Integrity Constraints for General-Purpose Knowledge Bases

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Abstract. Integrity constraints in databases have been studied extensively since the 1980s, and they are considered essential to guarantee database integrity. In recent years, several authors have studied how the same notion can be adapted to reasoning frameworks, in such a way that they achieve the purpose of guaranteeing a system's consistency, but are kept separate from the reasoning mechanisms.

In this paper we focus on multi-context systems, a general-purpose framework for combining heterogeneous reasoning systems, enhancing them with a notion of integrity constraints that generalizes the corresponding concept in the database world.

1 Introduction

Integrity constraints in databases have now been around for decades, and are universally acknowledged as one of the essential tools to ensure database consistency [2]. The associated problem of finding out how to repair an inconsistent database – i.e., change it so that it again satisfies the integrity constraints – was soon recognized as an important and difficult one [1], which would unlikely be solvable in a completely automatic way [18].

Since the turn of the century, much focus in research has moved from classical databases to more powerful reasoning systems, where information is not all explicitly described, but may be inferred by logical means. In this setting, an important topic of study is how to combine the reasoning capabilities of different systems, preferrably preserving the properties that make them useful in practice – e.g. consistency, decidability of reasoning, efficient computation. One of the most general frameworks to combine reasoning systems abstractly is that of heterogeneous nonmonotonic multi-context systems [5]. Besides being studied from a theoretical perspective, these have been implemented, and many specialized versions have been introduced to deal with particular aspects deemed relevant in practice [7,15,23,31]. In this work, we will work with relational multi-context systems [20], a first-order generalization of the original, propositional-based systems, which we will refer to simply as multi-context systems, or MCSs.

As a very simple kind of reasoning system, databases can naturally be viewed as particular cases of MCSs. In this paper we propose to define integrity constraints in MCSs in a way that naturally generalizes the usual definitions for

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relational databases. Some authors have previously discussed modelling integrity constraints in MCSs, but their approach differs substantially from the typical database perspective, as integrity constraints are embedded *into* the system, thereby becoming part of the reasoning mechanism – unlike the situation in databases, where they form an independent layer that simply signals whether the database is in a consistent state. We argue that integrity constraints for MCSs should also follow this principle, and show how our approach is also in line with investigations on how to add integrity constraints to other reasoning frameworks, namely description logic knowledge bases [19,26]. Due to the richer structure of MCSs, we can define two distinct notions of consistency with respect to integrity constraints, which coincide for the case of databases.

We also address the problem of repairing an MCS that does not satisfy its integrity constraints by moving to managed multi-context systems (mMCSs) [7], which offer additional structure that helps defining the notion of repair.

Contributions. Our main contribution is a uniform notion of integrity constraint over several formalisms. We define integrity constraints over an MCS, together with notions of weak and strong satisfaction of these. We show that the problem of deciding whether an MCS satisfies a set of integrity constraints is polynomial-time reducible to the problem of deciding whether an MCS is logically consistent (i.e., it has a model). We show how our definition captures the traditional notion of integrity constraints over relational databases, and how it naturally generalizes this concept to distributed databases and deductive databases. We also compare our definition with existing proposals for integrity constraints over ontology languages. Finally, we define repairs, and show how our definition again generalizes the traditional concept in databases.

Outline. In Sect. 2 we introduce the framework of multi-context systems. In Sect. 3 we define integrity constraints over MCSs, together with the notions of weak and strong satisfaction. We show how we can encode an MCS with integrity constraints as a different MCS, and obtain decidability and complexity results for satisfaction of integrity constraints by reducing to the problem of logical consistency. In Sect. 4 we justify our definition of integrity constraint, by showing that it generalizes the usual concept in relational databases, as well as other authors' proposals for ontology languages [26] and peer-to-peer systems [9]. We also show that it induces a natural concept of integrity constraint for distributed databases, as well as providing a similar notion for deductive databases that is more expressive than the usual one; and provide complexity results for these concrete cases. In Sect. 5 we recall the notion of a database repair, and show how repairs can be naturally defined in a simple extension of MCSs. We conclude with an overview of our results and future directions in Sect. 6.

1.1 Related Work

The topic of integrity constraints has been extensively studied in the literature. In this section, we discuss the work that we feel to be more directly relevant to the tasks we carry out in this paper.

Integrity constraints and updates – ways of repairing inconsistent databases – were identified as a seminal problem in database theory almost thirty years ago [1]. The case for viewing integrity constraints as a layer on top of the database, rather than as a component of it, has been made since the 1980s. The idea is that the data inconsistencies captured by integrity constraints need to be resolved, but they should not interfere with the ability to continue using the database. In this line, much work has been done e.g. in query answering from inconsistent databases [3,30], by ensuring that the only answers generated are those that hold in minimally repaired versions of the database.

The first authors to consider deductive databases [4,22] also discussed this issue. They identify three ways to look at deductive databases: by viewing the whole system as a first-order theory; by viewing it as an extensional database together with integrity constraints; and a mixed view, where some rules are considered part of the logic theory represented by the database, and others as integrity constraints identifying preferred models. In [4], it is argued that this third approach is the correct one, as it cleanly separates rules that are meant to be used in logic inferencing from those that only specify consistency requirements.

More recently, authors have considered adding integrity constraints to open-world systems such as ontologies. Although integrity constraints can be written in the syntax of terminological axioms, the authors of [26] discuss why they should still be kept separate from the logical theory. Therefore, they separate the axioms in the T-Box (the deductive part of an ontology) into two groups: reasoning rules, which are used to infer new information, and integrity constraints, which only verify the consistency of the knowledge state without changing it.

The setting of multiple ontologies was considered in [19], which considers the problem of combining information from different knowledge sources while guaranteeing the overall consistency, and preserving this consistency when one of the individual ontologies is changed. This is achieved by external integrity constraints, written in a Datalog-like syntax, which can refer to knowledge in different ontologies in order to express relationships between them. Again, the purpose of these rules is uniquely to identify incompatibilities in the data, and not to infer new information.

By contrast, the authors who have discussed multi-context systems have not felt the need to take a similar approach. Integrity constraints appear routinely in examples in e.g. [6,7,17,28], but always encoded within the system, so that their violation leads to logical inconsistency of the global knowledge base. Their work focuses rather on the aspect of identifying the sources of inconsistencies – integrity constraints being only one example, not given any special analysis – and ways in which it can be repaired.

Although we believe this last work to be of the utmost importance, and show how satisfaction of integrity constraints can be reduced to consistency checking (which in turn implies that computing repairs can be reduced to restoring consistency), we strive for the clean separation between integrity constraints and reasoning that is present in other formalisms, and believe our proposal to be an important complement to the analysis of inconsistency in MCSs.

2 Background

We begin this section with a summary of the notion of relational multi-context system [20]. Intuitively, these are a collection of logic knowledge bases – the *contexts* – connected by Datalog-style *bridge rules*. The formal definition proceeds in several layers. The first notion is that of *relational logic*, an abstract notion of a logic with a first-order sublanguage.

Definition 1. *Formally, a relational logic L is a tuple $\langle \mathsf{KB}_L, \mathsf{BS}_L, \mathsf{ACC}_L, \Sigma_L \rangle$, where KB_L is the set of well-formed knowledge bases of L (sets of well-formed formulas), BS_L is a set of possible belief sets (models), $\mathsf{ACC}_L : \mathsf{KB}_L \to 2^{\mathsf{BS}_L}$ is a function assigning to each knowledge base a set of acceptable sets of beliefs (i.e., its models), and Σ_L is a signature consisting of sets P_L^{KB} and P_L^{BS} of predicate names (with associated arity) and a universe U_L of object constants, such that $U_L \cap (P_L^{\mathsf{KB}} \cup P_L^{\mathsf{BS}}) = \emptyset$.*

If $p \in P_L^{\mathsf{KB}}$ has arity k and $c_1, \ldots, c_k \in U_L$, then $p(c_1, \ldots, c_k)$ must be an element of some knowledge base, and if $p \in P_L^{\mathsf{BS}}$, then $p(c_1, \ldots, c_k)$ must be an element of some belief set. Therefore, we can view Σ_L as a first-order signature generating a sublanguage of L. The elements in this sublanguage are called *relational ground elements*, while the remaining elements of knowledge bases or belief sets are called *ordinary*.

Example 1. We can see first-order logic over a first-order signature Σ_{FOL} as a logic $\mathsf{FOL} = \langle \mathsf{KB}_{\mathsf{FOL}}, \mathsf{BS}_{\mathsf{FOL}}, \mathsf{ACC}_{\mathsf{FOL}}, \Sigma_{\mathsf{FOL}} \rangle$, where $\mathsf{KB}_{\mathsf{FOL}}$ is the set of sets of well-formed formulas over Σ_{FOL}, $\mathsf{BS}_{\mathsf{FOL}}$ is the set of first-order interpretations over Σ_{FOL}, and $\mathsf{ACC}_{\mathsf{FOL}}$ maps each set of formulas to the set of its models. This logic only contains relational elements.

Definition 2. *Let $\mathfrak{I}$ be a finite set of indices, $\{L_i\}_{i \in \mathfrak{I}}$ be a set of relational logics, and V be a set of (first-order) variables distinct from predicate and constant names in any L_i. A* relational element *of L_i has the form $p(t_1, \ldots, t_k)$, where $p \in P_{L_i}^{\mathsf{KB}} \cup P_{L_i}^{\mathsf{BS}}$ has arity k and each t_j is a term from $V \cup U_{L_i}$, for $1 \leq j \leq k$. A* relational k-bridge rule *over $\{L_i\}_{i \in \mathfrak{I}}$ and V is a rule of the form*

$$(k : s) \leftarrow (c_1 : p_1), \ldots, (c_q : p_q), \mathsf{not}\ (c_{q+1} : p_{q+1}), \ldots, \mathsf{not}\ (c_m : p_m) \qquad (1)$$

such that $k, c_i \in \mathfrak{I}$, s is an ordinary or a relational knowledge base element of L_k and $p_1, \ldots, p_m$ are ordinary or relational beliefs of L_{c_i}.

The notation $(c : p)$ indicates that p is evaluated in context c. These rules intuitively generalize logic programming rules, and as usual in that context we impose a *safety condition*: all variables occurring in $p_{q+1}, \ldots, p_m$ must also occur at least once in $p_1, \ldots, p_q$.

Definition 3. *A* relational multi-context system *is a collection $M = \{C_i\}_{i \in \mathfrak{I}}$ of contexts $C_i = \langle L_i, \mathsf{kb}_i, \mathsf{br}_i, D_i \rangle$, where L_i is a relational logic, kb_i is a knowledge base, br_i is a set of relational i-bridge rules, and D_i is a set of import domains $D_{i,j}$, with $j \in \mathfrak{I}$, such that $D_{i,j} \subseteq U_j$.*

Import domains define which constants are exported from one context to another: as the underlying logic languages can be different, these sets are essential to allow one context to reason about individuals introduced in another. We will assume that $D_{i,j}$ is the finite domain consisting of the object constants appearing in kb_j or in the head of a relational bridge rule in br_j, unless otherwise stated.

Example 2. Let C_1 and C_2 be contexts over the first-order logic FOL with R and Rt binary predicates in Σ_{FOL}, and let $\mathsf{kb}_1 = \mathsf{kb}_2 = \emptyset$. We can use the following bridge rules in br_2 to define Rt in C_2 as the transitive closure of R in C_1.

$$(2 : \mathsf{Rt}(x, y)) \leftarrow (1 : \mathsf{R}(x, y)) \qquad (2 : \mathsf{Rt}(x, y)) \leftarrow (1 : \mathsf{R}(x, z)), (2 : \mathsf{Rt}(z, y))$$

We will use the MCS $M = \langle C_1, C_2 \rangle$ to exemplify the concepts we introduce.

The semantics of relational MCSs is defined in terms of ground instances of bridge rules: the instances obtained from each rule $r \in \mathsf{br}_i$ by uniform substitution of each variable X in r by a constant in $\bigcap D_{i,j}$, with j ranging over the indices of the contexts to which queries containing X are made in r.

Definition 4. *A* belief state *for M is a collection $S = \{S_i\}_{i \in \mathfrak{I}}$ where $S_i \in \mathsf{BS}_i$ for each $i \in \mathfrak{I}$ – i.e., a tuple of models, one for each context. The ground bridge rule* Eq. (1) *is* applicable *in a belief state S if $p_i \in S_{c_i}$ for $1 \leq i \leq q$ and $p_i \notin S_{c_i}$ for $q < i \leq m$. The set of the heads of all applicable ground instances of bridge rules of context C_i w.r.t. S is denoted by $\mathsf{app}_i(S)$. An* equilibrium *is a belief state S such that $S_i \in \mathsf{ACC}_i(\mathsf{kb}_i \cup \mathsf{app}_i(S))$.*

Particular types of equilibria (minimal, grounded, well-founded) [5] can be defined for relational MCSs, but we will not discuss them here.

Example 3. In the setting of the previous example, all equilibria of M will have to include the transitive closure of R in S_1 in the interpretation of Rt in S_2. For example, if we take $S = \langle S_1, S_2 \rangle$ with $S_1 = \{\mathsf{R}(\mathsf{a}, \mathsf{b}), \mathsf{R}(\mathsf{b}, \mathsf{c})\}$ and $S_2 = \{\mathsf{Rt}(\mathsf{a}, \mathsf{b}), \mathsf{Rt}(\mathsf{b}, \mathsf{c}), \mathsf{Rt}(\mathsf{a}, \mathsf{c})\}$, then S is an equilibrium. However, $S' = \langle S_1, S'_2 \rangle$ with $S'_2 = \{\mathsf{Rt}(\mathsf{a}, \mathsf{b}), \mathsf{Rt}(\mathsf{b}, \mathsf{c})\}$ is not an equilibrium, as it does not satisfy the second bridge rule.

Checking whether an MCS has an equilibrium is known as the *consistency problem* in the literature. We will refer to this property as *logical consistency* (to distinguish from consistency w.r.t. integrity constraints, defined in the next section) throughout this paper. This problem has been studied extensively [6,16,17,35]; its decidability depends on decidability of reasoning in the underlying contexts. The complexity of checking logical consistency of an MCS M depends on the context complexity of M – the highest complexity of deciding consistency in one of the contexts in M (cf. [17] for a formal definition and known results).

3 Integrity Constraints on Multi-context Systems

In their full generality, integrity constraints in databases can be arbitrary first-order formulas, and reasoning with them is therefore undecidable. For this reason, it is common practice to restrict their syntax in order to regain decidability;

our definition follows the standard approach of writing integrity constraints in denial clausal form.

Definition 5. *Let $M = \langle C_1, \ldots, C_n \rangle$ be an MCS. An* integrity constraint *over an MCS M (in denial form) is a formula*

$$\leftarrow (i_1 : P_1), \ldots, (i_m : P_m), \mathsf{not}\ (i_{m+1} : P_{m+1}), \ldots, \mathsf{not}\ (i_\ell : P_\ell) \tag{2}$$

where $M = \langle C_1, \ldots, C_n \rangle$, $i_k \in \{1, \ldots, n\}$, each P_k is a relational element of C_{i_k}, and the variables in $P_{m+1}, \ldots, P_\ell$ all occur in $P_1, \ldots, P_m$.

Syntactically, integrity constraints are similar to "headless bridge rules". However, we will treat them differently: while bridge rules influence the semantics of MCSs, being part of the notion of equilibrium, integrity constraints are meant to be checked at the level of equilibria.

Example 4. Continuing the example from the previous section, we can write an integrity constraint over M stating that the relation R (in context C_1) is transitive.

$$\leftarrow (2 : \mathsf{Rt}(x, y)), \mathsf{not}\ (1 : \mathsf{R}(x, y)) \tag{3}$$

The restriction on variables again amounts to the usual Logic Programming requirement that bridge rules be safe. To capture general tuple-generating dependencies we could relax this constraint slightly, and allow $P_{m+1}, \ldots, P_\ell$ to introduce new variables, with the restriction that they can be used only once in the whole rule. This generalization poses no significant changes to the theory, but makes the presentation heavier, and we will therefore assume safety.

Definition 6. *Let $M = \langle C_1, \ldots, C_n \rangle$ be an MCS and $S = \langle S_1, \ldots, S_n \rangle$ be a belief state for M. Then S satisfies the integrity constraint* Eq. (2) *if, for every instantiation θ of the variables in $P_1, \ldots, P_m$, either $P_k\theta \notin S_k$ for some $1 \leq k \leq m$ or $P_k\theta \in S_k$ for some $m < k \leq \ell$.*

In other words: equilibria must satisfy all bridge rules (if their body holds, then so must their heads), but they may or may not satisfy all integrity constraints. In this sense, integrity constraints express preferences among equilibria.

Example 5. The equilibrium S from Example 3 does not satisfy the integrity constraint (3), thus M does not strongly satisfy this formula. However, M weakly satisfies (3), as seen by the equilibrium $S'' = \langle S'_1, S'_2 \rangle$ where S'_2 is as above and $S'_1 = \{\mathsf{R}(\mathsf{a}, \mathsf{b}), \mathsf{R}(\mathsf{b}, \mathsf{c}), \mathsf{R}(\mathsf{a}, \mathsf{c})\}$.

Definition 7. *Let M be an MCS and η be a set of integrity constraints.*

1. *M* strongly satisfies *η, $M \models_s \eta$, if: (i) M is logically consistent and (ii) every equilibrium of M satisfies all integrity constraints in η.*
2. *M* weakly satisfies *η, $M \models_w \eta$, if there is an equilibrium of M that satisfies all integrity constraints in η.*

We say that M is (strongly/weakly) *consistent* w.r.t. a set of integrity constraints η if M (strongly/weakly) satisfies η. These two notions express different interpretations of integrity constraints. Strong satisfaction views them as necessary requirements, imposing that all models of the MCS to satisfy them. Examples of these are the usual integrity constraints over databases, which express semantic connections between relations that must always hold. Weak satisfaction views integrity constraints as expressing preferences: the MCS may have several equilibria, and we see those that do satisfy the integrity constraints as "better".

The distinction is also related to the use of brave (credulous) or cautious (skeptical) reasoning. If M strongly satisfies a set of integrity constraints η, then any inferences we draw from M using brave reasoning are guaranteed to hold in some equilibrium that also satisfies η. If, however, M only weakly satisfies η, then this no longer holds, and we can only use cautious reasoning if we want to be certain that any inferences are still compatible with η.

Both strong and weak satisfaction require M to be logically consistent, so $M \models_s \eta$ implies $M \models_w \eta$. This implies that deciding whether $M \models_s \eta$ and $M \models_w \eta$ are both at least as hard as deciding whether M has an equilibrium – thus undecidable in the general case.[1] When logical consistency of M is decidable and its set of equilibria is enumerable, weak satisfaction is semi-decidable (if there is an equilibrium that satisfies η, we eventually encounter it), while strong satisfaction is co-semi-decidable (if there is an equilibrium that does not satisfy η, we eventually encounter it). The converse also holds.

Theorem 1. *Weak satisfaction of integrity constraints is reducible to logical consistency.*

Proof. To decide whether $M \models_w \eta$, construct M' by extending M with a context C_0 where $\mathsf{KB}_0 = \wp(\{*\})$, $\mathsf{kb}_0 = \emptyset$, $\mathsf{ACC}_0(\emptyset) = \{\emptyset\}$, $\mathsf{ACC}_0(\{*\}) = \emptyset$, and the bridge rules obtained by adding $(0 : *)$ to the head of the rules in η. Then M' has an equilibrium iff $M \models_w \eta$: any equilibrium of M not satisfying η corresponds to a belief state of M' where $\mathsf{app}_0(S) = \{*\}$, which is never an equilibrium of M'; but equilibria of M satisfying η give rise to equilibria of M' taking $S_0 = \emptyset$. □

Theorem 2. *Strong satisfaction of integrity constraints is reducible to logical inconsistency.*

Proof. Construct M' as before, but now defining $\mathsf{ACC}_0(\emptyset) = \emptyset$, $\mathsf{ACC}_0(\{*\}) = \{\{*\}\}$. If M is inconsistent, then $M \not\models_s \eta$. If M is consistent, then any equilibrium of M satisfying η corresponds to a belief state of M' where $\mathsf{app}_0(S) = \emptyset$, which can never be an equilibrium of M'; in turn, equilibria of M not satisfying η give rise to equilibria of M' taking $S_0 = \{*\}$. So if M is consistent, then $M \models_s \eta$ iff M' is inconsistent. □

Combining the two above results with the well-known complexity results for consistency checking (Table 1 in [17]), we directly obtain the following results.

[1] If consistency of one of M's contexts is undecidable, then clearly the question of whether M has an equilibrium is also undecidable.

Table 1. Complexity of integrity checking of an MCS in terms of its context complexity.

$\mathcal{CC}(M)$	P	NP	Σ_i^p	PSPACE	EXPTIME
$M \models_w \eta$	NP	NP	Σ_i^p	PSPACE	EXPTIME
$M \models_s \eta$	Δ_2^p	Δ_2^p	Δ_{i+1}^p	PSPACE	EXPTIME

Corollary 1. *The complexity of deciding whether $M \models_w \eta$ or $M \models_s \eta$, depending on the context complexity of M, $\mathcal{CC}(M)$, is given in* Table 1.

These results suggest an alternative way of modelling integrity constraints in MCSs: adding them as bridge rules whose head is a special atom interpreted as inconsistency. This approach was taken in e.g. [16]. However, we believe that integrity constraints should be kept separate from the data, and having them as a separate layer achieves this purpose. In this way, we do not restrict the models of MCSs, and we avoid issues of logical inconsistency. Furthermore, violation of integrity constraints typically is indicative of some error in the model or in the data, which should result in an alert and not in additional inferences.

These considerations are similar to those made in Sect. 2.7 of [26] and in [19], in the (more restricted) context of integrity constraints over description logic knowledge bases. Likewise, the approach taken for integrity constraints in databases is that inconsistencies should be brought to the users' attention, but not affect the semantics of the database [1,18]. In particular, it may be meaningful to work with reasoning systems not satisfying integrity constraints (see [30] for databases and [28] for description logic knowledge bases). Our approach is also in line with [7], where it is argued that in MCSs it is important to "distinguish data from additional operations on it".

4 Applications of ICs for MCSs

In this section we look at particular cases of MCSs with integrity constraints. We begin by showing that our notion generalizes the usual one for standard databases. Then we look into other types of databases and show how we obtain interesting notions for these systems.

4.1 Relational Databases

Integrity constraints in relational databases can be written as first-order formulas in denial clausal form [21] – which are essentially equivalent in form to bridge rules with no head.

Definition 8. *Let DB be a database. The context generated by DB, $\mathsf{Ctx}(DB)$, is defined as follows.*

- *The underlying logic is first-order logic.*
- *Belief sets are sets of ground literals.*

- *The knowledge base is DB.*
- *For all* kb*, the only belief set compatible with* kb *is* $\mathsf{ACC}(\mathsf{kb}) = \mathsf{kb}^{\vdash} = \mathsf{kb} \cup \{\neg a \mid a \notin \mathsf{kb}\}$.
- *The set of bridge rules is empty.*

We can see any database DB as a single-context MCS consisting of exactly the context $\mathsf{Ctx}(DB)$; we will also denote this MCS by $\mathsf{Ctx}(DB)$, as this poses no ambiguity. The only equilibrium for $\mathsf{Ctx}(DB)$ is $DB^{\vdash}$ itself, corresponding to the usual closed-world semantics of relational databases. Previous work (cf. [7,17]) implicitly treats databases in this way, although Ctx is not formally defined.

Let DB be a database and r be an integrity constraint over DB in denial clausal form. We can rewrite r as an integrity constraint over $\mathsf{Ctx}(DB)$: if r is $\forall(A_1 \wedge \ldots \wedge A_k \wedge \neg B_1 \wedge \ldots \wedge \neg B_m \rightarrow \bot)$, then $\mathsf{br}(r)$ is

$$\leftarrow (1 : A_1), \ldots, (1 : A_k), \mathsf{not}\ (1 : B_1), \ldots, \mathsf{not}\ (1 : B_m)\,.$$

Note that general tuple-generating dependencies require allowing singleton variables in the B_is, as discussed earlier. The following result is straightforward to prove. If we assume first-order logic with equality, we can also write equality-generating constraints, thus obtaining the expressivity used in databases.

Theorem 3. *Let DB be a database and* η *be a set of ICs over DB. Then DB satisfies all ICs in* η *iff* $\mathsf{Ctx}(DB) \models_s \mathsf{br}(\eta)$ *iff* $\mathsf{Ctx}(DB) \models_w \mathsf{br}(\eta)$*, where* br *is extended to sets in the standard way.*

In this setting, weak and strong satisfaction of integrity constraints coincide, as every database has exactly one equilibrium. Furthermore, deciding whether $\mathsf{Ctx}(DB) \models \mathsf{br}(\eta)$ can be done in time $O(|DB| \times |\eta|)$, where $|DB|$ is the number of elements in DB and $|\eta|$ is the total number of literals in all integrity constraints in η. This means that the data complexity [34] of this problem is linear, as we can query the database using the open bridge rules in η, rather than considering the set of all ground instances of those rules.

Theorem 3 could be obtained by adding integrity constraints as bridge rules with a special inconsistency atom, as discussed earlier, and done in [16]). This would significantly blur the picture, though, as in principle nothing would prevent us from writing integrity constraints referencing the inconsistency atom in their body, potentially leading to circular reasoning. Our approach guarantees that there is no such internalization of inconsistencies into the database.

Our results show that the notion of integrity constraint we propose directly generalizes the traditional notion of integrity constraints over databases [1].

4.2 Distributed DBs

Distributed databases are databases that store their information at different sites in a network, typically including information that is duplicated at different nodes [33] in order to promote resilience of the whole system.

A distributed database consisting of individual databases $DB_1, \ldots, DB_n$ can be modeled as an MCS with n contexts $\mathsf{Ctx}(DB_1), \ldots, \mathsf{Ctx}(DB_n)$. The internal consistency of the database, in the sense that tables that occur in different DB_is must have the same rows, can be specified as integrity constraints over this MCS as follows. For each relation p, let $\gamma(p)$ be the number of columns of p and $\delta(p)$ be the set of indices of the databases containing p. Then

$$\{\leftarrow (i : p(x_1, \ldots, x_{\gamma(p)})), \mathsf{not}\ (j : p(x_1, \ldots, x_{\gamma(p)})) \mid i, j \in \delta(p), p \text{ is a relation}\}$$

logically specifies the integrity of the system. Different strategies for fixing inconsistencies in distributed databases (e.g. majority vote or siding with the most recently updated node) correspond to different preferences for choosing repairs in the sense of the next section.

Again, such integrity constraints can be written as bridge rules in the form

$$(j : p(x_1, \ldots, x_{\gamma(p)})) \leftarrow (i : p(x_1, \ldots, x_{\gamma(p)}))\,.$$

but these significantly change the semantics of the database: instead of describing preferred equilibria, they impose a flow of information between nodes.

Example 6. Consider a country with a central person register (CPR), mapping a unique identifying number to the name and current address of each citizen using a relation person, e.g. $\mathsf{person}(1111111118, \mathit{old\_lady}, \mathit{gjern})$. Furthermore, each electoral district keeps a local voter register using a relation voter, e.g. $\mathsf{voter}(1111111118)$, and a list of addresses local to the given electoral district using a relation $\mathsf{address}$, e.g. $\mathsf{address}(\mathit{gjern})$. Then the integrity constraints

$$\leftarrow \mathsf{Skborg} : \mathsf{voter}(\mathit{Id}), \mathsf{not}\ (\mathsf{CPR} : \mathsf{person}(\mathit{Id})) \tag{4}$$

$$\leftarrow \mathsf{Skborg} : \mathsf{voter}(\mathit{Id}), \mathsf{CPR} : \mathsf{person}(\mathit{Id}, \mathit{Add}), \mathsf{not}\ (\mathsf{Skborg} : \mathsf{address}(\mathit{Add})) \tag{5}$$

ensure that all voters registered in the Silkeborg electoral district are registered in the central person register, and that they are registered with an address that is local to the Silkeborg electoral district. Here, we are implicitly assuming that the database is closed under projection, and overload the person relation for the sake of simplicity. In addition, the following set of integrity constaints models the fact that each person registered in the Silkeborg electoral district is not registered in any other electoral districts from the set ED.

$$\{\leftarrow \mathsf{Skborg} : \mathsf{voter}(\mathit{Id}), C_i : \mathsf{voter}(\mathit{Id}) \mid C_i \in \mathit{ED} \setminus \{\mathsf{Skborg}\}\}$$

This assumption of closure under projection is meaningful from a practical point of view, and has been implemented e.g. in [12]. Alternatively, we could define the projections as bridge rules of the MCSs, in line with the idea of encoding views of deductive databases presented in the next section.

This section's treatment of distributed databases is equivalent to considering their disjoint union as a database. Consequently, there is no need to use MCSs for distributed databases, but this mapping shows that our notion of integrity constraints abstracts the practice in this field. Furthermore, results in previous work [11] indicate that the processing of integrity constraints can be efficiently parallelized in this disjoint scenario, given suitable assumptions.

4.3 Deductive DBs

We now address the case of deductive databases. These consist of two different components: the (extensional) fact database, containing only concrete instances of relations, and the (intensional) rule database, containing Datalog-style rules defining new relations. Every relation must be either intensional or extensional, unlike in e.g. full-fledged logic programming.

One standard way to see the intensional component(s) of deductive databases is as *views* of the original database. The instances of the new relations defined by rules are generated automatically from the data in the database, and these relations can thus be seen as content-free, having a purely presentational nature. For simplicity of presentation, we consider the case where there is one single view.

Definition 9. *Let Σ_E and Σ_I be two disjoint first-order signatures. A* deductive database *over Σ_E and Σ_I is a pair $\langle DB, R\rangle$, where DB is a relational database over Σ_E and R is a set of rules of the form $p \leftarrow q_1, \ldots, q_n$, where p is an atom of Σ_I and $q_1, \ldots, q_n$ are atoms over $\Sigma_E \cup \Sigma_I$.*

More precisely, this definition corresponds to the definite deductive databases in [22]; we do not consider the case of indefinite databases in this work. We can view deductive databases as MCSs.

Definition 10. *Let $\langle DB, R\rangle$ be a deductive database over Σ_E and Σ_I. The MCS induced by $\langle DB, R\rangle$ is $M = \langle C_E, C_I\rangle$, where $C_E = \mathsf{Ctx}(DB)$ defined as above and $C_I = \mathsf{Ctx}(R)$ is a similar context where:*

- *The knowledge base is $\emptyset$.*
- *For each rule $p \leftarrow q_1, \ldots, q_n$ in R there is a bridge rule $(I : p) \leftarrow (i_1 : q_1), \ldots, (i_n : q_n)$ in $\mathsf{Ctx}(R)$, where $i_k = E$ if q_k is an atom over Σ_E and $i_k = I$ otherwise.*

Integrity constraints over such MCSs correspond precisely to the definition of integrity constraints over deductive databases from [4]. By combining this with the adequate notion of repair, we capture the typical constraints of deductive databases – that consistency can only be regained by changing extensional predicates – in line with the traditional view-update problem. More modern works [8] restrict the syntax of integrity constraints, allowing them to use only extensional relations; in the induced MCS, this translates to the additional requirement that only relational elements from C_E appear in the body of integrity constraints.

Example 7. Consider a deductive database for class diagrams, where information about direct subclasses is stored in the extensional database using a relation isa, e.g. $\mathsf{isa}(\mathit{list}, \mathit{collection})$ and $\mathsf{isa}(\mathit{array}, \mathit{list})$. Intensionally, we model the transitive closure of the subclass relation using a view created by the two rules $\mathsf{sub}(A, B) \leftarrow \mathsf{isa}(A, B)$ and $\mathsf{sub}(A, C) \leftarrow \mathsf{isa}(A, B), \mathsf{sub}(B, C)$, thus allowing us to find out that in our example $\mathsf{sub}(\mathit{array}, \mathit{collection})$. The integrity constraint

$$\leftarrow \mathsf{sub}(A, A)$$

can then be used to state the acyclicity of the subclass relation. Integrity constraints restricted to the extensional database could not express this, as there would be no way to define a fixpoint. The only (incomplete) solution would be to add n integrity constraints disallowing cycles of length up to n. This example illustrates our gain of expressive power compared to the approach in [8].

We can also consider databases with several, different views, each view generating a different context. Integrity constraints over the resulting MCS can then specify relationships between relations in different views.

Yet again, the complexity of verifying whether an MCS induced by a deductive database satisfies its integrity constraints is lower than the general case. In particular, consistency checking is reducible to query answering (all integrity constraints are satisfied iff there are no answers to the queries expressed in their bodies). If we do not allow negation in the definition of the intensional relations, then there is only one model of the database as before, and consistency checking w.r.t. a fixed set of integrity constraints is PTIME-complete [29]. In the general case, weak and strong consistency correspond, respectively, to brave and cautious reasoning for Datalog programs under answer set semantics, which are known to be co-NP-complete and NP-complete, respectively.

4.4 Peer-to-Peer Systems

Peer-to-peer (P2P) networks are distributed systems where each node (the peer) has an identical status in the hierarchy, i.e., there is no centralized control. Queries can be posed to each peer, and peers communicate amongst themselves in order to produce the desired answer. For a general overview see e.g. [27].

A particularly interesting application are P2P systems, which integrate features of both distributed and deductive databases. We follow [9], which also addresses the issue of integrity constraints. In this framework, P2P systems consist of several nodes (the peers), each of them a deductive database of its own, connected via *mapping rules* that port relations from one peer to another.

Definition 11. *A peer-to-peer system $\mathcal{P}$ is a set of peers $\mathcal{P} = \{P_i\}_{i=1}^n$. Each peer is a tuple $\langle \Sigma^i, DB_i, R_i, M_i, IC_i \rangle$, where:*

- *Σ^i is the disjoint union of three signatures Σ_E^i, Σ_I^i and Σ_M^i;*
- *$\langle DB_i, R_i \rangle$ is a deductive database over signatures Σ_E^i and Σ_I^i, where the rules in R_i may also use relations from Σ_M^i;*
- *M_i is a set of mapping rules of the form $p \leftarrow_j q_1, \ldots, q_m$ with $j \neq i$, where p is an atom over a signature Σ_M^i and each q_k is an atom over Σ^j;*
- *IC_i is a set of integrity constraints over Σ^i.*

Intuitively, relations can be defined either extensionally (those in Σ_E), intensionally (those in Σ_I) or as mappings from another peer (those in Σ_M), and these definitions may not be mixed. Observe that, with these definitions, negations may only occur in the bodies of the integrity constraints.

We can view a P2P system as a MCS with integrity constraints. To simplify the construction, we adapt the definition from the case of deductive databases slightly, so that there is a one-to-one correspondence between peers and contexts.

Definition 12. *Let $\mathcal{P} = \{P_i\}_{i=1}^n$ be a P2P system. The MCS induced by $\mathcal{P}$ is defined as follows.*

- *There are n contexts, where C_i is constructed as $\mathsf{Ctx}(DB_i)$ together with the following set of bridge rules:*
  - $(i:p) \leftarrow (i:q_1), \ldots, (i:q_m)$ *for each rule* $p \leftarrow q_1, \ldots, q_m \in R_i$*;*
  - $(i:p) \leftarrow (j:q_1), \ldots, (j:q_m)$ *for each rule* $p \leftarrow_j q_1, \ldots, q_m \in M_i$*.*
- *Each integrity constraint $\leftarrow q_1, \ldots, q_m$ in IC_i is translated to the integrity constraint $\leftarrow (i:q_1), \ldots, (i:q_m)$, where we take $(i:\neg q)$ to mean* $\mathsf{not}\ (i:q)$*.*

The definition of the bridge rules from R_i is identical to what one would obtain by constructing the context $\mathsf{Ctx}(R_i)$ described in the previous section.

This interpretation does not preserve the semantics for P2P systems given in [9,10]. Therein, mapping rules can only be applied if they do not generate violations of the integrity constraints. This is directly related to the real-life implementation of these systems, where this option represents a "cheap" strategy to ensure local enforcement of integrity constraints; as discussed in [35], the underlying philosophy of P2P systems and MCSs is significantly different.

We now show that, while the semantics differ, there is a correspondence between P2P systems and their representation as an MCS, and the "ideal" models of both coincide. When no such models exist, the MCS formulation can be helpful in identifying the problematic mapping rules.

The semantics of P2P systems implicitly sees them as logic programs.

Definition 13. *Let $\mathcal{P} = \{P_i\}_{i=1}^n$ be a P2P system and I be a Herbrand interpretation over $\bigcup \Sigma^i$. The program $\mathcal{P}^I$ is obtained from $\mathcal{P}$ by (i) grounding all rules and (ii) removing the mapping rules whose head is not in I.*

Let $\mathcal{MM}(P)$ denote the minimal model of a logic program. A weak model *for $\mathcal{P}$ is an interpretation I such that $I = \mathcal{MM}(\mathcal{P}^I)$.*

Since integrity constraints are rules with empty head, this definition implicitly requires weak models to satisfy them. Interpretations over a P2P system and equilibria over the induced MCS are trivially in bijection, as the latter simply assign each atom to the right context, and we implicitly identify them hereafter. We can relate the "perfect" models in both systems.

Theorem 4. *Let $\mathcal{P}$ be a P2P system, I an interpretation for $\mathcal{P}$, and M the induced MCS. Then $I = \mathcal{MM}(\mathcal{P}) = \mathcal{MM}(\mathcal{P}^I)$ iff I is an equilibrium for M satisfying all the integrity constraints.*

Proof. Since $\mathcal{P}$ corresponds to a positive program, the only equilibrium of M is $\mathcal{MM}(\mathcal{P})$ (see [14]). Furthermore, for any I, $\mathcal{MM}(\mathcal{P}^I)$ includes the facts in all extensional databases and satisfies all rules in R_i and all integrity constraints. Thus, it also corresponds to a belief state satisfying their counterparts in M.

Suppose that $\mathcal{MM}(\mathcal{P}) = \mathcal{MM}(\mathcal{P}^I)$. Since mapping rules are the only ones that can add information about relations in Σ_M^i to I, the second equality implies that no mapping rules are removed in $\mathcal{P}^I$. Therefore $I = \mathcal{MM}(\mathcal{P})$ satisfies all bridge rules of M obtained from the mapping rules in $\mathcal{P}$, whence I is an equilibrium of M satisfying all integrity constraints.

Conversely, if I is an equilibrium of M and r is a mapping rule, then either I does not satisfy the body of r or I contains its head. Since no other rules can infer instances of relations in Σ_M^i, this implies that $\mathcal{MM}(\mathcal{P}) = \mathcal{MM}(\mathcal{P}^I)$, and being an equilibrium implies that $I = \mathcal{MM}(\mathcal{P})$. □

The MCS representation has an interesting connection with the notion of weak model in general, though: if there are integrity constraints in M that are not satisfied by $\mathcal{MM}(\mathcal{P})$, then repairing M by removing mapping rules is equivalent to finding a weak model for $\mathcal{P}$. This is again reminescent of the view-update problem.

The MCS representation allows us to write seemingly more powerful integrity constraints over a P2P system, as we can use literals from different contexts in the same rule. However, this does not give us more expressive power: for example, the integrity constraint $\leftarrow (1 : a), (2 : b)$ can be written as $\leftarrow (1 : a), (1 : b_2)$ adding the mapping rule $(1 : b_2) \leftarrow (2 : b)$, where b_2 is a fresh relation in peer 1.

4.5 Description Logic Knowledge Bases

We now discuss the connection between our work and results on adding integrity constraints to description logic knowledge bases, namely OWL ontologies.

Description logics differ from databases in their rejection of the closed-world assumption, thereby contradicting the semantics of negation-by-failure. For this reason, encoding ontologies as a context in an MCS is a bit different than the previous examples. We follow the approach from [13], refering the reader to the discussion therein of why the embeddding from e.g. [5] is not satisfactory.

Definition 14. *A description logic $\mathcal{L}$ is represented as the relational logic $L_{\mathcal{L}} = \langle \mathsf{KB}_{\mathcal{L}}, \mathsf{BS}_{\mathcal{L}}, \mathsf{ACC}_{\mathcal{L}}, \Sigma_{\mathcal{L}} \rangle$ defined as follows:*

- $\mathsf{KB}_{\mathcal{L}}$ *contains all well-formed knowledge bases (including a T-Box and an A-Box) of $\mathcal{L}$;*
- $\mathsf{BS}_{\mathcal{L}}$ *is the set of all possible A-Boxes in the language of $\mathcal{L}$;*
- $\mathsf{ACC}_{\mathcal{L}}(\mathsf{kb})$ *is the singleton set containing the set of* kb*'s known consequences (positive and negative);*
- $\Sigma_{\mathcal{L}}$ *is the signature underlying $\mathcal{L}$.*

Regarding the choice of acceptable belief sets (the elements of $\mathsf{BS}_{\mathcal{L}}$), the possible A-Boxes correspond to (partial) models of $\mathcal{L}$, seen as a first-order theory: they contain concepts and roles applied to particular known individuals, or negations thereof. However, they need not be categorical: they may contain neither $C(a)$ nor $\neg C(a)$ for particular C and a. This reflects the typical open-world semantics of ontologies. In particular, the only element of $\mathsf{ACC}_{\mathcal{L}}(\mathsf{kb})$ may not be a model

of kb in the classical sense of first-order logic. This is in contrast with [5], where $\mathsf{ACC}_{\mathcal{L}}(\mathsf{kb})$ contains all models of kb; as discussed in [13], this is essential to model e.g. default reasoning correctly.

Definition 15. *An ontology $\mathcal{O}$ based on description logic $\mathcal{L}$ induces a context with underlying logic $L_{\mathcal{L}}$, knowledge base $\mathcal{O}$, and an empty set of bridge rules.*

Like in the database scenario, ontologies viewed as MCSs always have one equilibrium, as long as they are logically consistent. Therefore, the notions of weak and strong satisfaction of integrity constraints again coincide, and we get the same notion of consistency w.r.t. a set of integrity constraints as that defined in [26]; however, our syntax is more restricted, as we do not allow general formulas as integrity constraints. Observe that, as in that work, our integrity constraints only apply to named individuals (explicitly mentioned in the ontology's A-Box), which is a desirable consequence that yet again can only be gained from keeping integrity constraints separate from the knowledge base.

Example 8. We illustrate the construction in this section with a classical example. We assume that we have an ontology O including a concept person and a role hasCPR, which associates individuals with their CPR number. (So we are essentially resetting Example 6 to use an ontology, rather than a distributed database.) We can add the integrity constraint

$$\leftarrow (O : \mathsf{person}(x)), \mathsf{not}\ (O : \mathsf{hasCPR}(x, y))$$

requiring each person to have a CPR number. Due to the semantics of ontologies, this actually requires each person's CPR number to be explicitly present in the ontology: the presence of an axiom such as $\mathsf{person} \sqsubseteq (\exists \mathsf{person.hasCPR})$ does not yield any instance $\mathsf{hasCPR}(x, y)$ in the set of the ontology's known consequences. This also justifies our definition of $\mathsf{ACC}_{\mathcal{L}}$: if we take the model-based approach of [5], then this integrity constraint no longer demands the actual presence of such a fact in the A-Box.

This integrity constraint is an example of one that does not satisfy the safety condition (the variable y occurs only in a negated literal), but as discussed in Sect. 3 our theory is easily extended to cover this case, as y only occurs once in the formula.

Our scenario is also expressive enough to model the distributed ontology scenario of [19], which defines integrity constraints as logic programming-style rules with empty head whose body can include atoms from different ontologies: we can simply consider the MCS obtained from viewing each ontology as a separate context, and the integrity constraints as ranging over the joint system.

5 Repairs and Managed Multi-context Systems

The definitions in the previous section allow us to distinguish between acceptable and non-acceptable equilibria w.r.t. a set of integrity constraints, but they do

not help with the analog of the problem of database repair [1] – namely, given an inconsistent equilibrium for a given MCS, how do we change it into a consistent one. In order to address this issue, we turn our attention to *managed* multi-context systems (mMCS) [7].

Definition 16. *A* managed multi-context system *is a collection of managed contexts* $\{C_i\}_{i\in\mathcal{J}}$*, with each* $C_i = \langle L_i, \mathsf{kb}_i, \mathsf{br}_i, D_i, OP_i, \mathsf{mng}_i\rangle$ *as follows.*

- L_i *is a relational logic,* kb_i *is a knowledge base, and* D_i *is a set of import domains, as in standard MCSs.*
- OP_i *is a set of operation names.*
- br_i *is a set of managed bridge rules, with the form of* Eq. (1)*, but where* s *is of the form* $o(p)$ *with* $o \in OP_i$ *and* $p \in \bigcup \mathsf{KB}_i$*.*
- $\mathsf{mng}_i : \wp(OP_i \times \bigcup \mathsf{KB}_i) \times \mathsf{KB}_i \to \mathsf{KB}_i$ *is a* management function*.*

The intuition is as follows: the heads of bridge rules can now contain arbitrary actions (identified by the labels in OP_i), and the management function specifies the semantics of these labels – see [7] for a more detailed discussion. Our definition is simplified from those authors', as they allow the management function to change the semantics of the contexts and return several possible effects for each action. This simplification results in a less flexible concept of mMCS, which is however more useful for the purposes of defining repairs.

Example 9. The management function can perform several manipulations of the knowledge base in one update action. For example, considering the setting of Example 6, we could include an operation $\mathsf{replace} \in OP_{\mathsf{CPR}}$ such that $\mathsf{mng}(\{\langle \mathsf{replace}, \mathsf{person}(Id, Name, Add)\rangle\}, \mathsf{kb})$ inserts the tuple $(Id, Name, Add)$ into the person table and removes any other tuple $(Id, Name', Add')$ from that table.

Every MCS (in the sense of the previous section) can be seen as an mMCS by taking every context to have exactly one operation add with the natural semantics of adding its argument (the head of the rule) to the belief set associated with the context in question. We will therefore discuss integrity constraints over mMCS in the remainder of this section. The motivation of generalizing database tradition also suggests that we include another operation remove that removes an element from the specified context.

Definition 17. *Let* $M = \{C_i\}_{i\in\mathcal{I}}$ *be an mMCS. An* update action *for* M *is of the form* $(i : o(p))$*, with* $i \in \mathcal{J}$*,* $o \in OP_i$ *and* $p \in \bigcup \mathsf{KB}_i$*.*

Given a set of update actions $\mathcal{U}$ *and an mMCS* M*, the result of applying* $\mathcal{U}$ *to* M*, denoted* $\mathcal{U}(M)$*, is computed by replacing each* kb_i *(in context* C_i*) by* $\mathsf{mng}_i(\mathcal{U}_i, \mathsf{kb}_i)$*, where* $\mathcal{U}_i$ *is the set of update actions of the form* $(i : o(p))$*.*

Updates differ from applying (managed) bridge rules, as they actually change one or more knowledge bases in M's contexts *before* any evaluation of bridge rules takes place. This is similar to database updates, which change the database before and independent of the query processing. Based on this notion of update, we can define (weak) repairs as follows.

Definition 18. *Let M be an mMCS, η be a set of ICs over M, and assume that M is inconsistent w.r.t. η. A set of update actions $\mathcal{U}$ is a* weak repair *for M and η if $\mathcal{U}(M)$ is consistent w.r.t. η. If there is no subset $\mathcal{U}'$ of $\mathcal{U}$ that is also a weak repair for M and η, then $\mathcal{U}$ is a* repair.

Example 10. Again in the setting of Example 6, suppose that the CPR database contains the record $\mathsf{person}(1111111118, \mathit{old\_lady}, \mathit{odense})$ and the Silkeborg electoral database contains the records $\mathsf{voter}(1111111118)$ and $\mathsf{address}(\mathit{gjern})$, but not the record $\mathsf{address}(\mathit{odense})$ as Odense is not in Silkeborg. The induced mMCS is inconsistent w.r.t. the integrity constraint Eq. (5), and a possible repair is $\{(\mathsf{CPR} : \mathsf{add}(\mathsf{person}(1111111118, \mathit{old\_lady}, \mathit{gjern})))\}$. The semantics of the management function guarantee that only the new record will persist in the mMCS.

As is the case in databases, it can happen that a set of integrity constraints is inconsistent, in the sense that no MCS can satisfy it. However, this inconsistency can also arise from incompatibility between integrity constraints and bridge rules – consider the very simple case where there is a bridge rule $(B : \mathsf{b}) \leftarrow (A : \mathsf{a})$ and an integrity constraint $\leftarrow (A : \mathsf{a}), \mathsf{not}\ (B : \mathsf{b})$. Since our notion of update does not allow one to change bridge rules, this inconsistency is unsurmountable.

In general, this interaction between integrity constraints and bridge rules makes the problem of finding repairs for inconsistent MCSs more complex than in the database world. However, Theorems 1 and 2 show that the problem of finding a repair for an MCS that is inconsistent w.r.t. a set of integrity constraints can be reduced to finding a set of update actions that will make a logically inconsistent MCS have equilibria. The results on diagnosing and repairing logical inconsistency in multi-context systems [16,17] can therefore be used to tackle this problem. By considering deductive databases as MCSs, we also see the problem of repairing an inconsistent MCS as a generalization of the view-update problem [24,25,32].

Another issue is how to choose between different repairs: as in the database case, some repairs are preferable to others. Consider the following toy example.

Example 11. Let M be the MCS induced by a deductive database with one extensional relation p and one intensional relation q, both 0-ary, connected by the rule $\mathsf{q} \leftarrow \mathsf{p}$, and consider the integrity constraint $(I : \mathsf{q})$.

Assume the usual operations add and remove. There are two repairs for M, namely $\{(E : \mathsf{add}(\mathsf{p}))\}$ and $\{(I : \mathsf{add}(\mathsf{q}))\}$, but only the former is valid from the perspective of deductive databases.

The usual consensus in databases is that, in general, deciding which repair to apply is a task that needs human intervention [18]. However, several formalisms also include criteria to help automate such preferences. In our setting, a simple way to restrict the set of possible repairs would be to restrict the update actions to use only a subset of the OP_is – in the case of deductive databases, we could simply restrict them to the operations over C_E. An alternative that offers more fine-tuning capabilities would be to go in the direction of active integrity constraints [21], which require the user to be explicit about which update actions

can be used to repair the integrity constraints that are not satisfied. We plan to pursue the study of such formalisms to discuss repairs of MCSs with integrity constraints in future work. We also intend to study generalizations of repairs to include the possibility of changing bridge rules.

6 Conclusions and Future Work

In this paper, we proposed a notion of integrity constraint for multi-context systems, a general framework for combining reasoning systems. We showed that our notion generalizes the well-studied concept of integrity constraint over databases, and studied its relation to similar notions in other formalisms. Satisfaction of integrity constraints comes in two variants, weak and strong, related to the usual concepts of brave and cautious reasoning.

By showing how to encode integrity constraints within the syntax of MCSs, we obtained decidability and complexity results for the problem of whether a particular MCS weakly or strongly satisfies a set of integrity constraints, and of repairing it in the negative case. We argued however that by keeping integrity constraints as an added layer on top of an MCS we are able to separate intrinsic logical inconsistency from inconsistencies that may arise e.g. from improper changes to an individual context, which we want to detect and fix, rather than propagate to other contexts. Our examples show that we indeed capture the usual behaviour of integrity constraints in several existing formalisms.

We also defined a notion of repair, consistent with the tradition in databases, and identified new research problems related to which repairs should be preferred that arise in the MCS scenario. We intend to pursue this study further by developing a theory of active integrity constraints, in the style of [21].

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