

Efficiency of a good but not linear nominal unification algorithm

Weixi Ma, Jeremy G. Siek, David Thrane Christiansen,
Daniel P. Friedman

June 25, 2018



Nominal Unification [Urban et al., 2004]

$$\lambda a. \lambda b. X \ Y \stackrel{?}{=} \lambda a. \lambda a. a \ Z$$

Unifier:

$$\{X/b, Y/(a \leftrightarrow b) \cdot Z\} \text{ and } \{b \# Z\}$$

Nominal Unification [Urban et al., 2004]

The root of evil:

$$\pi \cdot (\pi' \cdot X) \equiv (\pi @ \pi') \cdot X$$

It's straightforward to check α -equivalence

using de Bruijn numbers [de Bruijn, 1972]

$$\lambda a.\lambda b.a \stackrel{\alpha}{=} \lambda c.\lambda d.c$$

In de Bruijn numbers:

$$\lambda.\lambda.1 \stackrel{\alpha}{=} \lambda.\lambda.1$$

De Bruijn numbers should coexist with names

A *scope* is a list of names.

A *static closure* consists of a **term** and its enclosing scope.

term: $\lambda a. \lambda b. a$

closure: $\langle (b\ a); a \rangle$

Free and Bound

$$\frac{a \notin \Phi}{\Phi \vdash \text{Fr } a} [\text{FREE}]$$

$$\frac{\begin{array}{l} (\text{name} \rightarrow \text{idx } \Phi a) = i \\ (\text{idx} \rightarrow \text{name } \Phi i) = a \end{array}}{\Phi \vdash \text{Bd } a i} [\text{BOUND}]$$



α -equivalence between name-closures

$$\frac{\begin{array}{l} a_1 = a_2 \\ \Phi_1 \vdash \text{Fr } a_1 \\ \Phi_2 \vdash \text{Fr } a_2 \end{array}}{\langle \Phi_1; a_1 \rangle \approx \langle \Phi_2; a_2 \rangle} [\text{SAME-FREE}]$$

$$\frac{\begin{array}{l} i_1 = i_2 \\ \Phi_1 \vdash \text{Bd } a_1 \ i_1 \\ \Phi_2 \vdash \text{Bd } a_2 \ i_2 \end{array}}{\langle \Phi_1; a_1 \rangle \approx \langle \Phi_2; a_2 \rangle} [\text{SAME-BOUND}]$$

Unifying name-closures

$$\lambda a. \lambda b. a \stackrel{?}{=} \lambda c. \lambda d. c$$

$$\sigma \vdash \langle (b\ a); a \rangle \stackrel{\alpha}{=} \langle (d\ c); c \rangle \Rightarrow \sigma$$

Unifying name-closure versus var-closure

$$\lambda a. \lambda b. X \stackrel{?}{=} \lambda c. \lambda d. c$$

$$\sigma \vdash \langle (b\ a); X \rangle \stackrel{\alpha}{=} \langle (d\ c); c \rangle \Rightarrow \{X/a\} \cup \sigma$$

Unifying name-closure versus var-closure

another example

$$\lambda a.\lambda a.X \stackrel{?}{=} \lambda c.\lambda d.c$$

$$\sigma \vdash \langle (a\ a); X \rangle \stackrel{\alpha}{=} \langle (d\ c); c \rangle \Rightarrow \perp$$

Unifying var-closures

$$\lambda a. \lambda b. X \stackrel{?}{=} \lambda c. \lambda d. Y$$

$$\sigma \vdash \langle (b\ a); X \rangle \stackrel{\alpha}{=} \langle (d\ c); Y \rangle \Rightarrow ?$$

σ is not enough.

Unifying var-closures

$$\lambda a. \lambda b. X \stackrel{?}{=} \lambda c. \lambda d. Y$$

$$\sigma; \delta \vdash \langle (b\ a); X \rangle \stackrel{\alpha}{=} \langle (d\ c); Y \rangle \Rightarrow \sigma; \delta'$$

$$\delta' = \{ \langle (b\ a); X \rangle \stackrel{\alpha}{=} \langle (d\ c); Y \rangle \} \cup \delta$$

To sum up:

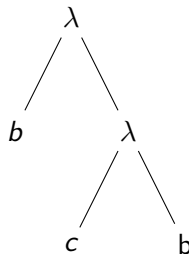
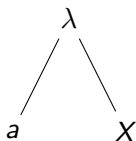
- ▶ De Bruijn numbers get along with names in closures.
- ▶ σ is a substitution.
- ▶ δ contains unsolved pairs of var-closures.
- ▶ We have solved the simple case where unification variables only associate with names.
- ▶ Next, let's look at $X \stackrel{?}{=} \lambda a.Y$ and $X \stackrel{?}{=} YZ$.



To generalize the algorithm:

Need: a shared shape for two arbitrary terms

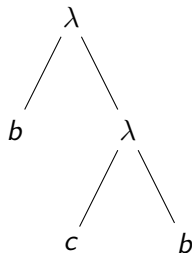
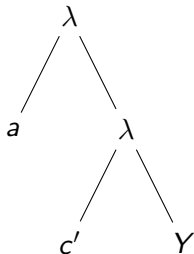
$$\lambda a.X \stackrel{?}{=} \lambda b.\lambda c.b$$



To generalize the algorithm:

Need: a shared shape for two arbitrary terms

$$\lambda a.X \stackrel{?}{=} \lambda b.\lambda c.b$$



$$\text{Also, } \sigma = \{X/\lambda c'.Y\} \cup \sigma$$

Something about Φ

$$\frac{\delta_0; \sigma_0 \vdash \langle a_1, \Phi_1; t_1 \rangle \stackrel{\alpha}{=} \langle a_2, \Phi_2; t_2 \rangle \Rightarrow \delta_1; \sigma_1}{\delta_0; \sigma_0 \vdash \langle \Phi_1; \lambda a_1. t_1 \rangle \stackrel{\alpha}{=} \langle \Phi_2; \lambda a_2. t_2 \rangle \Rightarrow \delta_1; \sigma_1} [\text{ABS}]$$

$$\frac{\begin{array}{l} \delta_0; \sigma_0 \vdash \langle \Phi_1; l_1 \rangle \stackrel{\alpha}{=} \langle \Phi_2; l_2 \rangle \Rightarrow \delta'_0; \sigma'_0 \\ \delta'_0; \sigma'_0 \vdash \langle \Phi_1; r_1 \rangle \stackrel{\alpha}{=} \langle \Phi_2; r_2 \rangle \Rightarrow \delta_1; \sigma_1 \end{array}}{\delta_0; \sigma_0 \vdash \langle \Phi_1; l_1 \ r_1 \rangle \stackrel{\alpha}{=} \langle \Phi_2; l_2 \ r_2 \rangle \Rightarrow \delta_1; \sigma_1} [\text{APP}]$$

Why is it linear?

- ▶ Every term is annotated with a scope, no swappings are needed ($\pi @ \pi'$ is gone).
- ▶ A scope, previously represented by a list, can be replaced with two hashtables.
- ▶ Persistent hashtables [Bagwell, 2001] provide efficient lookup and access, and more importantly, sharing.

Replacing lists with hashtables

$\lambda a.\lambda b.\lambda a....$

indices with list:
 $(a\ b\ a)$

levels with two hashtables:

$a \mapsto 0 \quad 0 \mapsto a$

$b \mapsto 1 \quad 1 \mapsto b$

$a \mapsto 2 \quad 2 \mapsto a$

Nominal unification is linear!

Primary references

- Phil Bagwell. Ideal Hash Trees. *Technical Report EPFL-REPORT-169879, Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne*, November 2001.
- Nicolaas G. de Bruijn. Lambda calculus notation with nameless dummies, a tool for automatic formula manipulation, with application to the Church-Rosser theorem. *Indagationes Mathematicae (Proceedings)*, 75(5):381–392, January 1972.
- Christian Urban, Andrew M. Pitts, and Murdoch J. Gabbay. Nominal unification. *Theoretical Computer Science*, 323(1-3): 473–497, September 2004.

Thank you!

