Background A central component in the process of implicature computation is the generation of the set $\mathcal{ALT}$ of alternatives. In the Neo-Gricean tradition, the make-up of $\mathcal{ALT}(\phi)$ is a matter of lexical semantics: Certain items like *some* are lexically specified to have *scalemates* like {*most, all*}. But attempts have been made to derive $\mathcal{ALT}$ from a general syntactic mechanism s.t. $\psi \in \mathcal{ALT}(\phi)$ *iff* $\psi \lesssim \phi$, i.e., ψ is at most as complex as ϕ. Formally [Katzir07]:

(1) $\psi \lesssim \phi$ iff ψ can be derived from ϕ by successive replacements of subconstituents of ϕ with elements of ϕ's substitution source
The substitution source of ϕ is the union of the lexicon, all subconstituents of ϕ, and contextually given constituents

A simple and general mechanism, it still over-generates: Sentences never exhibit the wealth of implicatures predicted to be possible (not actual!). Thus, $\mathcal{ALT}$(John saw some of the French movies) = {John saw all of the movies, John read most Italian books, John wrote some American series, ...}.[1] Generally speaking, the over-generation of the structural approach can be addressed by a *pruning* mechanism for $\mathcal{ALT}$, s.t. $A \subset \mathcal{ALT}$ is the *active* set of alternatives for a given LF. Contextual relevance is one obvious factor in determining A: $A \subseteq \mathcal{ALT} \cap C$, with C the set of contextually relevant sentences [F&K11]. But how much pruning of $\mathcal{ALT}$ is possible (Q1)? and What are the principles underlying the limits of contextual pruning (Q2)?

State of the Art While little has been said about Q2, [F&K11] address Q1 in relation to the *Symmetry* problem [vF&H99]. They argue that if $\mathcal{ALT}$ contains symmetric alternatives, contextual pruning to a set $A \subset \mathcal{ALT}$ can not remedy this — there's no contextual symmetry breaking:

(2) [Context: John solved the math problem.] Mary solved the math or the chemistry problem
$\lightning \not\Rightarrow$ Mary solved math or chemistry $\wedge \neg$ (Mary solved math) ($\equiv$ Mary solved chemistry)

This empirically unattested inference could be derived on the basis of the set alternative set A:

(3) $\mathcal{ALT}(2)$ = {math or chemistry, math, $\boxed{\text{chemistry}}$, (math and chemistry)[2]}
$A \subset \mathcal{ALT}(2)$ = {math or chemistry, math, (math and chemistry)}

(2) shows that $A \subset \mathcal{ALT}$ is not a possible pruning, or else the implicature marked $\lightning$ would be possible. In apparent contrast, (4) can only be accounted for if symmetric alternatives *can* be pruned after all [T&H15]:[3]

(4) [John went for a run and didn't smoke.] Bill (only) went for a run
$\checkmark \Rightarrow \neg$ (Bill didn't smoke) ($\equiv$ Bill smoked)
$\mathcal{ALT}$= {run, $\neg$smoke, $\boxed{\text{smoke}}$, run $\wedge\neg$smoke}, A = {run, $\neg$ smoke, run $\wedge\neg$smoke}

Here, only pruning of a $\boxed{\text{symmetric alternative}}$ can account for the observed implicature. Importantly, (2) and (4) are covered by [F&K11]'s suggested generalization, i.e., their answer to Q1:

(5) A $\subset \mathcal{ALT}$ is an allowable pruning if the set $\mathcal{ALT} - A$ contains no exhaustively relevant member
p is exhaustively relevant given A if $only_A\ p$ is in the Boolean closure of A

We suggest that this stipulative condition on the pruning mechanism can be done away with once we address the more fundamental Q2.

1 We agree with [F&K11] that F-marking is an important factor in restricting $\mathcal{ALT}$— implicature computation is focus-sensitive. The questions discussed in this talk are however orthogonal to this issue and remain regardless.
2 The conjunctive alternative is bracketed because its presence is inessential to the problem at hand.
3 The set of structural alternatives below is already in keeping with T&H's Atomicity constraint, which we assume is correct but which is orthogonal to the issue at hand.

Proposal We argue that the limits of $\mathcal{ALT}$-pruning fall out of a general theory of economy. [Me14] argues for the following principle in relation to Hurford's constraint:

(6) An LF ϕ is blocked by an LF ψ iff $\psi < \phi$ and $[\![\psi]\!]=[\![\phi]\!]$($\psi < \phi$ iff $\psi \lesssim \phi \wedge \neg(\phi \lesssim \psi)$)

The idea is that strictly simpler competitors, as defined by (1), block a given LF if the meaning is the same. Here is how (6) derives (2), and generally the lack of efficient exhaustification with symmetric alternatives like $\mathcal{ALT}$ ={some, just some, all} in (8) [Ka07]:

(7) LF1 = exh_A [A or B]
$\mathcal{ALT}$= {A or B, A, $\boxed{\text{B}}$, A and B}
A = {A or B, A, (A and B)}
$[\![\text{LF1}]\!]$ = $(A \vee B) \wedge \neg A \wedge \neg(A \wedge B)$ ($\equiv$ $B \wedge \neg A$)
C_{block}(LF1) = {$\boxed{exh\ \text{B}}$, *exh* A, ...}

(8) LF1 = exh_A [some]
$\mathcal{ALT}$= {some, just some, all}
A = {some, just some}
$[\![\text{LF1}]\!]$ = all (!!!)
C_{block}(LF1) = {some, just some, $\boxed{\text{all}}$, ...}

LF2= exh_{A_2} [some], A_2 = {some, all}
$[\![\text{LF2}]\!]$= just some
C_{block}(LF2) = {some, $\boxed{\text{just some}}$, ...}
LF3 = exh_{A_3} [some], A_3 = $\mathcal{ALT}$= {some, just some, all}
$[\![\text{LF3}]\!]$= some
C_{block}(LF3) = {$\boxed{\text{some}}$, ...}

Note that (6) also derives (4), even though pruning targets a symmetric alternative here.[4]

Discussion Theoretical and practical consequences of the proposal will be discussed: • Under certain assumptions about pragmatic strengthening [Ma09], we explain why sequences like *John saw just some of the movies. Mary saw some of the movies* are infelicitous [Ka07], but parallel sequences like (2) are not. This allows for a explanatory account of attested vs. unattested cases of symmetry-pruning. • We will discuss how obligatory ignorance inferences associated with disjunction, superlative modifiers [Nou10], and marked indefinites [K&S02] can fall out of structural competition as defined via (6), and how this pertains to the pragmatics/semantics divide. • The account supports [Ch09]'s argument that # *A or B* in contexts in which $\vDash_C$ A is ruled out by a Manner-, rather than a Quantity-based constraint. We argue that this restricts the validity of experimental designs involving disjunction as critical items [Ch14, Ch&al08, Nov&al02]. • We will spell-out and support the two premises of the account: 1. C_{block} cannot be pruned itself, in contrast to $\mathcal{ALT}$. C_{block} reflects the contextual standard of complexity, determined by (a) the lexicon and (b) previously uttered constituents (e.g., *exh [A or B]*, just some). This standard is *not* subject to (non-monotonic) change: Using *just some* sets the contextual standard of complexity, (i.e. *just some* $\in$ C_{block}). This cannot be undone (s. (8)).

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4 Here is the derivation:

(i) LF1 = exh_A/only$_A$ [Bill went for a run]
$\mathcal{ALT}$= {run, ¬smoke, smoke, run ∧¬smoke}
A = {run, ¬ smoke, run ∧¬smoke}
$[\![\text{LF1}]\!]$= run ∧ ¬(smoke)

C_{block}(LF1) = {run, smoke, ¬smoke[5], ...}

$\boxed{\text{LF1 ✔}}$