Ontology and Database Systems: Foundations of Database Systems
Part 2: First-order Query Languages

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How Are Algebra and Calculus Related?

We have seen several queries that could be expressed both in
- Relational Calculus
- Relational Algebra.

Are both languages the same? Or are they different?

How can we formally express hypotheses about their relationship?

How could we prove that they are the same? And how that they are different?
Relationship between Algebra and Calculus

Theorem

For every Relational Algebra expression $E$ one can compute in polynomial time a first-order formula $\phi$ such that

$$E(I) = Q_\phi(I)$$

for all instances $I$

Proof.

Induction over the structure of algebra expressions. Exercise! :-(

If the algebra expression $E$ contains comparisons in the selection and join conditions, then $\phi$ will have comparisons

What about the converse statement?
Safe Queries

Proposition
For every algebra expression $E$ and every instance $I$, the set $E(I)$ is finite

Proof.
How?

Definition
Let $Q_\phi$ be a calculus query.
We say that $Q_\phi$ is safe if $Q_\phi(I)$ is finite for all instances $I$.

So, all algebra queries are safe. What about calculus queries?
Negation and Safety

Consider

\[ Q = \{ (i, n, f) \mid \neg \text{Course}(i, n, f) \} \]

What is \( Q(I_{\text{univ}}) \)?

Can we (automatically) tell safe queries from unsafe queries?
Different Kinds of Satisfiability

Recall: Sentences are formulas where all variables are bound (closed formulas)

**Definition**

Let $\phi$ be a logical sentence. Then

- $\phi$ is **first-order satisfiable** (or just satisfiable) if there is a first order interpretation $I$ such that $I \models \phi$;
- $\phi$ is **finitely satisfiable** if there is a finite first order interpretation $I$ such that $I \models \phi$;
- $\phi$ is **database satisfiable** if there is a database instance $I$ such that $I \models \phi$.

Analogously, we define first-order validity, finite validity, and database validity.

*What do you know about the decidability of these properties?*
Undecidability of Validity in First-order Logic

Theorem (Church (1) and Trakhtenbrot (2))

1. First-order validity of sentences is undecidable.
2. Finite validity of first-order sentences is undecidable.

Proof.
For both proofs, see the notes by Stephen G. Simpson from Penn State University. Simpson’s proof uses formulas with one constant 0, two function symbols, and a binary relation symbol. Note that, if we have equality, we can encode $n$-ary function symbols into $(n + 1)$-ary relation symbols, using functionality axioms for the new symbols. Moreover, equality can be encoded into a new binary relation symbol, using congruence axioms. Thus, the claim holds also for sentences without function symbols and without equality.

What does this imply for (un)satisfiability of sentences? …and what for sentences valid in all database instances?
Lemma (Relativization)

For every first-order sentence $\phi$ we can construct (in polynomial time) a first-order sentence $\tilde{\phi}$ such that the following are equivalent:

- $\phi$ has a finite model;
- $\tilde{\phi}$ has a model that is a database instance.

Proof (Sketch).

Idea: Encode the domain implicitly into $\tilde{\phi}$, using a new relation symbol $D$.

Translate atoms as $R(s_1, \ldots, s_n) := R(s_1, \ldots, s_n) \land D(s_1) \land \cdots \land D(s_n)$.

Translate conjunctions as $\tilde{\psi_1} \land \tilde{\psi_2} := \tilde{\psi_1} \land \tilde{\psi_2}$.

Translate existential quantification as $\exists x \tilde{\psi} := \exists x (D(x) \land \psi)$.

Translate negation as $\tilde{\neg \psi} := D(x_1) \land \cdots \land D(x_n) \land \neg \psi$, where $x_1, \ldots, x_n$ are the free variables of $\psi$.

What does this tell us about the decidability of database satisfiability? …and what about the decidability of safety?
Decidability of Safety

Theorem
Safety of Relational Calculus queries is undecidable.

Proof (Idea).
Encode the finite satisfiability problem using the relativization lemma. Then conclude the claim from Trakhtenbrot’s Theorem.
More Properties of Queries

Definition

Let $Q, Q_1, Q_2$ be relational calculus queries. We say that

- $Q$ is **satisfiable** iff there is an instance $I$ such that $Q(I) \neq \emptyset$ (otherwise, $Q$ is **unsatisfiable**)

- $Q_1$ and $Q_2$ are **equivalent** (written $Q_1 \equiv Q_2$) iff $Q_1(I) = Q_2(I)$ for all instances $I$

- $Q_1$ is **contained** in $Q_2$ (written $Q_1 \subseteq Q_2$) iff $Q_1(I) \subseteq Q_2(I)$ for all instances $I$

Can we conclude one property from another one?

If so, which from which, and how?

How can we check these properties?
More Properties of Queries

Theorem

Satisfiability, equivalence, and containment are undecidable for RelCalc queries

Proof.

Undecidability of satisfiability follows from Trakhtenbrot’s theorem, using the relativization lemma. The other two claims can then be shown by reduction.

Exercise!

Back to our original question:

Can all safe queries be expressed in relational algebra?
What is the Role of the Domain in Query Answering?

Consider the query

\[ Q = \{ x \mid \text{Person}(x) \land \forall y \text{ Loves}(x, y) \}. \]

Is \( Q \) safe?

Consider the instance

\[ I_{\text{db pers}} = \{ \text{Person}(Fred), \text{Person}(Mary), \]
\[ \text{Loves}(Fred, Fred), \text{Loves}(Fred, Mary) \}. \]

What is \( Q(I_{\text{db pers}}) \)?

Consider the finite interpretation \( I_{\text{fin pers}} \)

- where the domain is \{Fred, Mary\} and
- where the interpretation of each relation is the same as in \( I_{\text{db pers}} \).

What is \( Q(I_{\text{fin pers}}) \)?

Could \( Q \) possibly be defined in relational algebra?
A query where the answer depends
  • not only on the interpretation of the relations,
  • but also on the domain
is domain dependent.

All other queries are domain independent.

*Can you give an example of a relational algebra query that is domain dependent?*

*We make this more formal on the following slides*
Active Domain

When introducing the semantics of calculus queries, we defined the domain of the interpretation $I$ as

$$\Delta^I = \text{dom}.$$  

However, there are more options.

For an instance $I$ and a query $Q$ let

- $\text{adom}(I) :=$ the set of constants occurring in $I$, the active domain of $I$;
- $\text{adom}(Q) :=$ the set of constants occurring in $Q$, the active domain of $Q$;
- $\text{adom}(Q, I) := \text{adom}(Q) \cup \text{adom}(I)$, the active domain of $Q$ and $I$.

A set $d \subseteq \text{dom}$ is admissible for $Q$ and $I$ if $\text{adom}(Q, I) \subseteq d$.

Given an admissible $d$ we define $I_d$ similarly as $I$, with the exception that

$$\Delta^{I_d} = d.$$
Query Semantics

Let $d$ be admissible for $Q = \{\bar{x} \mid \phi\}$ and $I$.

Then we define the answer of $Q$ over $I$ relative to $d$ as

$$Q_d(I) = \{\alpha(\bar{x}) \mid I_d, \alpha \models \phi\}.$$

Intuitively, different semantics have different quantifier ranges.

The extreme cases are:

- **Natural semantics** $Q_{nat}(I)$: unrestricted interpretation, that is $d = \text{dom}$

- **Active domain semantics** $Q_{adom}(I)$: the range of quantifiers is the set of all constants in $Q$ and in $I$, that is $d = \text{adom}(Q, I)$. 
Domain Independence

**Definition**

Let $Q$ be a RelCalc query. We say that $Q$ is **domain independent** if

$$Q_d(I) = Q_{\text{nat}}(I)$$

for all instances $I$ and all domains $d \subseteq \text{dom}$ that are admissible for $Q$ and $I$.

*Is domain independence is decidable or not? How one can prove this result?*
Equivalence Theorem of Relational Query Languages

The domain-independent relational calculus (DI-RelCalc) consists of all domain-independent calculus queries.

**Theorem (Codd)**

Relational Algebra and DI-RelCalc have the same expressivity.

That is, for every relational algebra expression $E$, there is a DI-RelCalc query $Q$ such that $E \equiv Q$ and vice versa.

**Remark:** The theorem only holds for relational algebra with the operator

- singleton $\{d\}$,

where $d \in \text{dom}$. Singleton models "$x = d$" in queries, as in

$$\{(x, y) \mid x = d \land P(y)\}.$$
Codd’s Theorem: Proof Idea

We have shown that every algebra query can be translated into RelCalc. The converse statement follows from the next lemma.

Lemma

One can rewrite every RelCalc query \( Q_\phi \) to a Relational Algebra query \( E_Q \) such that for every instance \( I \) we have

\[
Q_{adom(\phi,I)} = E_\phi(I).
\]

Proof Sketch.

Consider \( Q_\phi = \{ \bar{x} \mid \phi \} \). It is straightforward to define a unary algebra expression \( E_{adom} \) such that for all instances \( I \) we have

\[
E_{adom}(I) = adom(\phi,I).
\]

Then we translate every subformula \( \psi \) of \( \phi \) into an expression \( E_\phi \) such that

\[
E_\psi(I) = (Q_\psi)_{adom(\phi,I)}.
\]
Codd’s Theorem: Proof Idea (cntd)

Proof Sketch (cntd).

We illustrate the translation with examples:

If $\psi(y_1, y_2) = R(d_1, y_1, y_2, d_2)$, where $R$ has the schema $R(A_1, A_2, A_3, A_4)$,
then $E_\psi = \pi_{A_2, A_3}(\sigma_{A_1=d_2 \land A_4=d_2}(R))$.

If $\psi(y_1, y_2) = (y_1 \neq y_2)$, where $A_1, A_2$ correspond to $y_1, y_2$,
then $E_\psi = \sigma_{A_1 \neq A_2}(E_{adom} \times E_{adom})$.

If $\psi(y_1, y_2, y_3) = \psi'(y_1, y_2) \lor \psi'(y_2, y_3)$, where $A_1, A_2, A_3$ correspond to $y_1, y_2, y_3$,
then $E_\psi = (E_{\psi'} \times E_{adom}) \cup (E_{adom} \times E_{\psi''})$.

If $\psi(y_1, \ldots, y_m) = \neg \psi'(y_1, \ldots, y_m)$,
then $E_\psi = (E_{adom} \times \cdots \times E_{adom}) \setminus E_{\psi'}$.

If $\psi(y_2, \ldots y_m) = \exists y_1 \psi'(y_1, \ldots, y_m)$, where $A_1, \ldots, A_m$ correspond to $y_1, \ldots, y_m$,
then $E_\psi = \pi_{A_2, \ldots, A_m}(E_{\psi'})$.

We also need renaming, e.g., to give a name to the attribute of $E_{adom}$. 
Safe-Range Queries

Safe range queries are a syntactically defined fragment of the relational calculus that contains only domain-independent queries

(and thus are also a fragment of DI-RelCalc)

One can show: Safe-Range RelCalc $\equiv$ DI-RelCalc

Steps in defining safe-range queries:
- a syntactic normal form of the queries
- a mechanism for determining whether a variable is range restricted

Then a query is safe-range iff all its free variables are range-restricted.
Safe-Range Normal Form (SRNF)

Equivalently rewrite query formula $\phi$

- **Rename variables apart:** Rename variables such that each variable $x$ is quantified at most once and has only free or only bound occurrences.

- **Eliminate $\forall$:** Rewrite $\forall x \phi \iff \neg \exists x \neg \phi$

- **Eliminate implications:** Rewrite $\phi \rightarrow \psi \iff \neg \phi \lor \psi$
  (and similarly for $\leftrightarrow$)

- **Push negation down as far as possible:** Use the rules
  - $\neg \neg \phi \iff \phi$
  - $\neg (\phi_1 \land \phi_2) \iff \neg \phi_1 \lor \neg \phi_2$
  - $\neg (\phi_1 \lor \phi_2) \iff \neg \phi_1 \land \neg \phi_2$

- **Flatten $\exists$'s:** No child of an $\exists$ in the formula parse tree is an $\exists$
  (this step is not essential)
Safe-Range Normal Form (2)

- The result of rewriting a query $Q$ is called $SRNF(Q)$
- A query $Q$ is in safe-range normal form if $Q = SRNF(Q)$

Examples:

$Q_1(\text{th}) = \exists \text{tl} \exists \text{dir} (\text{Movie}(\text{tl}, \text{dir}, '\text{Depp}') \land \text{Schedule}(\text{th}, \text{tl}))$

$SRNF(Q_1) = \exists \text{tl}, \text{dir} (\text{Movie}(\text{tl}, \text{dir}, '\text{Depp}') \land \text{Schedule}(\text{th}, \text{tl}))$

$Q_2(\text{dir}) = \forall \text{th} \forall \text{tl'} (\text{Schedule}(\text{th}, \text{tl'}) \rightarrow \exists \text{tl} \exists \text{act} (\text{Schedule}(\text{th}, \text{tl}) \land \text{Movie}(\text{tl}, \text{dir}, \text{act})))$

$SRNF(Q_2) = \neg \exists \text{th}, \text{tl'} (\text{Schedule}(\text{th}, \text{tl'}) \land \neg \exists \text{tl}, \text{act} (\text{Schedule}(\text{th}, \text{tl}) \land \text{Movie}(\text{tl}, \text{dir}, \text{act})))$
Range Restriction

Three elements:

- Syntactic condition on formulas in SRNF
- Intuition: all possible values of a variable lie in the active domain
- If a variable does not fulfill this, then the query is rejected
Algorithm Range Restriction (rr)

Input: formula $\phi$ in SRNF
Output: subset of the free variables of $\phi$ or $\bot$
(indicating that a quantified variable is not range restricted)

case $\phi$ of
  $R(t_1, \ldots, t_n)$: $rr(\phi) :=$ the set of variables from $t_1, \ldots, t_n$
  $x = a, a = x$: $rr(\phi) := \{x\}$
  $\phi_1 \land \phi_2$: $rr(\phi) := rr(\phi_1) \cup rr(\phi_2)$
  $\phi_1 \land x = y$: if $\{x, y\} \cap rr(\phi_1) = \emptyset$ then $rr(\phi) := rr(\phi_1)$
    else $rr(\phi) := rr(\phi_1) \cup \{x, y\}$
  $\phi_1 \lor \phi_2$: $rr(\phi) := rr(\phi_1) \cap rr(\phi_2)$
  $\neg \phi_1$: $rr(\phi) := \emptyset$
  $\exists x_1, \ldots, x_n \phi_1$: if $\{x_1, \ldots, x_n\} \subseteq rr(\phi_1)$ then $rr(\phi) := rr(\phi_1) \setminus \{x_1, \ldots, x_n\}$
    else return $\bot$
end case

Here, $S \cup \bot = \bot \cup S = \bot$ and similarly for $\cap, \setminus$
Safe Range Theorem

Definition

Let $\phi$ be a formula and $\widetilde{\phi}$ be its safe range normal form.

- Then $\phi$ is a safe range formula if the range restriction algorithm $rr$ returns the set of free variables of $\widetilde{\phi}$.
- A RelCalc query is a safe range query if it is defined by a safe range formula.

Theorem (Safe Range Theorem)

- All safe range queries are domain independent.
- For every domain independent query there is an equivalent safe range query.

The proof is very technical. We refer for it to the book [AHV].
We define the set of nice SQL queries as consisting of the queries constructed

- with SELECT, FROM and WHERE clauses
  - plus UNION of subqueries
  - plus nesting with EXISTS and IN

- with a DISTINCT in the SELECT clause

- where the SELECT clause contains only attributes

- with atomic conditions in WHERE clauses being equalities and comparisons, involving only constants and attributes

- with conditions in WHERE clauses being boolean combinations of atomic, EXISTS, and IN conditions

We call the set of all those queries Nice SQL (short NSQL)
Nice SQL and Relational Query Languages

Theorem

Relational algebra, DI-RelCalc, and NSQL have the same expressivity

This should not be surprising because

- NSQL combines the query constructs that have a correspondence in FOL
- We dropped, among others,
  - arithmetic ("+", "−", "∗"),
  - string functions, string matching,
  - null values, outer joins,
  - aggregation
Nice SQL: Exercise

Express the following queries over our university schema in NSQL

- Which are the names of students that have passed an exam in CS?
- What are the names of the courses for which student Egger has failed an exam?
- Which students have failed an exam for the same course at least twice?
- Which students (given by their id) have never failed an exam in CS?
- Which students (given by their id) have passed the exams for all courses in CS?
Looking Back …

We have reviewed three formalisms for expressing queries

- Relational Algebra
- Relational Calculus (with its domain-independent fragment)
- Nice SQL

and seen that they have the same expressivity

However, crucial properties ((un)satisfiability, equivalence, containment) are undecidable

Hence, automatic analysis of such queries is impossible

Can we do some analysis if queries are simpler?