails a commitment to a computed, rather than a defined, "is-a" relation. Confusion about these two forms of concept, and associated "is-a" relations, caused problems in early developments of semantic nets (Brachman, 1983). A similar confusion was also a problem in differentiating the definition of concepts from the assertion of those applicable to individuals (Woods, 1975). The generation of concepts, roles, individuals, constraints and values from the single primitive of making a distinction clarifies all these issues.

An important consequence of the structural definition of non-primitive concepts is that individuals may be *recognized* as being distinguished by one of these concepts even if this distinction has not been asserted. That is, other assertions made about an individual may be sufficient for them to satisfy the constraints of a non-primitive concept. This enables the anticipatory origins of distinction-making specified in Kelly's fundamental postulate to be captured. A *rule* is defined to be a link between concepts such that the recognition of an individual as distinguished by the first concept leads to the assertion that it is distinguished by the second:

"**a** rule **b**" $\quad \mathbf{a} \rightarrow\!\!\rightarrow \mathbf{b} \Leftrightarrow \mathbf{xa} \Leftrightarrow \vdash \mathbf{xb}$ $\quad (5)$

Notice that this differs from subsumption as defined in (1) in that **xa** need not be asserted, the commitment is to assert **xb** if **xa** is noted through assertion or recognition. The double arrow notation is chosen to portray both the similarities and differences between a rule and a subsumption relation.

Rules allow a cognitive system to be anticipatory in that it contains structures which from one set of distinctions made about an event will infer that another should be made. This can lead to prediction or action. Rules play a similar role in computational systems in allowing recommendations for decision or action to be made. Overtly modeling the conceptual system of an expert as a structure of concepts, roles, individuals and rules is a basis for emulating the expert's performance in a knowledge-based system.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

The knowledge representation primitives developed in this paper are not just theoretical constructs but have immediate practical application in knowledge acquisition tools. In particular, the diagrams form the basis of graphic knowledge editors providing a visual, formal language for entering and editing knowledge structures. Repertory grid techniques elicit knowledge indirectly by prompting the experts for critical cases and relevant constructs in a coherent sub-domain. The constructs define a domain concept that acts as a templet for the cases which are expressed as individuals recognized by the domain concept. Figure 8 shows how the grid relates to the conceptual structure of a domain, a grid is that structure which results from combining a concept with the individuals that it distinguishes. (Kelly's 'element' is a more general instance of an 'individual.') Thus, there is a grid corresponding to each domain concept or sub-domain. The significance of grid techniques is that they provide a method of indirectly developing domain concepts through examples when direct methods based on overt knowledge are not available.

Figure 9 is a grid based on the example taken from a paper by Cendrowska (1987) on the inductive analysis of a set of ophthalmic data, with 1 representing the left pole and 9 the right on a 9-point scale. The problem is to infer the type of contact lens to be prescribed by determining relevant attributes of the client. The grid shows the clients as elements, and the constructs as the attributes of normal or reduced tear production, astigmatic or not astigmatic, the age of young, pre-presbyopic or presbyopic, and the prescription of myope or hypermotrope. The lenses to be recommended are soft, hard or none. These are entered as two separate constructs, as this allows for the possibility that either may be suitable for some types of client. These are the right sides of rules predicting the lens recommended.

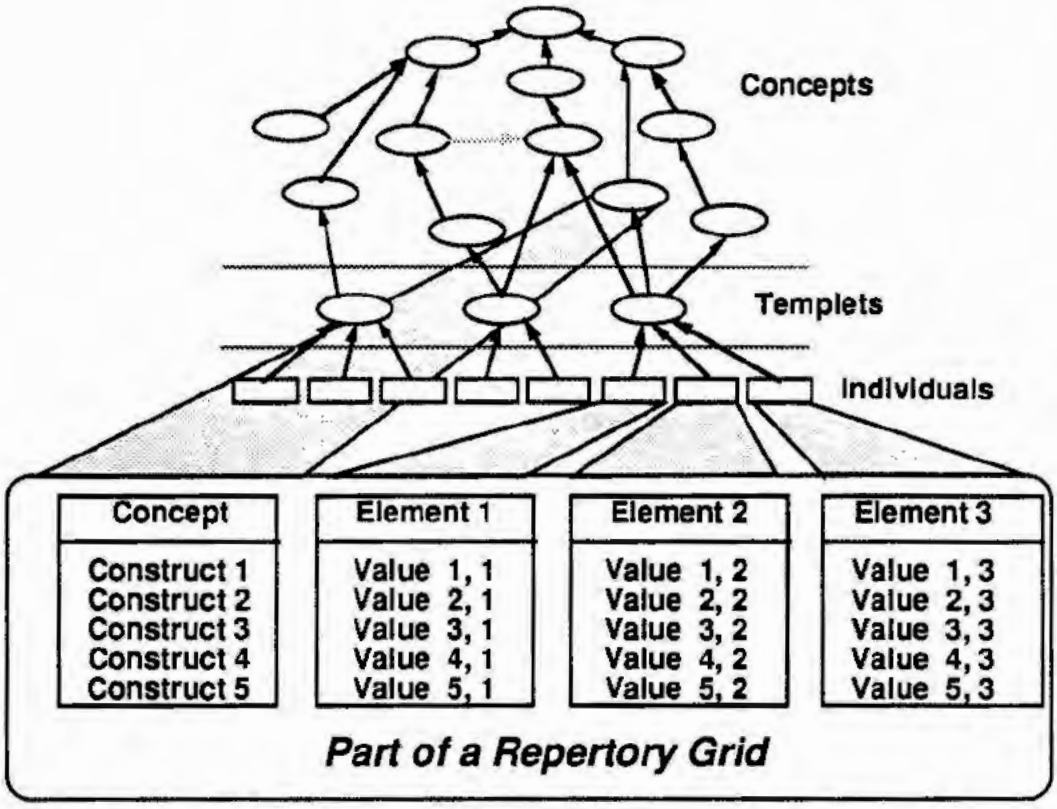

Fig.8 The repertory grid: elements in the construct system of a concept

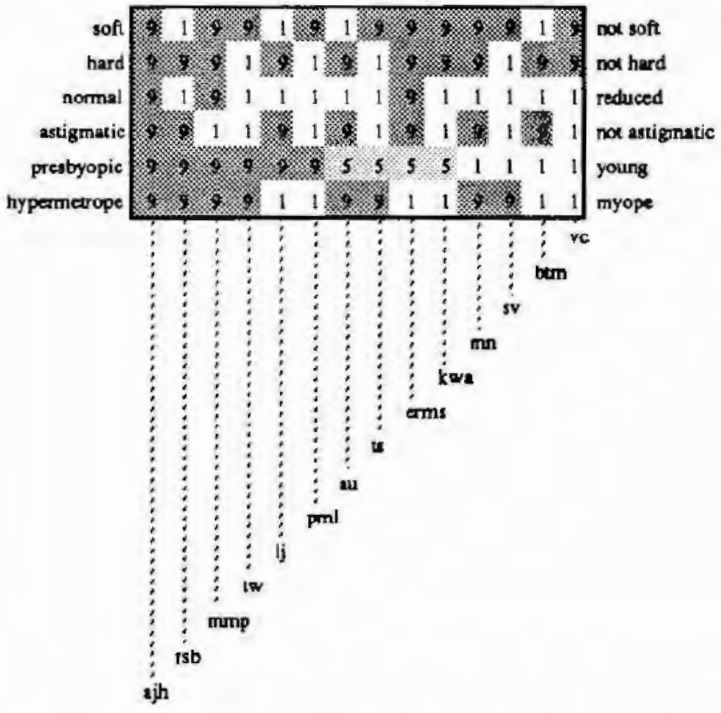

Fig.9 Display of contact lens data from RepGrid

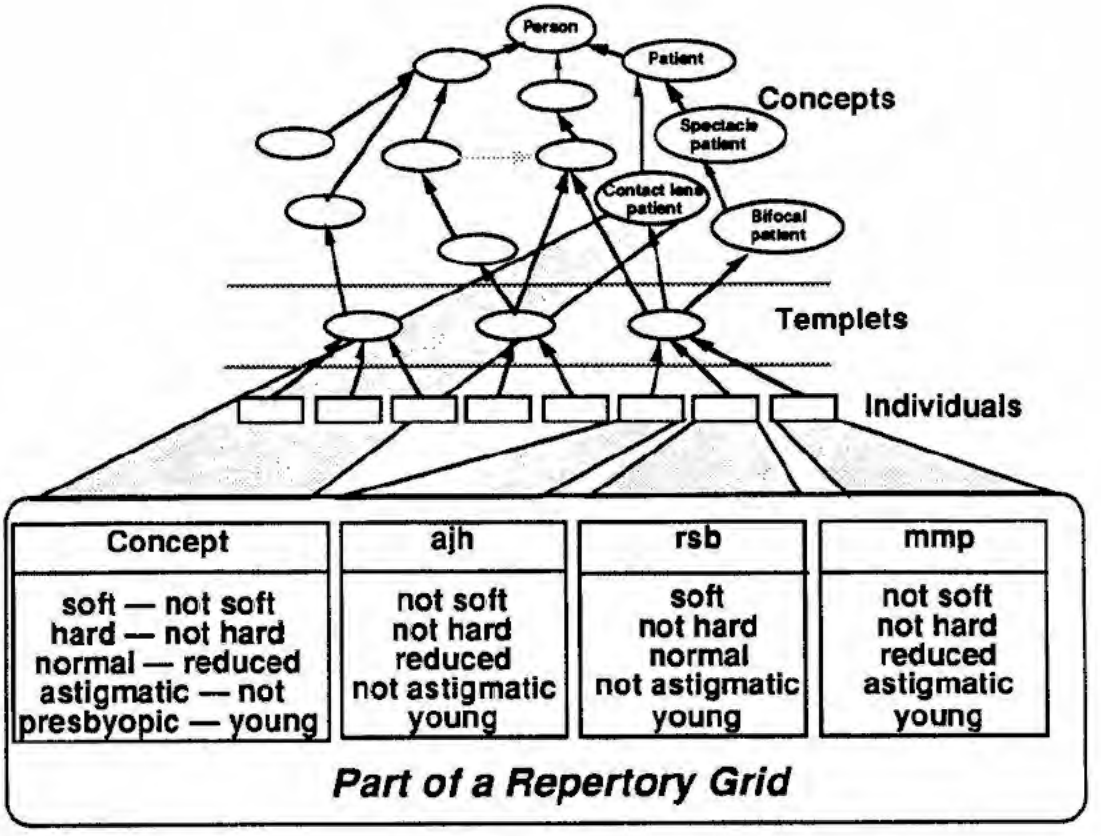

Fig.10 Part of the repertory grid in the concept structure of contact lens prescription

Figure 10 shows part of the grid of Figure 9 in the context of the whole domain, and Figure 11 shows the minimal solution to the problem graphed in the graphic editor associated with KRS, our knowledge representation server (Gaines, 1990). The three dichotomous or bipolar constructs and three trichotomous or tripolar constructs involved are graphed at the top of Figure 11. The five default rules are graphed in the center, and two individual cases are graphed at the bottom.

The convention in the grapher is that concepts are represented by ovals, indviduals by rectangles, roles (which are not used in this example) by unboxed text, and special expressions (such as cardinality constraints) by rounded-corner rectangles. The lines and arrows have exactly the interpretation given in this paper, a plain line denotes a disjoint relation between primitive concepts, an arrow from one concept to another denotes that the second concept subsumes the first, the double arrow for a rule is broken with an expression "Rule" for perspicuity. Primitive concepts are indicated by small interior lines on the left and right sides which line up with the line indicating a disjoint relation in a construct.

The graphic editor itself operates in a very similar way to MacDraw with additional features taking advantage of the defined syntax and semantics of the knowledge structures to simplify data entry, for example text is automatically wrapped to as rectangular a shape as possible, boxes are automatically fitted to text, lines reconnect when items are dragged, and arcs between boxes cannot be entered if they violate the syntax. Knowledge structures in RepGrid grids and rules (Gaines & Shaw, 1987), or in KRS knowledge bases (Gaines, 1990), can be output to the graphic editor, edited and returned to RepGrid (Shaw, 1989) or KRS.

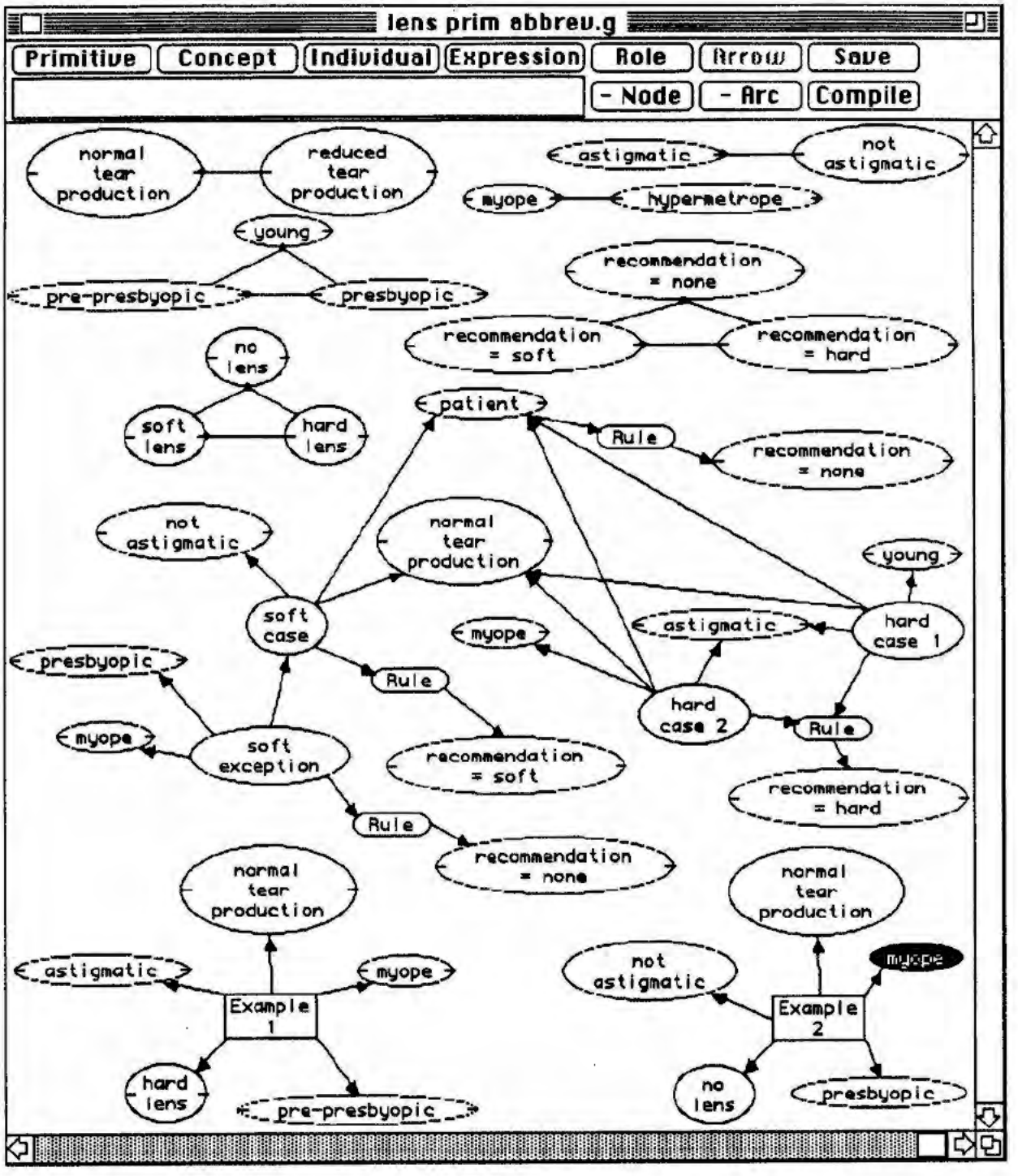

Fig.11 Graphic knowledge editor

Since the knowledge structures in the graphic editor conform exactly to the formal schema defined in this paper it is possible to compile them directly to operational knowledge structures that will run as knowledge-based systems in a suitable shell. Thus the graphic editor provides a *visual programming language* for knowledge-based systems, one with a clear inheritance from semantic nets but now having a simple and well-defined formal semantics.

Other tools have a natural place in the system. Conceptual clustering techniques such as FOCUS and PrinCom (Shaw & Gaines, 1987) are an alternative way of developing concepts by grouping related constructs together. They are attractive in allowing the expert to visualize conceptual relationships and see how they derive from the cases.

Techniques for comparing the knowledge structures of different experts, such as Socio (Shaw & Gaines, 1989), are important in highlighting conflicts in the use of distinctions and terminology and in enriching concepts by providing additional distinctions and alternative ways of expressing them. This analysis is related to Kelly's *commonality corollary*, that similar construction systems generate similar psychological processes.

Element and construct hierarchies are intrinsically available within the knowledge representation framework developed in this paper. They correspond to the extension of the grid in Figure 8 to encompass multiple related concepts.

Abstract individuals in the grid, such as an *ideal element*, cannot be adequately represented as concrete individuals. They are basically a system of constraints not values and correspond to a concept rather than an individual. However, it is possible to provide a user interface for the definition of such abstract individuals in terms of constraints which is very similar to that for the entry of data about existent individuals in terms of values.

CONCLUSIONS

The main features of personal construct psychology have been presented. A theoretical framework has been developed and shown to provide logical foundations for personal construct psychology and computational knowledge representation schema. The framework is generated from the single primitive of "making a distinction." This has been used to provide cognitive and logical foundations for existing knowledge acquisition tools and techniques, and for the design of integrated knowledge acquisition systems. The framework presented in this paper has natural extensions to include these other paradigms and, potentially, give a complete account of human knowledge processes.

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