First-Order Logical Filtering

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Abstract

Logical filtering is the process of updating a belief state (set of possible world states) after a sequence of executed actions and perceived observations. In general, it is intractable in dynamic domains that include many objects and relationships. Still, potential applications for such domains (e.g., semantic web, autonomous agents, and partial-knowledge games) encourage research beyond immediate intractability results.

In this paper we present polynomial-time algorithms for filtering belief states that are encoded as First-Order Logic (FOL) formulae. We sidestep previous discouraging results, and show that our algorithms are exact in many cases of interest. These algorithms accept belief states in full FOL, which allows natural representation with explicit references to unidentified objects, and partially known relationships. Our algorithms keep the encoding compact for important classes of actions, such as STRIPS actions. These results apply to most expressive modeling languages, such as partial databases and belief revision in FOL.

1 Introduction

Many everyday scenarios are dynamic and partially observable: a robot in one room cannot see the state of another room, a camera overlooking a bookshelf cannot detect the title of a book that is obscured, and one cannot readily observe the amount of money an agent has. Many applications in such domains compute information about the current world state (*belief state*, i.e., set of possible states or a distribution over such a set) after actions and observations. This computation is called *filtering* (also, state estimation, belief update, and database progression). They use this information to make decisions, answer questions, and explore.

Filtering is intractable in general for discrete domains [Eiter and Gottlob, 1992], and much research is dedicated to its approximation in stochastic domains (e.g., [Boyen and Koller, 1998]). Still, these approximations introduce unbounded errors many times, take unbounded computation time in others, and are not usable in most deterministic domains. Recent progress on logical methods for filtering of propositional belief states (sets of states) [Amir and Russell, 2003] with actions and observations has shown that *exact* filtering is tractable when belief states are represented as propositional formulae, and certain natural assumptions are met. Still, many domains have propositional encodings that are too large or are not possible (e.g., large numbers of objects, unknown number of objects, and observations with partial knowledge about identity of objects).

In this paper we present tractable algorithms and theoretical results for updating belief states that are represented in First-Order Logic (FOL). These representations permit belief states of infinite sizes, uncertainty about the number of objects and their identity, and observations that do not distinguish between some objects. It also enables more compact representations than those of propositional logic.

We show that when actions map states 1:1, then we can update FOL belief-state formulae efficiently (linear time in the representation size), after prior compilation. We also show that the representation remains of bounded polynomial size for two classes of actions, including those for which actions have simple case preconditions and actions with STRIPS-like preconditions (non-conditional, and observed success/failure). For those we also present filtering algorithms that do not require precompilation for efficient update. This is in surprising contrast to the common belief that FOL cannot be used efficiently for representing and updating partial knowledge [Winslett, 1990; Lin and Reiter, 1997].

On the way to these contributions we form the foundations and provide a theory for FOL belief update. We relate deterministic Situation Calculus [Reiter, 2001] with a first-order transition model [Blass and Gurevich, 2000]. There, every belief state is a set of FOL models over the FOL language of a state. We show that filtering such belief states can be captured exactly by *deduction in FOL*, if the result of the filtering is definable in FOL (this is the best we can hope for [Lin and Reiter, 1997]). Also, we show that deduction can be carried out one time step at a time.

Most work related to ours is limited to the propositional case (e.g., [Amir and Russell, 2003; Boyen and Koller, 1998]). Important exceptions are [Cravo *et al.*, 2001; Dixon and Wobcke, 1993] (First-Order AGM belief revision), [Winslett, 1990] (belief update and revision in simple subclasses of FOL), and [Lin and Reiter, 1997] (progression in

Situation Calculus). The important difference that we draw with these works is that ours provides efficient inference procedures, while others focus on the use of general-purpose theorem provers, and intractability results.

2 Semantics of First-Order Filtering

In this section, we study logical filtering with first-order structures. A *first-order language* has as nonlogical symbols, the variables, the function symbols and the predicate symbols. A 0-ary function symbol is called *constant*. Note that among the binary predicate symbols must be the equality symbol $=$. We define the *terms* and formulas by the generalized inductive definition. Variables and functions are terms. Predicates are atomic formulas.

A *first-order language* is a language in which the symbols and formulas are as described above. We now turn to a description of the semantics of first-order languages. A *structure* S for a first-order language consists of:

1. $|S|$, the nonempty *universe* or *domain* of the structure S. The elements of $|S|$ are called the *individuals* of S.
2. For each n-ary predicate symbol p, $p^S \subseteq |S|^n$. These tuples of the universe are those tuples on which p is true.
3. For each n-ary function symbol f, $f^S : |S|^n \rightarrow |S|$. (In particular, for each constant e, e^S is an individual of S)

When a sentence ψ is *true* in a structure S, we denote it by $\models_S \psi$. For example, suppose that in structure S, $|S| = \{B, R\}$, for predicate in, $in^S = \{\langle B, R\rangle\}$, for constant *CS-R*, *CS-R*$^S = \{R\}$, and for constant *CS-B*, *CS-B*$^S = \{B\}$. This world has a CS room (*CS-R*), a CS book (*CS-B*), and a predicate in which indicates whether a book is in a room. By this definition, sentence in(*CS-B*, *CS-R*) is true in S.

We define logical filtering using situation calculus. The one that we use is compatible with the *basic action theory* of [Reiter, 2001]. The basic action theory has the form $\mathcal{D} = \Sigma \cup \mathcal{D}_{ss} \cup \mathcal{D}_{ap} \cup \mathcal{D}_{una} \cup \mathcal{D}_{s_0}$ where:

- Σ are the foundational axioms for situations.
- $\mathcal{D}_{ss}$ is a set of successor state axioms.
- $\mathcal{D}_{ap}$ is a set of action precondition axioms.
- $\mathcal{D}_{una}$ is a set of unique name axioms for actions. $\mathcal{A}(\overrightarrow{x}) \neq \mathcal{A}'(\overrightarrow{y})$, $\mathcal{A}(\overrightarrow{x}) = \mathcal{A}(\overrightarrow{y}) \Rightarrow \overrightarrow{x} = \overrightarrow{y}$ where $\mathcal{A}$ and $\mathcal{A}'$ are action symbols.
- $\mathcal{D}_{s_0}$ (the initial database) is a finite set of first-order sentences that are *uniform* in s_0

Definition 2.1 (Uniform Formula). *A formula is* uniform *in s if s is the only term of sort situation mentioned by that formula.*

We define precondition axioms and successor state axioms as a part of basic action theory as follows.

Definition 2.2 (Action Precondition Axioms). *An action precondition axiom is a sentence of the form:*[1]

$Poss(a(x_{1:n}), s) \Leftrightarrow precond_a(x_{1:n}, s)$

where a is an n-ary action symbol, and $precond_a(x_{1:n}, s)$ is a formula that is uniform in s and whose free variables are among $x_1, \ldots, x_n, s$.

[1] $x_{1:n}$ is the abbreviation for $x_1, \ldots, x_n$

Generally, the values of relations and functions in a dynamic world will vary from one situation to the next. Relations whose truth values vary from situation to situation are called *relational fluents*. They are denoted by predicate symbols taking a situation term as their last argument. Same argument is true about functions.

Definition 2.3 (Successor State Axioms). Successor state axioms *is defined for either a relational fluent or a functional fluent. A successor state axiom for an n-ary relational fluent p is a sentence of the form:*

$Poss(a(x_{1:n}), s) \Rightarrow \forall y_1, \ldots, \forall y_m$
$(p(y_{1:m}, do(a(x_{1:n}), s)) \Leftrightarrow succ_{p,a}(x_{1:n}, y_{1:m}, s))$

where a is an action symbol, and $succ_{p,a}(x_{1:n}, y_{1:m}, s)$ is a formula that is uniform in s and whose free variables are among $x_1, \ldots, x_n, y_1, \ldots, y_m, s$. We define a successor state axiom for a functional fluent in a similar way.

All changes to the world are the result of named actions. An action may be parameterized. For example, $move(b, r_1, r_2)$ stands for the action of moving object b from room r_1 to room r_2. The intended interpretation is that situations are finite sequences of actions, and $do(a, s)$ denotes the sequence formed by adding action a to the sequences s. In other words, $do(a, s)$ is the successor situation resulting from performing the action a. We use situation calculus as foundations and semantics. Later (section 3 onwards) we do not mention it because we always focus on belief states. However, it is used in the proofs of theorems and our results are applicable to it.

Example Consider a book keeper robot who lives in a world consisting of rooms. When the robot is in a room, it can make observations about the books in that room. It can move a book between rooms, it can return a book to the library from an arbitrary room or it can put a borrowed book in a room. So possible actions are $move(b, r_1, r_2)$, $return(b, r)$ or $borrow(b, r)$. The actions which are executable in a world state can change the value of different predicates or functions. Predicates are $room(r)$, $book(b)$ or $in(b, r)$. There are no functional fluents except constants.

We define a precondition axiom and a successor state axiom for action $move$ and skip the others.

- *Precondition Axiom:*
  $Poss(move(b, r_1, r_2), s) \Leftrightarrow book(b, s) \wedge room(r_1, s) \wedge room(r_2, s) \wedge in(b, r_1, s)$
- *Successor State Axioms:*
  $Poss(move(b, r_1, r_2), s) \Rightarrow$
  $\forall b', r'\ (in(b', r', do(move(b, r_1, r_2), s)) \Leftrightarrow$
  $(((b' = b) \wedge (r' = r_1)) \Rightarrow false$
  $\wedge((b' = b) \wedge (r' = r_2)) \Rightarrow true$
  $\wedge(\neg((b' = b) \wedge (r' = r_1))$
  $\wedge\neg((b' = b) \wedge (r' = r_2))) \Rightarrow in(b', r', s)))$ ■

The definition of progression and filtering semantics are as follows.

Definition 2.4 (Transition Relation of Structures). *For an action theory $\mathcal{D}$ and a structure S, we define a transition re-*

lation $\mathcal{R}_{\mathcal{D}}(S, a, S')$ as follows.

$$\mathcal{R}_{\mathcal{D}} = \{\langle S, a(u_{1:n}), S'\rangle \mid \models_S precond_a(u_{1:n}), |S'| = |S|,$$
$$p^{S'} = \{\langle s_{1:m}\rangle \in |S|^m| \models_S succ_{p,a}(u_{1:n}, s_{1:m})\},$$
$$f^{S'} = \{\langle s_{1:m}, s_r\rangle \in |S|^{m+1}| \models_S succ_{f,a}(u_{1:n}, s_{1:m}, s_r)\}\}$$

We use $[x/v]$ as a notion of substitution in which x is a vector of variables and v is a vector of variables and constants. $[x/v]$ is a shorthand for $[x_1/v_1, \ldots]$ in which $[x_1/v_1]$ means replacing all instances of symbol x_1 by symbol v_1.

Definition 2.5 (Logical Filtering Semantics). *Let σ be a set of first-order structures. We refer to it as* belief state*. The* filtering *of a sequence of actions (ground or not) and observations $\langle a_1, o_1, \ldots, a_t, o_t\rangle$ is defined as follows (ϵ refers to the empty sequence).*

1. $Filter[\epsilon](\sigma) = \sigma$;
2. $Filter[a](\sigma) = \{S' \mid S \in \sigma,\ \langle S, \hat{a}, S'\rangle \in \mathcal{R}_{\mathcal{D}},\ \hat{a} = a_{[x/v]}\}$
3. $Filter[o](\sigma) = \{S \in \sigma \mid \models_S o\}$;
4. $Filter[\langle a_i, o_i, \ldots, a_t, o_t\rangle](\sigma) = Filter[\langle a_{i+1}, o_{i+1}, \ldots, a_t, o_t\rangle](Filter[o_i](Filter[a_i](\sigma)))$.

We call Step 2 progression with a *and Step 3* filtering with o.

3 Filtering of FOL Formulae

In the above definition, filtering is applied to a set of first-order structures. In this section we use FOL to represent belief states and we update this representation without explicit reference to the structures in a belief state.

3.1 FOL Theories and Belief States

A *belief state formula* is a first-order theory (possibly infinite) that represents belief state. A structure is in belief state if and only if it satisfies the belief state formula. The use of a theory instead of a formula is required because the set of first-order consequences of a first-order formula is infinite and may not be representable by a FOL formula.

For simplicity, we use the same logical connectives that we have for FOL formulas. The meaning of those connectives on first-order theories is as follows:

If φ, ψ are theories of infinite size, then

- $\varphi \wedge \psi$ will mean $\varphi \cup \psi$.
- $\varphi \vee \psi$ will mean $\{\alpha \vee \beta |\ \alpha \in \varphi, \beta \in \psi\}$ (similar to de-morgan law).
- Whenever applying negation ($\neg$) we will assume that φ is a finite theory (thus, a logical formula)
- Same for $\exists$ (can replace $\exists$ with a new constant symbol)

Thus, in the rest of the paper, whenever we say "belief state formula", we refer to a FOL theory, unless sanctioned otherwise as above. From now on, we assume that our first-order language has no function symbols except constants.

3.2 Basic Algorithm

In this section, we show how we can progress an initial database represented by a logical formula after applying a single action or observation. The result of progression is a new database that progression algorithm can use afterwards.

We define a predicate corresponding to each relational fluent whose truth value does not depend on the situation. The snapshot of system at time t only shows the truth values of predicates. The truth values of predicates would change while moving from one situation to the next. We represent predicates with the same symbol as relational fluents but with different arity.

Suppose that $\mathcal{P} = \{g_1, \ldots, g_r\}$ is the set of all constants and predicates. We define a new set of symbols $\mathcal{P}' = \{g'_1, \ldots, g'_r\}$ such that $g'_i(y_{1:n}) = g_i(y_{1:n})_{[\mathcal{P}/\mathcal{P}']}$ where $[\mathcal{P}/\mathcal{P}']$ is a shorthand for $[g_1/g'_1, ..., g_r/g'_r]$. We view $\mathcal{P}$ as the set of predicates in situation s, and $\mathcal{P}'$ as the set of predicates in situation $do(a, s)$.

We filter a belief-state formula as follows. (We reuse $Filter[\cdot](\cdot)$ for filtering a belief-state formula.) Let ψ be a belief state formula, $a(u_{1:n})$ be a grounded action, $Cn(\Psi)$ be the set of logical consequences of Ψ (i.e. formulae ϕ such that $\Psi \models \phi$), and $Cn^{\mathcal{L}}(\Psi)$ be the set of logical consequences of Ψ in the language $\mathcal{L}$. We write $Cn^{L}(\Psi)$, when L is a *set of symbols*, to mean $Cn^{\mathcal{L}(L)}(\Psi)$.

$$1.\ Filter[a(u_{1:n})](\psi) = (Cn^{\mathcal{P}'}(\psi \wedge precond_a(u_{1:n}) \wedge \bigwedge_i \forall y_{1:m}, p'_i(y_{1:m}) \Leftrightarrow succ_{p_i,a}(u_{1:n}, y_{1:m}) \wedge \bigwedge_i \forall y_{1:m} \forall z, f'_i(y_{1:m}) = z \Leftrightarrow succ_{f_i,a}(u_{1:n}, y_{1:m}, z)))_{[\mathcal{P}'/\mathcal{P}]}$$
$$2.\ Filter[o](\psi) = \psi \wedge o \qquad (1)$$

When we filter with action a we assert implicitly that its precondition held in the last world state. If the action is not executable on the belief state, the new belief state would be false which indicates an empty set. We prove in the following theorem that this definition of filtering approximates the semantics of definition 2.5.

Theorem 3.1. *Let ψ be a belief state formula and a be an action, then*

$$Filter[a](\{s \mid \models_s \psi\}) \subseteq \{s' \mid \models_{s'} Filter[a](\psi)\}$$

PROOF See section A.1 ■

[Lin and Reiter, 1997] showed that progression is not always first-order definable. However, they proved that progression always exists as a set of second order sentences for finite initial databases. Therefore, the two sides in theorem 3.1 are not equivalent since formula (1) is in FOL. In other words, FOL is not strong enough to model the progression of the initial database. However, the following corollary shows that the two sides of theorem 3.1 would be equal if the progression of a database is FOL definable.

Corollary 3.2. *Let ψ be a first-order belief state formula. If FOL can represent the progression of ψ after performing action a, then*

$$Filter[a](\{s \mid \models_s \psi\}) = \{s' \mid \models_{s'} Filter[a](\psi)\}$$

From this point, we assume that progression is first-order definable. Our basic algorithm computes $Filter[\langle a_1, o_1, ..., a_t, o_t\rangle](\psi)$ by iteratively applying filtering of a belief-state formula with an action and an observation. It sets $\psi_0 = \psi$ and $\psi_i = Filter[o_i](Filter[a_i](\psi_{i-1}))$

recursively for $i > 0$ using the equations defined above. This algorithm is correct, as shown by corollary 3.2. It can be implemented using a first-order consequence finder.

3.3 Sequences of Actions and Observations

This section shows that iterative applications of progression steps lose no information. Thus, we can throw away the previous database and start working with the new one after performing each action.

We break our action theory $\mathcal{D}$ into two parts, the initial database $\mathcal{D}_{s_0}$ and the rest $\mathcal{D}_g$. Therefore, $\mathcal{D} = \mathcal{D}_g \cup \mathcal{D}_{s_0}$. Now we define the language of an action theory as follows.

Definition 3.3. *The language of $\mathcal{D}$, $\mathcal{L}(\mathcal{D})$, is a set of first-order formulae whose predicate and function symbols occur in $\mathcal{D}$.*

For instance, if $\mathcal{D}_{s_0} = put(A, B) \wedge \forall x \;\; box(x)$, then $put(A, A)$ and $\forall x \exists y \; put(x, y)$ are in $\mathcal{L}(\mathcal{D}_{s_0})$ but $box(A, B)$ is not.

In progression we assume that a ground action a is performed, and we are looking for a set of sentences $\mathcal{D}_{s_a}$ that can serve as a new initial database (s_a denotes the situation term $do(a, s)$). Unfortunately [Lin and Reiter, 1997] showed that $\mathcal{D}_{s_a}$ is not always first-order definable.

We define $\mathcal{F}_{s_a}$ as the set of first-order sentences uniform in s_a entailed by $\mathcal{D}$. If we use $\mathcal{F}_{s_a}$ instead of $\mathcal{D}_{s_a}$, for every first-order sentence ψ about the future of s_a, $\mathcal{F}_{s_a} \cup \mathcal{D}_g \models \psi$ iff $\mathcal{D} \models \psi$. The following theorem states this result.

Note that the intersection of all consequences of the action theory with $\mathcal{L}(\mathcal{D}_g \cup \{s_a\})$ is uniform in s_a.

Theorem 3.4. *Let $\mathcal{D}_0$ be an action theory, and define $\mathcal{D}_1, \mathcal{D}_2, \mathcal{D}_2'$ as follows.*

$$\begin{aligned}
\mathcal{D}_1 &= Cn(\mathcal{D}_0 \cup \{s_1 = do(a_1, s_0)\}) \cap \mathcal{L}(\mathcal{D}_g \cup \{s_1\}) \\
\mathcal{D}_2 &= Cn(\mathcal{D}_1 \cup \{s_2 = do(a_2, s_1)\}) \cap \mathcal{L}(\mathcal{D}_g \cup \{s_2\}) \\
\mathcal{D}_2' &= Cn(\mathcal{D}_0 \cup \{s_1 = do(a_1, s_0), s_2 = do(a_2, s_1)\}) \\
&\quad \cap \mathcal{L}(\mathcal{D}_g \cup \{s_2\})
\end{aligned}$$

(a_1 and a_2 are two actions in $\mathcal{D}_0$, not necessarily different. s_0, s_1 and s_2 do not occur in $\mathcal{D}_g$.) Then , $\mathcal{D}_2 = \mathcal{D}_2'$.

PROOF See section A.2 ■

For instance in our book keeper example, if $\mathcal{D}_{s_0}$ is $\{book(\mathrm{B}, s_0), room(\mathrm{R}, s_0), in(\mathrm{B}, \mathrm{R}, s_0)\}$ and the first action is $return(\mathrm{B}, \mathrm{R})$, $\mathcal{D}_{s_1}$ would be $\{book(\mathrm{B}, s_1), room(\mathrm{R}, s_1), \neg in(\mathrm{B}, \mathrm{R}, s_1)\}$.

4 Factored Inference

Several distribution properties hold for logical filtering. We can decompose the filtering of a formula φ along logical connectives $\wedge, \vee, \neg, \forall, \exists$.

Theorem 4.1. *Let a be an action, and let φ, ψ be first-order formulae. Then,*

1. $Filter[a](\varphi \vee \psi) \equiv Filter[a](\varphi) \vee Filter[a](\psi)$
2. $\models Filter[a](\varphi \wedge \psi) \Rightarrow Filter[a](\varphi) \wedge Filter[a](\psi)$
3. $\models Filter[a](\neg\varphi) \Leftarrow \neg Filter[a](\varphi) \wedge Filter[a](\mathit{TRUE})$
4. $Filter[a](\exists x \; \varphi(x)) \equiv \exists x \; Filter[a](\varphi(L))_{[L/x]}$

(L is a fresh constant symbol.) 3, 4 hold only when $Filter[a](\varphi)$ is finite.

We can say something stronger for actions that act as *permutations* on the structures in which they are executable.

Definition 4.2 (Permuting Actions). *Action a is* permuting *(*1:1*) if for every structure S' there is at most one S such that $\mathcal{R}_{\mathcal{D}}(S, a, S')$.*

Domains that only include permuting actions are called *permutation domains*.

Theorem 4.3 (Distribution for Permutation Domains). *Let a be a permuting action, and let φ, ψ be formulae. Then,*

1. $Filter[a](\varphi \vee \psi) \equiv Filter[a](\varphi) \vee Filter[a](\psi)$
2. $Filter[a](\varphi \wedge \psi) \equiv Filter[a](\varphi) \wedge Filter[a](\psi)$
3. $Filter[a](\neg\varphi) \equiv \neg Filter[a](\varphi) \wedge Filter[a](\mathit{TRUE})$
4. $Filter[a](\exists x \; \varphi(x)) \equiv \exists x \; Filter[a](\varphi(L))_{[L/x]}$

We can decompose every first-order formula into a set of single literals by using distribution properties proved above. For instance, $\forall x \; (\varphi(x) \wedge \psi(x))$ is equivalent to $\forall x \; \varphi(x) \wedge \forall x \; \psi(x)$ so rule 2 can break it into two parts. Also $\forall x \; \neg\varphi(x)$ is equivalent to $\neg\exists x \; \varphi(x)$ so rule 3 and rule 4 can be used, and $\forall x \; (\varphi(x) \vee \psi(x))$ is equivalent to $\neg\exists x \; (\neg\varphi(x) \wedge \neg\psi(x))$ so rule 3, rule 4, and rule 2 can be used.

In permutation domains, we decompose the formula down to a set of grounded first-order single literals, and for filtering a single literal we use formula (1).

Our factored filtering (FF) algorithm for permutation domains is presented in Figure 1. It relies on theorems 3.2, 4.1, and 4.3. The number of different grounded single literals would be finite, if the number of objects is finite. Therefore, we can calculate filtering of all single literals as a preprocessing step and retrieve it later in finite domains.

Note that the arguments of these literals are either the constants associated to existential quantifiers or the constants which are mentioned in the initial belief state, the set of axioms or the observations.

PROCEDURE FF($\langle a_i, o_i \rangle_{0<i\leq t}$,$\psi$)
$\forall i$, a_i an action, o_i an observation, ψ a belief-state formula.
1. if $t = 0$, return ψ.
2. return $o_t \wedge$ FF-Step(a_t, $precond_{a_t} \wedge$ FF($\langle a_i, o_i \rangle_{0<i\leq(t-1)}$,$\psi$)).

PROCEDURE FF-Step(a,ψ)
a an action. ψ a belief-state formula.
1. if ψ is a single literal, then return Single-Literal-Filtering(a, ψ).
2. else, use distribution properties, call FF-Step recursively on sub-formulas of ψ.

Figure 1: Filtering of a FOL formula when all the actions are permuting actions.

Theorem 4.4. *The algorithm FF is correct, and if the filtering of all single literals are given, the algorithm FF would run in time $O(|precond_a \wedge \psi|)$, where ψ is a belief state formula.*

Our factored filtering algorithm uses consequence finding tools. Since it is part of preprocessing, it does not affect the

runtime of the system. In open systems the time is different since new objects may be added during the operation of the system. In these systems filtering of new single literals should be computed while system is running.

5 Filtering Algorithms for Different Domains

Our naive filtering algorithm uses consequence finding tools which do not scale to large domains. The following theorem suggests a different reasoning procedure.

Theorem 5.1. *Let a be an action, ψ be a belief state formula, and $\Phi(\varphi_{1:n})$ be a first-order logical formula whose atomic subformulas are among $\varphi_1, \ldots, \varphi_n$. Then,*

$$Filter[a](\psi) \equiv \{\Phi(p_{1:n}) | \textit{ FOL formula } \Phi, \\ \psi \wedge precond_a \models \Phi(succ_{p_1,a}, \ldots, succ_{p_n,a})\} \quad (2)$$

In this formula, all possible Φs should be considered. In general, generating all Φs is impossible because there are infinitely many such Φs. In the following sections, we provide simpler closed-form solutions for two special cases of dynamic domains. These give rise to practical(polynomial) algorithms.

5.1 Unit-Case Successor State Axioms

By definition of successor state axioms, for every pair of actions and predicates exactly one successor state axiom is provided. The successor state axiom for action a and predicate p_i can be rewritten as:

$$Poss(a(x_{1:n}), s) \Rightarrow \forall y_1, \ldots, \forall y_m \; (p_i(y_{1:m}, do(a, s)) \Leftrightarrow \\ (case_i^1 \Rightarrow \phi_i^1) \wedge \ldots \wedge (case_i^{l_i} \Rightarrow \phi_i^{l_i}) \\ \wedge (\neg case_i^1 \wedge \ldots \wedge \neg case_i^{l_i}) \Rightarrow \phi_i^{l_i+1})$$

where $case_i^j$ is of the form $(y_{j_1} = x_{j_1}) \wedge \ldots \wedge (y_{j_k} = x_{j_k})$ (variable x_{j_1} is an argument of action a and variable y_{j_1} is an argument of predicate p) and each variable assignment satisfies at most one of the cases. A successor state axiom is called *unit-case successor state axiom* if it can be rewritten in a form where every ϕ_i^j $(1 \leq j \leq l_i + 1)$ is a unit clause.

We break a unit-case successor state axiom into multiple instantiated axioms. Instantiated successor state axioms for predicate p_i are:

- $Poss(a(x_{1:n}), s) \Rightarrow (p_i(y_{1:m}, do(a, s)) \Leftrightarrow \phi_i^j)_{[y_i^j/x_i^j]}$ for all $1 \leq j \leq l_i$
- $Poss(a(x_{1:n}), s) \Rightarrow \forall y_{1:m} \; (\neg case_i^1 \wedge \ldots \wedge \neg case_i^{l_i}) \Rightarrow (p_i(y_{1:m}, do(a, s)) \Leftrightarrow \phi_{l_i+1})$

$[y_i^j/x_i^j]$ is the substitution corresponding to $case_i^j$ (y_i^j and x_i^j are sequences of variables). This process is called *breaking into cases*. Note that all instantiated successor state axioms are in the form $Poss(a) \Rightarrow (cond_i \Rightarrow (p_i \Leftrightarrow \phi_i))$ where in some of them $cond_i$ is true (i is an enumeration of all instantiated successor state axioms of action a).

Figure 2 shows the unit-case filtering (UCFilter) algorithm. This algorithm is applicable on permutation domains whose successor state axioms are unit-case. The algorithm UCFilter is actually a way to compute every $\Phi(subsucc_a^1, \ldots, subsucc_a^k)$ in formula (2). In permutation domains, the head of entailment in formula (2) is a single literal (action precondition can be considered as a conjunct to the belief state formula, and the distribution properties can be used). Consequently, $\Phi(subsucc_a^1, \ldots, subsucc_a^k)$ is either equivalent to that literal or a tautology. A tautology is at most of size two when unit-case successor state axioms are used. Therefore, we can compute all desired Φs in a finite number of steps.

PROCEDURE UCFilter($\langle a_i, o_i \rangle_{0<i\leq t}$,$\psi$)
$\forall i$, a_i an action, o_i an observation, ψ a belief-state formula.
1. if $t = 0$, return ψ.
2. ψ_{t-1} = UCFilter($\langle a_i, o_i \rangle_{0<i\leq(t-1)}$,$\psi$).
3. return $o_t \wedge$ Filter-True(a_t) $\wedge$ UCStep($a_t, precond_{a_t} \wedge \psi_{t-1}$).

PROCEDURE Filter-True(a)
a an action.
1. $poss(a) \Rightarrow (cond_i \Rightarrow (p_i \Leftrightarrow \phi_i))$ an instantiated successor state axiom ($1 \leq i \leq k$).
2. $S = \emptyset$
3. for all $1 \leq i, j \leq k$,
   (a) if $\phi_i = true$, add $case_i \Rightarrow p_i$ to S
   (b) elseif $\phi_i = false$, add $case_i \Rightarrow \neg p_i$ to S
   (c) elseif unifiable(ϕ_i, ϕ_j), add $((cond_i \wedge cond_j) \Rightarrow (p_i \Leftrightarrow p_j))_{mgu(\phi_i,\phi_j)}$ to S
   (d) elseif unifiable($\phi_i, \neg\phi_j$), add $((cond_i \wedge cond_j) \Rightarrow (p_i \Leftrightarrow \neg p_j))_{mgu(\phi_i,\phi_j)}$ to S
   (e) elseif $\phi_i = \forall x \; q(x), \phi_j = q(t)$, add $(cond_i \wedge cond_j) \Rightarrow (\neg p_i \vee p_j)$ to S
   (f) elseif $\phi_i = \exists x \; q(x), \phi_j = q(t)$, add $(cond_i \wedge cond_j) \Rightarrow (p_i \vee \neg p_j)$ to S
4. return $\bigwedge_{\varphi \in S} \varphi$.

PROCEDURE UCStep(a,ψ)
a an action. ψ a belief-state formula.
1. if ψ is a single literal, then
   (a) $poss(a) \Rightarrow (cond_i \Rightarrow (p_i \Leftrightarrow \phi_i))$ an instantiated successor state axiom ($1 \leq i \leq k$).
   (b) $S = \emptyset$
   (c) for all $1 \leq i \leq k$,
      i. if unifiable(ϕ_i, ψ), add $(case_i \Rightarrow p_i)_{mgu(\phi_i,\psi)}$ to S
      ii. elseif unifiable($\phi_i, \neg\psi$), add $(case_i \Rightarrow \neg p_i)_{mgu(\phi_i,\psi)}$ to S
   (d) return $\bigwedge_{\varphi \in S} \varphi$.
2. else, use distribution properties, call UCStep recursively on sub-formulae of ψ.

Figure 2: Unit-Case Filtering.

Theorem 5.2. *Let k be the number of successor state axioms after breaking into cases, and ψ be the belief state formula. If each predicate has arity at most R, then algorithm UCFilter returns the filtering of ψ with action a in time $O(R \cdot k^2 + R \cdot k \cdot |\psi \wedge precond_a|)$. The length of new belief state formula is $O(R \cdot k^2 + R \cdot k \cdot |\psi \wedge precond_a|)$.*

Corollary 5.3. *Given a sequence of t actions and observations, algorithm UCFilter returns the filtering of ψ_0 in time $O(t^2 \cdot R^t \cdot k^{t+1} + t \cdot R^t \cdot k^t \cdot |\psi_0|)$. The length of belief state formula after t step is $\psi_t = O(t \cdot R^t \cdot k^{t+1} + R^t \cdot k^t \cdot |\psi_0|)$. (If the length of all observations and preconditions of actions are negligible compared to the length of belief state formula)*

5.2 STRIPS Domains

In STRIPS domains every action has no conditional effects. It means that the value of each predicate either changes to true, changes to false, or remains the same. STRIPS actions are not necessarily permuting. Consequently STRIPS successor state axioms can not be treated by algorithm UCFilter even though they are unit-case. Successor state axioms in STRIPS domains are of the form:

$$Poss(a(x_{1:n}), s) \Rightarrow \forall y_1, \ldots, \forall y_m\ (p_i(y_{1:m}, do(a, s)) \Leftrightarrow (case_i^1 \Rightarrow \phi_i^1) \wedge \ldots \wedge (case_i^{l_i} \Rightarrow \phi_i^{l_i}) \wedge (\neg case_i^1 \wedge \ldots \wedge \neg case_i^{l_i}) \Rightarrow p_i(y_{1:m}, s))$$

where ϕ_i^j ($j \leq l_i$) is either true or false.

A STRIPS action affects some of the instantiated predicates and keeps the value of the others. We refer to the set of affected instantiated predicates as Eff(a).

$$\text{Eff}(a) = \{p(\overrightarrow{v}) |\ \text{action } a \text{ affects every instance of } p(\overrightarrow{v})\}$$

where v is a sequence of variables and constant symbols.

The first-order STRIPS filtering (FOSF) algorithm is presented in figure 3. The belief state formula which is an input to this algorithm should be in the form $\exists^*\forall^*\phi$ (EAFOL) (EAFOL is a first-order formula in which there is no existential quantifier inside a universal one). A clause in the clausal form of ϕ would be splitted into multiple instantiated clauses if one of its literals has some instances in Eff(a) and some out of Eff(a). This step is called *splitting into pure literal clauses*. We split every clause $p(x) \vee \varphi$ in which some instantiations of $p(x)$ are affected and some are not, into:

$$\{p(v_1) \vee \varphi\ ,\ \ldots\ ,\ p(v_r) \vee \varphi\ , \quad ((x \neq v_1 \wedge \ldots \wedge x \neq v_r) \Rightarrow p(x)) \vee \varphi\}$$

where $p(v_1), \ldots, p(v_r)$ are in Eff(a). Note that we treat $((x \neq v_1 \wedge \ldots \wedge x \neq v_r) \Rightarrow p(x))$ as a single literal.

The new clausal form of ϕ is divided into two parts, clauses with no literal in Eff(a) and clauses that have at least one literal in Eff(a). The first part directly goes to the new belief state formula. The algorithm adds all the consequences of the second part in which no affected literals exist, to the new belief state formula. All literals in Eff(a) are also added to new belief state formula as their values can be determined unconditionally after applying the action.

Theorem 5.4. *Given action a, observation o, and belief state formula ψ in EAFOL, algorithm FOSF returns the filtering of ψ with a and o in time $O(R \cdot |E| \cdot min((\frac{|E|}{2})^{2^{|Eff(a)|}}, |Eff(a)|2^{|E|\cdot R}) + |\psi|)$ where E is the set of all clauses with any literal in Eff(a) after splitting into pure literal clauses and each clause has length at most R.*

Theorem 5.5. *If ψ is in 2-FO-CNF[2] then the time complexity of FOSF after filtering one action is $O(|Eff(a)| \cdot |E|^2 + |\psi|)$. The formula length is $O(|Eff(a)| + |E|^2 + |\psi|)$.*

Extended Example

Consider our previous book-keeping robot. Suppose that we have two rooms, a CS room and an ECE room, and two books, a CS book and an ECE book, and our belief state formula is $in(\textit{CS-B}, \textit{CS-R}) \wedge in(\textit{ECE-B}, \textit{ECE-R})$. ECE department needs the CS book for a while, so the book keeper moves it to ECE room. The action is $a = move(\textit{CS-B}, \textit{CS-R}, \textit{ECE-R})$. (This example has unit-case successor state axioms.)

First, we add precondition to belief state formula. The new belief state is $in(\textit{CS-B}, \textit{CS-R}) \wedge in(\textit{ECE-B}, \textit{ECE-R}) \wedge book(\textit{CS-B}) \wedge room(\textit{CS-R}) \wedge room(\textit{ECE-R})$. We calculate the filtering of all the single literals of the belief state formula separately and compute the result by using distribution properties. What follows is the formula for one of these literals based on the algorithm presented before.

$$Filter[move(\textit{CS-B}, \textit{CS-R}, \textit{ECE-R})](in(\textit{ECE-B}, \textit{ECE-R})) \equiv in(\textit{CS-B}, \textit{ECE-R}) \wedge \neg in(\textit{CS-B}, \textit{CS-R}) \wedge in(\textit{ECE-B}, \textit{ECE-R})$$

Now suppose that instead of applying an action we filter the belief state based on an observation. The robot enters the CS room and observes that there is only one book in the room. The perfect filtering algorithm guarantees that in such cases the book is the same book that the robot has put in the room before.

Assume that the belief state formula is $in(\textit{CS-B}, \textit{CS-R}) \wedge in(\textit{ECE-B}, \textit{ECE-R})$. The observation is $\forall x\, in(x, \textit{CS-R}) \Rightarrow x = \textit{TheBook}$. $Filter[o](\psi) \models \textit{TheBook} = \textit{CS-B}$, so we can replace every instance of *TheBook* in the new belief state formula by *CS-B*.

PROCEDURE FOSF($\langle a_i, o_i\rangle_{0<i\leq t}$,$\psi$)
$\forall i$, a_i an action, o_i an observation and ψ a belief state formula. o_i and ψ in EAFOL
1. if $t = 0$, return ψ.
2. return Move-Quan[a]($o_t \wedge$ FO-STRIPS-Step(a_t, Move-Quan($precond_{a_t} \wedge$ FOSF($\langle a_i, o_i\rangle_{0<i\leq(t-1)}$,$\psi$))))

[a] Moves all the quantifiers to the front with fresh variable names

PROCEDURE FO-STRIPS-Step(a,ψ)
a an action, $\psi = \exists^*\forall^* \bigwedge_i c_i$ a belief-state formula.
1. if $\psi = \exists x\ \phi(x)$, return $\exists x$ FO-STRIPS-Step(a,$\phi(L)$)$_{[L/x]}$ [a]
2. elseif $\psi = \forall x\ \phi(x)$, return $\forall x$ FO-STRIPS-Step(a,$\phi(x)$)
3. else,
   (a) $\psi' \leftarrow$ split every clause in ψ into pure literal clauses
   (b) $E \leftarrow$ all clauses in ψ' with any literal in Eff(a)
   (c) $S \leftarrow$ all clauses in ψ' with no literal in Eff(a)
   (d) if $E \neq \emptyset$
       for all $l \in$ Eff(a)
       $E \leftarrow$ resolve-out(l, E)
   (e) $\phi = \bigwedge_{c_i \in E \cup S} c_i$
   (f) Eff$^+$(a) $\leftarrow$ literals affected to true
   (g) Eff$^-$(a) $\leftarrow$ literals affected to false
   (h) return $\phi \wedge \bigwedge_{p(v)\in \text{Eff}^+(a)} p(v) \wedge \bigwedge_{p(v)\in \text{Eff}^-(a)} \neg p(v)$.

[a] L is a fresh constant that does not appear in the language

Figure 3: First-Order STRIPS Filtering.

6 Conclusions

In this paper we presented semantics and methodology for filtering in domains that include many objects whose identity is not certain. We generalized this problem to filtering with FOL

[2] A first-order formula is in k-FO-CNF if in clausal form the size of each clause is at most k.

formulae. We showed that this problem is solvable in polynomial time when actions map states 1:1, or the actions are STRIPS. We showed that 1:1 actions allow us to filter first-order belief state formulae in linear time (in the size of representation), if we can perform a precompilation step. When actions are STRIPS or Unit-Case, we can filter these belief state formulae efficiently without precompilation. In some cases, we showed that the belief state formulae is guaranteed to remain compactly represented. Those cases permit filtering of actions and observations indefinitely in polynomial time (in the number of predicates and objects). As a result, we can use our algorithm for many interesting applications, such as semantic web, autonomous agents, robot motion control, and partial knowledge games.

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A Proofs

A.1 Proof of Theorem 3.1: Filtering Algorithm

PROOF Take $\hat{S} \in Filter[a](\{s \mid \models_s \psi\})$. We need to show that $\models_{\hat{S}} Filter[a](\psi)$. From Definition 2.5 there should be S such that $S \in \{s \mid \models_s \psi\}$ and $\langle S, \hat{a}, \hat{S}\rangle \in \mathcal{R}_{\mathcal{D}}$. In other words, there should be S such that $\models_S \psi$ and $\langle S, \hat{a}, \hat{S}\rangle \in \mathcal{R}_{\mathcal{D}}$.

To prove $\models_{\hat{S}} Filter[a](\psi)$ we need to show that $\psi \wedge precond_a(u_{1:n}) \wedge \bigwedge_i \forall y_{1:m}, p'_i(y_{1:m}) \Leftrightarrow succ_{p_i,a}(u_{1:n}, y_{1:m}) \wedge \bigwedge_i \forall y_{1:m} \forall z, f'_i(y_{1:m}) = z \Leftrightarrow succ_{f_i,a}(u_{1:n}, y_{1:m}, z)$ with $\hat{S}$ as structure for $\mathcal{P}'$ and S as structure for $\mathcal{P}$. In other words the truth assignment $\hat{S}$ to all predicates in some situation satisfies this formula together with the truth assignment S to all predicates in following situation. It is not satisfying this formula only if one of the conjuncts ψ, $precond_a(u_{1:n}), \forall y_{1:m}, p'_i(y_{1:m}) \Leftrightarrow succ_{p_i,a}(u_{1:n}, y_{1:m})$, or $\forall y_{1:m} \forall z, f'_i(y_{1:m}) = z \Leftrightarrow succ_{f_i,a}(u_{1:n}, y_{1:m}, z)$is falsified. This in not the case for first two by our choice of S.

Assume by contradiction that this is the case for some i. Then, the truth assignments sanction that $p'_i(y_{1:m}) \Leftrightarrow succ_{p_i,a}(u_{1:n}, y_{1:m})$ does not hold. From the way we defined $\mathcal{R}$ this is never the case. This contradicts our assumption. The same argument is true for functions. Thus, we get that $\models_{\hat{S}} Filter[a](\psi)$. ■

A.2 Proof of Theorem 3.4: Progression Possibility

PROOF We show that the two sets of world structures have the same elements. We first show that the left-hand side of the equality is contained in the right-hand side.

Take $\phi \in \mathcal{D}_2$. We show that ϕ should be in $\mathcal{D}'_2$. We can plug the definition of $\mathcal{D}_1$ in the definition of $\mathcal{D}_2$.

$$\begin{aligned}\mathcal{D}_2 &= C_n(C_n(\mathcal{D}_0 \cup \{s_1 = do(a_1, s_0)\}) \cap \mathcal{L}(\mathcal{D}_g \cup \{s_1\})) \\ &\quad \cap \mathcal{L}(\mathcal{D}_g \cup \{s_2\}) \\ &\subseteq C_n(C_n(\mathcal{D}_0 \cup \{s_1 = do(a_1, s_0)\})) \cap \mathcal{L}(\mathcal{D}_g \cup \{s_2\}) \\ &= C_n(\mathcal{D}_0 \cup \{s_1 = do(a_1, s_0)\}) \cap \mathcal{L}(\mathcal{D}_g \cup \{s_2\})\end{aligned}$$

In other words, $\mathcal{D}_2 \subseteq \mathcal{D}'_2$.

For the opposite direction (showing the right-hand side is contained in the left-hand side), suppose that $\phi \in \mathcal{D}'_2$. We show that $\phi \in^? \mathcal{D}_2$.

From the definition of $\mathcal{D}'_2$, we know that $\phi \in \mathcal{D}'_2$ iff $\mathcal{D}_0 \cup \{s_1 = do(a_1, s_0), s_2 = do(a_2, s_1)\} \models \phi$. So, with the same explanation, we show that $\mathcal{D}_1 \cup \{s_2 = do(a_2, s_1)\} \models^? \phi$.

$$\begin{aligned}&\phi \in \mathcal{D}'_2 \\ &\mathcal{D}_0 \cup \{s_1 = do(a_1, s_0), s_2 = do(a_2, s_1)\} \models \phi \\ &\mathcal{D}_0 \cup \{s_1 = do(a_1, s_0)\} \models (s_2 = do(a_2, s_1)) \Rightarrow \phi\end{aligned}$$

On the other hand we know that,

$$\begin{aligned}\mathcal{L}(\mathcal{D}_0 \cup \{s_1 = do(a_1, s_0)\}) &= \mathcal{L}(\mathcal{D}_0 \cup \{s_0, s_1)\}) \\ &\subseteq \mathcal{L}(\mathcal{D}_g \cup \{s_0, s_1)\}) \\ \mathcal{L}(s_2 = do(a_2, s_1) \Rightarrow \phi) &= \mathcal{L}(\mathcal{D}'_2 \cup \{s_1, s_2\}) \\ &\subseteq \mathcal{L}(\mathcal{D}_g \cup \{s_1, s_2)\})\end{aligned}$$

As we know, there is no s_i in $\mathcal{D}_g$ so we can compute the intersection of the two side of equation.

$$\mathcal{L}(\mathcal{D}_0 \cup \{s_1 = do(a_1, s_0)\}) \cap \mathcal{L}(s_2 = do(a_2, s_1) \Rightarrow \phi) \subseteq \mathcal{L}(\mathcal{D}_g \cup \{s_1\})$$

Now, by applying Craig's interpolation theorem for FOL, we get that there should exist a $\gamma \in \mathcal{L}(\mathcal{D}_g \cup \{s_1\})$ such that $\mathcal{D}_0 \cup \{s_1 = do(a_1, s_0)\} \models \gamma$ and $\gamma \models (s_2 = do(a_2, s_1)) \Rightarrow \phi$. From $\gamma \in \mathcal{L}(\mathcal{D}_g \cup s_1)$ and $\mathcal{D}_0 \cup \{s_1 = do(a_1, s_0)\} \models \gamma$ we can conclude that $\gamma \in \mathcal{D}_1$. So,

$$\begin{aligned}\mathcal{D}_1 &\models (s_2 = do(a_2, s_1)) \Rightarrow \phi \\ \mathcal{D}_1 \cup (s_2 = do(a_2, s_1)) &\models \phi\end{aligned}$$

and the opposite direction is done. ■