

# Descriptive Complexity: Inductive Definitions

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**ALMA**

*INTER-INSTITUTIONAL GRADUATE PROGRAM  
"ALGORITHMS, LOGIC AND DISCRETE MATHE-  
MATICS"*

# Overview

- 1 Inductive Definitions
- 2  $\text{FO(LFP)}=P$
- 3 The Depth of Inductive Definitions
- 4  $\text{FO(PFP)}=PSPACE$

# Overview

1 Inductive Definitions

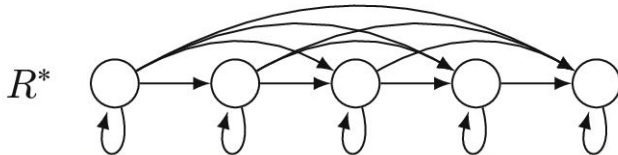
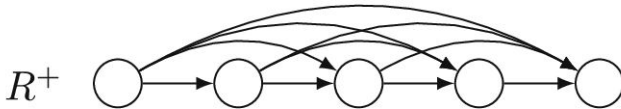
2 FO(LFP)=P

3 The Depth of Inductive Definitions

4 FO(PFP)=PSPACE



# Reflexive and transitive closure

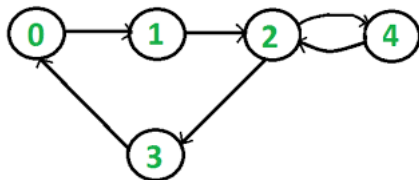




For every structure  $\mathcal{A} \in STRUC[\tau_g]$ , the formula  $\phi_{tc}$  induces an operator  $F_{\phi_{tc}} : \mathcal{P}(|\mathcal{A}|^2) \rightarrow \mathcal{P}(|\mathcal{A}|^2)$  defined as follows:

$$F_{\phi_{tc}}(X) = \{(a, b) \mid \mathcal{A} \models \phi_{tc}(X/R, a, b)\}$$

where  $X/R$  means that  $R$  is interpreted as  $X$  in  $\phi_{tc}$ .

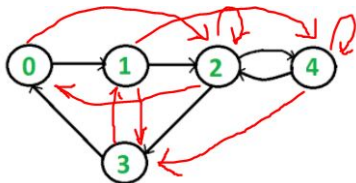


$$F_{\phi_{tc}}(\emptyset) = \{(a, b) \mid \mathcal{A} \models E(a, b) \vee \exists z (E(a, z) \wedge R(z, b))\}$$

$$F_{\phi_{tc}}(\emptyset) = \{(0, 1), (1, 2), (2, 3), (2, 4), (3, 0), (4, 2)\}$$

$$F_{\phi_{tc}}(\emptyset) = \{(a, b) \in |\mathcal{A}|^2 \mid \text{distance}(a, b) = 1\}$$



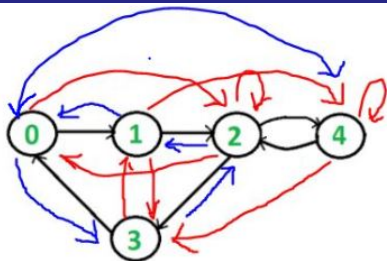


$$F_{\phi_{tc}}(F_{\phi_{tc}}(\emptyset)) =$$

$$F_{\phi_{tc}}^2(\emptyset) = \{(a, b) \mid \mathcal{A} \models E(a, b) \vee \exists z (E(a, z) \wedge R(z, b))\}$$

$$F_{\phi_{tc}}^2(\emptyset) = \{(0, 1), (1, 2), (2, 3), (2, 4), (3, 0), (4, 2), (0, 2), (1, 3), (1, 4), (2, 0), (2, 2), (3, 1), (4, 3), (4, 4)\}$$

$$F_{\phi_{tc}}^2(\emptyset) = \{(a, b) \in |\mathcal{A}|^2 \mid d(a, b) = 1 \text{ or } d(a, b) = 2\}$$



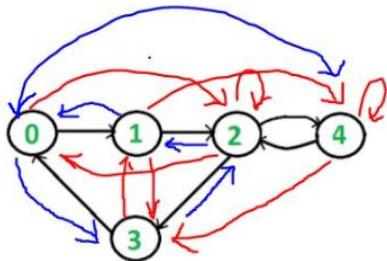
$$F_{\phi_{tc}}(F_{\phi_{tc}}^2(\emptyset)) = F_{\phi_{tc}}^3(\emptyset) =$$

$F^2(\emptyset)$

$$\{(a, b) \mid \mathcal{A} \models E(a, b) \vee \exists z (E(a, z) \wedge R(z, b))\}$$

$$F_{\phi_{tc}}^3(\emptyset) = \{(0, 1), (1, 2), (2, 3), (2, 4), (3, 0), (4, 2), \\ (0, 2), (1, 3), (1, 4), (2, 0), (2, 2), (3, 1), (4, 3), (4, 4), \\ (0, 3), (0, 4), (1, 0), (2, 1), (3, 2), (4, 0)\}$$

$$F_{\phi_{tc}}^3(\emptyset) = \{(a, b) \in |\mathcal{A}|^2 \mid 1 \leq d(a, b) \leq 3\}$$



$$F_{\phi_{tc}}(F_{\phi_{tc}}^3(\emptyset)) = F_{\phi_{tc}}^4(\emptyset) =$$

$$\{(0, 1), (1, 2), (2, 3), (2, 4), (3, 0), (4, 2),$$

$$(0, 2), (1, 3), (1, 4), (2, 0), (2, 2), (3, 1), (4, 3), (4, 4),$$

$$(0, 3), (0, 4), (1, 0), (2, 1), (3, 2), (4, 0)$$

$$(0, 0), (1, 1), (3, 3), (3, 4), (4, 1)\}$$

$$F_{\phi_{tc}}^4(\emptyset) = \{(a, b) \in |\mathcal{A}|^2 \mid 1 \leq d(a, b) \leq 4\}$$

Here  $F_{\phi_{tc}}^4(\emptyset) = |\mathcal{A}|^2$ , so  $F_{\phi_{tc}}^5(\emptyset) = F_{\phi_{tc}}^4(\emptyset) = |\mathcal{A}|^2$ .

Thus for  $n = \|\mathcal{A}\|$ , then

$$F_{\phi_{tc}}^n(\emptyset) = E^+ = \text{the least fixed point of } F_{\phi_{tc}}.$$

In other words,  $F_{\phi_{tc}}^n(\emptyset)$  is the minimal relation  $T$  such that

$$F_{\phi_{tc}}(T) = T.$$

- Let  $R$  be a new relation symbol of arity  $k$ .
- Let  $\phi(R, x_1, \dots, x_k)$  be a first-order formula that induces a monotone operator  $F_\phi$ , i.e.

$$X \subseteq Y \implies F_\phi(X) \subseteq F_\phi(Y)$$

## Theorem

Let  $\phi(R, x_1, \dots, x_k)$  be a first-order formula that induces a monotone operator  $F_\phi$ .

For any structure  $\mathcal{A}$ , the least fixed point of  $F_\phi$ , symb.  $\mathbf{lfp}(F_\phi)$ , exists.

It is equal to  $F_\phi^r(\emptyset)$  where  $r$  is minimum so that  $F_\phi^r(\emptyset) = F_\phi^{r+1}(\emptyset)$ .  
Furthermore,  $r \leq n^k$ , where  $n = \|\mathcal{A}\|$ .

*Proof.* Consider the sequence

$$\emptyset \subseteq F_\phi(\emptyset) \subseteq F_\phi^2(\emptyset) \subseteq F_\phi^3(\emptyset) \subseteq \dots$$

The inclusions hold because of monotonicity of  $F_\phi$ .

If  $F_\phi^{i+1}(\emptyset) \subsetneq F_\phi^i(\emptyset)$ , then  $F_\phi^{i+1}(\emptyset)$  contains at least one new  $k$ -tuple from  $|\mathcal{A}|^k$ .

Since there are  $n^k$  such  $k$ -tuples, for some  $r \leq n^k$ ,

$F_\phi^r(\emptyset) = F_\phi(F_\phi^r(\emptyset)) = F_\phi^{r+1}(\emptyset)$ , i.e.  $F_\phi^r(\emptyset)$  is a fixed point of  $F_\phi$ .

*Proof.* Let  $S$  be any other fixed point of  $F_\phi$ .

We show by induction that  $F_\phi^i(\emptyset) \subseteq S$  for every  $i$ .

Base case:  $F_\phi^0(\emptyset) = \emptyset \subseteq S$ .

Suppose that  $F_\phi^i(\emptyset) \subseteq S$ . Since  $F_\phi$  is monotone,

$$F_\phi^{i+1}(\emptyset) = F_\phi(F_\phi^i(\emptyset)) \subseteq F_\phi(S) \subseteq S.$$

Thus,  $F_\phi^r(\emptyset) \subseteq S$  and  $F_\phi^r(\emptyset)$  is the least fixed point of  $F_\phi$ . □

## Lemma

Testing if  $F_\phi$  is monotone is undecidable for FO formulas  $\phi$ .

*Proof.* Let  $\Phi$  be an arbitrary FO sentence and consider the formula

$$\phi(S, x) = (S(x) \rightarrow \Phi).$$

- Suppose  $\Phi$  is valid. Then  $\phi(S, x)$  is always true and  $F_\phi$  is monotone for every structure  $\mathcal{A}$ .
- Suppose that there is a non-empty structure  $\mathcal{A}$  such that  $\mathcal{A} \models \neg\Phi$ . Then,  $\phi(S, x)$  is equivalent to  $\neg S(x)$  over  $\mathcal{A}$ , so  $F_\phi$  is not monotone.

Therefore,  $F_\phi$  is monotone iff  $\Phi$  is valid, which is undecidable by Trakhtenbrot's theorem. □



- Given a formula  $\phi$  that contains  $R$ , we say that an occurrence of  $R$  is *negative* if it is under the scope of an odd number of negations and is *positive* if it is under the scope of an even number of negations.
- In  $\exists x \neg R(x) \vee \neg \forall y \forall z \neg (R(y) \wedge \neg R(z))$ , the first and the last occurrence of  $R$  are negative and the second occurrence of  $R$  is positive.
- A formula is *positive in  $R$*  if there are no negative occurrences of  $R$  in it.

## Proposition

If  $\phi(R, \vec{x})$  is positive in  $R$ , then  $F_\phi$  is monotone.

# The logic FO(LFP)

## Definition

The logic FO(LFP) extends FO with the following formation rule:

- if  $\phi(R, \vec{x})$  is a formula positive in  $R$ , where  $R$  is a  $k$ -ary relation symbol and  $\vec{t}$  is a tuple of terms, such that  $|\vec{x}| = |\vec{t}| = k$ , then

$$[\mathbf{lfp}_{R, \vec{x}} \phi(R, \vec{x})](\vec{t})$$

is a formula the free variables of which are those of  $\vec{t}$ .

The semantics is defined as follows:

$$\mathcal{A} \models [\mathbf{lfp}_{R, \vec{x}} \phi(R, \vec{x})](\vec{a}) \text{ iff } \vec{a} \in \mathbf{lfp}(F_\phi).$$

## Examples of queries definable in FO(LFP)

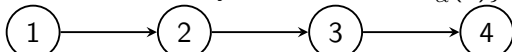
**Acyclicity:** Let  $\tau_g = \langle E^2 \rangle$  and a structure  $\mathcal{A} \in STRUC[\tau_g]$ . Consider the formula  $\alpha(S, x) = \forall y (E(y, x) \rightarrow S(y))$ .

$$F_\alpha(\emptyset) = \{a \in |\mathcal{A}| \mid a \text{ is a node of in-degree } 0\} = \{1\}$$

$$F_\alpha^2(\emptyset) = F_\alpha(\emptyset) \cup \{a \in |\mathcal{A}| \mid a \text{ is a node that has incoming edges only from nodes of } F_\alpha(\emptyset)\} = \{1, 2\}$$

$$F_\alpha^3(\emptyset) = F_\alpha^2(\emptyset) \cup \{a \in |\mathcal{A}| \mid a \text{ is a node that has incoming edges only from nodes of } F_\alpha^2(\emptyset)\} = \{1, 2, 3\}$$

$$F_\alpha^4(\emptyset) = F_\alpha^3(\emptyset) \cup \{a \in |\mathcal{A}| \mid a \text{ is a node that has incoming edges only from nodes of } F_\alpha^3(\emptyset)\} = \{1, 2, 3, 4\}$$



# Examples of queries definable in FO(LFP)

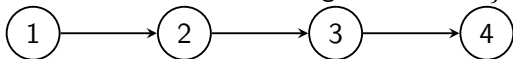
**Acyclicity:** Let  $\tau_g = \langle E^2 \rangle$  and a structure  $\mathcal{A} \in STRUC[\tau_g]$ . Consider the formula  $\alpha(S, x) = \forall y (E(y, x) \rightarrow S(y))$ .

$$F_\alpha(\emptyset) = \{a \in |\mathcal{A}| \mid a \text{ is a node of in-degree } 0\} = \{1\}$$

$$F_\alpha^2(\emptyset) = \{a \in |\mathcal{A}| \mid a \text{ is a node that all paths ending in } a \text{ have length at most } 1\} = \{1, 2\}$$

$$F_\alpha^3(\emptyset) = \{a \in |\mathcal{A}| \mid a \text{ is a node that all paths ending in } a \text{ have length at most } 2\} = \{1, 2, 3\}$$

$$F_\alpha^4(\emptyset) = \{a \in |\mathcal{A}| \mid a \text{ is a node that all paths ending in } a \text{ have length at most } 3\} = \{1, 2, 3, 4\}$$



# Examples of queries definable in FO(LFP)

## Acyclicity:

- $F_\alpha^i(\emptyset) = \{a \in |\mathcal{A}| \mid a \text{ is a node that all paths ending in } a \text{ have length at most } i - 1\}$
- $\mathcal{A} \models [\mathbf{lfp}_{S,x}\alpha(S,x)](a) \iff$   
all the paths of  $\mathcal{A}$  ending in  $a$  are of finite length
- $\mathcal{A} \models \forall u[\mathbf{lfp}_{S,x}\alpha(S,x)](u) \iff$  the graph represented by  
the structure  $\mathcal{A}$  is acyclic.

*Question:* How many times do we have to apply  $F_\alpha$  to obtain  $\mathbf{lfp}(F_\alpha)$ ?

# Examples of queries definable in FO(LFP)

**Arithmetic on Successor Structures:** Let  $\tau_{succ} = \langle Succ^2, 0 \rangle$ .

Let a structure

$$\mathcal{A} = \langle \{0, 1, \dots, n-1\}, \{(i, i+1) \mid 1 \leq i+1 \leq n-1\}, 0 \rangle.$$

We define  $+$  =  $\{(i, j, k) \mid i+j = k\}$ .

$$x + 0 = x$$

$$x + (y + 1) = (x + y) + 1$$

# Examples of queries definable in FO(LFP)

## Arithmetic on Successor Structures:

$$x + 0 = x$$

$$x + (y + 1) = (x + y) + 1$$

Let  $R$  be a ternary relation symbol and  $\beta_+(R, x, y, z)$  be

$$(y = 0 \wedge z = x) \vee \exists u \exists v (R(x, u, v) \wedge Succ(u, y) \wedge Succ(v, z))$$

$$x + 0 = x$$

$$x + u = v$$

$$y = u + 1$$

$$z = v + 1$$

# Examples of queries definable in FO(LFP)

## Arithmetic on Successor Structures:

$$(y = 0 \wedge z = x) \vee \exists u \exists v (R(x, u, v) \wedge Succ(u, y) \wedge Succ(v, z))$$

$$x + 0 = x$$

$$x + u = v$$

$$y = u + 1$$

$$z = v + 1$$

$$F_{\beta_+}(\emptyset) = \{(i, j, k) \mid (i, j, k) \text{ is of the form } (x, 0, x) \text{ for some } x \in |\mathcal{A}|\}$$

$$F_{\beta_+}^2(\emptyset) = \{(i, j, k) \mid (i, j, k) \text{ is of the form } (x, 0, x) \text{ or } (x, 1, x + 1)$$

$$\text{for some } x \in |\mathcal{A}|\}$$

*Question 1:* What is  $F_{\beta_+}^3(\emptyset)$ ?

*Question 2:* How many times do we have to apply  $F_{\beta_+}$  to obtain the least fixed point of  $(F_{\beta_+})$ ?



## Examples of queries definable in FO(LFP)

**A Game on Graphs:** Let  $G$  be a graph and  $s$  be a distinguished start node. There are also two players: player **I** and player **II**.

At round  $i$ :

- player **I** selects a node  $b_i$ ,
- player **II** selects a node  $c_i$

such that  $(a, b_1)$  and  $(b_i, c_i), (c_i, b_{i+1})$  are edges of the graph for every  $i$ .

The player that cannot make a legal move loses the game.

# Examples of queries definable in FO(LFP)

**A Game on Graphs:** Let  $\tau_g = \langle E^2 \rangle$  and  $\mathcal{A} \in STRUC[\tau_g]$ .

Let  $S$  be a unary relation and  $\psi(S, x)$  be

$$\forall y \left( E(x, y) \rightarrow \exists z (E(y, z) \wedge S(z)) \right)$$

$$F_\psi(\emptyset) = \{u \mid u \text{ is a node of out-degree } 0\}$$

$$F_\psi^2(\emptyset) = F_\psi(\emptyset) \cup \{u \mid \text{for every move from } u \text{ there is a move to} \\ \text{a node with out-degree } 0\}$$

# Examples of queries definable in FO(LFP)

## A Game on Graphs:

Reformulating this,

$F_\psi(\emptyset) = \{u \mid \text{if the game starts from } u \text{ then player I loses}\}$

$F_\psi^2(\emptyset) = \{u \mid \text{if the game starts from } u \text{ then player I loses}\} \cup$

$\{u \mid \text{for every move of player I from } u \text{ there is a move of}$   
 player II such that player I loses}

# Examples of queries definable in FO(LFP)

## A Game on Graphs:

- In general,  $F_\psi(X)$  is the set of nodes  $u$  such that no matter where player **I** moves from  $u$ , then player **II** can move to some node in  $X$ .
- $F_\psi^i(\emptyset)$  consists of the nodes from which player **II** has a winning strategy in at most  $i - 1$  rounds.
- $\mathcal{A} \models [\text{Ifp}_{S,x}\psi(S, x)](s)$  iff player **II** has a winning strategy from node  $s$  in  $\mathcal{A}$ .

# Examples of queries definable in FO(LFP)

## Alternating Reachability:

Let  $\tau_{ag} = \langle E^2, \forall^1, s, t \rangle$  and  $\mathcal{G} \in STRUC[\tau_{ag}]$ .

$P^{\mathcal{G}}$  is the smallest binary relation that satisfies the following:

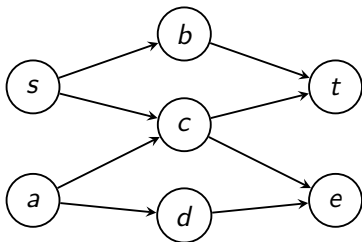
- $P^{\mathcal{G}}(x, x)$
- If  $x$  is existential and for some edge  $(x, z)$  we have  $P^{\mathcal{G}}(z, y)$ , then  $P^{\mathcal{G}}(x, y)$
- If  $x$  is universal,  $x$  has at least one outgoing edge and for all edges  $(x, z)$  we have  $P^{\mathcal{G}}(z, y)$ , then  $P^{\mathcal{G}}(x, y)$

# Examples of queries definable in FO(LFP)

## Alternating Reachability:

Let  $P$  be a binary relation symbol and  $\phi_{ap}$  be

$$x = y \vee \left( \exists z (E(x, z) \wedge P(z, y)) \wedge (\forall(x) \rightarrow \forall z (E(x, z) \rightarrow P(z, y))) \right)$$

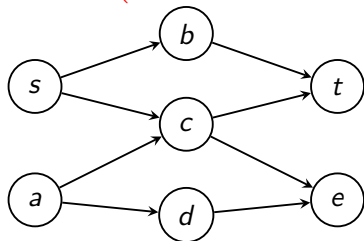


Universal Nodes:  $s$  and  $a$

Existential Nodes:  $b, c, d, t, e$

# Examples of queries definable in FO(LFP)

$$x = y \vee \left( \exists z (E(x, z) \wedge P(z, y)) \wedge (\forall x) \rightarrow \forall z (E(x, z) \rightarrow P(z, y)) \right)$$



Universal Nodes:  $s$  and  $a$

Existential Nodes:  $b, c, d, t, e$

$$F_{\phi_{ap}}(\emptyset) = \{(x, x) \mid x \in V\}$$

$$F_{\phi_{ap}}^2(\emptyset) = \{(x, x) \mid x \in V\} \cup \{(b, t), (c, t), (c, e), (d, e)\}$$

$$F_{\phi_{ap}}^3(\emptyset) = \{(x, x) \mid x \in V\} \cup \{(b, t), (c, t), (c, e), (d, e)\} \\ \cup \{(s, t), (a, e)\}$$

# Examples of queries definable in FO(LFP)

## Alternating Reachability:

Let  $P$  be a binary relation symbol and  $\phi_{ap}$  be

$$x = y \vee \left( \exists z (E(x, z) \wedge P(z, y)) \wedge (\forall x) \rightarrow \forall z (E(x, z) \rightarrow P(z, y)) \right)$$

$\mathcal{G} \models [\mathbf{lfp}_{P,x,y} \phi_{ap}(P, x, y)](s, t)$  iff  
there is an alternating path from  $s$  to  $t$  in  $\mathcal{G}$



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## Proposition

FO(LFP) is closed under first order reductions.

For any two queries  $A$  and  $B$  such that  $B \in \text{FO(LFP)}$  and  $A \leq_{fo} B$  we have that  $A \in \text{FO(LFP)}$ .

# FO(LFP)=P

## Theorem

*Over finite, ordered structures,*

$$\text{FO(LFP)} = \text{P}$$

*Proof.* (FO(LFP)  $\subseteq$  P): Let  $\mathcal{A}$  be an input structure, let  $n = \|\mathcal{A}\|$  and let  $[\mathbf{lfp}_{R, \vec{x}} \phi(R, \vec{x})](\vec{t})$  be a least fixed point formula. To decide if  $\mathcal{A} \models [\mathbf{lfp}_{R, \vec{x}} \phi(R, \vec{x})](\vec{a})$ , we have to find  $\mathbf{lfp}(F_\phi)$ . So, we have to evaluate the first order query defined by  $\phi$  at most  $n^k$  times.

First order queries can be evaluated in L, so in P as well.

# FO(LFP)=P

*Proof.* ( $P \subseteq \text{FO(LFP)}$ ):

- 1 FO(LFP) includes the query  $\text{REACH}_a$ , which is complete for the class P under first-order reductions.
- 2 FO(LFP) is closed under first-order reductions.
- 3 From 1 and 2, for any polynomial-time query  $A$ , we have that  $A \in \text{FO(LFP)}$ . □

# Normal Form Theorem

## Corollary

Let  $\phi$  be any formula in FO(LFP). Then there exists a first-order formula  $\psi$  and a tuple of constants  $\bar{c}$  such that over finite, ordered structures,

$$\phi \equiv [\mathbf{lfp}\psi](\bar{c})$$

- The use of ordering is required in the proof that  $\text{REACH}_a$  is P-complete under first order reductions.
- If we consider FO(LFP) on unordered structures then it does not define all polynomial-time properties.
- For NP and coNP we have logics that capture them over all structures.
- Is there a logic that captures P without the additional restriction to ordered structures?

### Gurevich's Conjecture

There is no logic that captures P over the class of all finite structures.

This conjecture is stronger than the  $P \neq \text{NP}$  conjecture!

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## Definition

Let  $R$  be a  $k$ -ary relation symbol, let  $\phi(R, \vec{x})$  be a formula which is positive in  $R$  and let  $\mathcal{A}$  be a structure of size  $n$ .

Define the *depth of  $\phi$  in  $\mathcal{A}$* , symb.  $|\phi^{\mathcal{A}}|$ , to be the minimum  $r$  such that

$$\mathcal{A} \models \left( F_{\phi}^r(\emptyset) \leftrightarrow F_{\phi}^{r+1}(\emptyset) \right)$$

## Definition

Define the *depth of  $\phi$* , symb.  $|\phi|$ , as a function of  $n$  equal to the maximum depth of  $\phi$  in  $\mathcal{A}$  for any structure  $\mathcal{A}$  of size  $n$ :

$$|\phi|(n) = \max_{\|\mathcal{A}\|=n} \{|\phi^{\mathcal{A}}|\}$$



# Example

- Let  $\tau_g = \langle E^2 \rangle$ . Then the formula

$$\phi_{rtc}(R, x, y) = x = y \vee \exists z(E(x, z) \wedge R(z, y))$$

defines inductively the reflexive transitive closure,  $E^*$ , of  $E$ .

- $|\phi_{rtc}|(n) = n$

# Example

- Consider the following alternate inductive definition of  $E^*$ :

$$\phi^*(R, x, y) = x = y \vee E(x, y) \vee \exists z(R(x, z) \wedge R(z, y)).$$

- $|\phi^*|(n) = \lceil \log n \rceil + 1$

## Definition

Let  $\text{IND}[t(n)]$  be the subset of  $\text{FO(LFP)}$  in which only fixed points of first-order formulas  $\phi$  for which  $|\phi|$  is  $\mathcal{O}(t(n))$  are included.

$$\text{FO(LFP)} = \bigcup_{k=1}^{\infty} \text{IND}[n^k].$$

## Proposition

$NL \subseteq IND[\log n]$

*Proof.*

- REACH is expressible as  $[Ifp_{R,x,y} \phi^*(R, x, y)](s, t)$  and is thus in  $IND[\log n]$ .
- REACH is NL-complete under first-order reductions.
- $IND[\log n]$  is closed under first order reductions.

Hence  $NL \subseteq IND[\log n]$ . □

**Remark.** In chapter 5, the depth of nesting of recursive calls is connected to the parallel time needed to evaluate such a recursive definition. In particular  $IND[\log n] = AC^1$ .

# Overview

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- Consider an arbitrary operator  $F : \mathcal{P}(|\mathcal{A}^k|) \rightarrow \mathcal{P}(|\mathcal{A}^k|)$ .
- Consider the sequence  $F(\emptyset), F^2(\emptyset), F^3(\emptyset), \dots$
- There are two possibilities
  - 1 The sequence reaches a fixed point, i.e. for some  $n \in \mathbb{N}$  we have  $F^n(\emptyset) = F^{n+1}(\emptyset)$  and thus for all  $m > n$ ,  $F^m(\emptyset) = F^n(\emptyset)$ . In this case  $n \leq 2^{||\mathcal{A}^k||}$ .
  - 2 The sequence does not reach a fixed point.
- We define the partial fixed point of  $F$  as

$$\mathbf{pfp}(F) = \begin{cases} F^n(\emptyset), & \text{if } F^n(\emptyset) = F^{n+1}(\emptyset) \\ \emptyset, & \text{if } F^n(\emptyset) \neq F^{n+1}(\emptyset) \text{ for all } n \leq 2^{||\mathcal{A}^k||} \end{cases}$$

# The logic FO(PFP)

## Definition

The logic FO(PFP) extends FO with the following formation rule:

- if  $\phi(R, \vec{x})$  is a formula, where  $R$  is a  $k$ -ary relation symbol and  $\vec{t}$  is a tuple of terms, such that  $|\vec{x}| = |\vec{t}| = k$ , then

$$[\mathbf{pfp}_{R, \vec{x}} \phi(R, \vec{x})](\vec{t})$$

is a formula the free variables of which are those of  $\vec{t}$ .

The semantics is defined as follows:

$$\mathcal{A} \models [\mathbf{pfp}_{R, \vec{x}} \phi(R, \vec{x})](\vec{a}) \text{ iff } \vec{a} \in \mathbf{pfp}(F_\phi).$$

## Theorem

*Over finite, ordered structures,*

$$\text{FO(PFP)} = \text{PSPACE}$$