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Yngve Villanger

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Department of Informatics

UNIVERSITY OF BERGEN

Bergen, Norway

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Department of Informatics, University of Bergen, Høyteknologisenteret,
P.O. Box 7800, N-5020 Bergen, Norway

Counting and Listing all Potential Maximal Cliques of a Graph

Yngve Villanger*

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Abstract

We show that the number of potential maximal cliques for an arbitrary graph G on n vertices is $\mathcal{O}^*(1.8135^n)$, and that all potential maximal cliques can be listed in $\mathcal{O}^*(1.8899^n)$ time. As a consequence of this results, treewidth and minimum fill-in can be computed in $\mathcal{O}^*(1.8899^n)$ time.

1 Introduction

Recently there has been a growing interest for exact exponential time algorithms for NP-hard problems. There are several reasons for this. One is the need for exact solutions, which approaches like approximation algorithms, randomized algorithms, and heuristics cannot deal with.

A exhaustive search is a trivial way to cope with the problem of finding an exact solution. In the recent yeas it has been showed that it is possible to design algorithms which are significantly faster than exhaustive search, though still not in polynomial time. Nice examples of this type of algorithms are a $\mathcal{O}^*(1.4802^n)$ time algorithm for 3-SAT [9] and Eppstein's algorithm for graph coloring in $\mathcal{O}^*(2.4150^n)$ time [10]. (In this paper we use a modified big-Oh notation that suppresses all other (polynomial bounded) terms. For functions f and g we write $f(n) = \mathcal{O}^*(g(n))$ if $f(n) = \mathcal{O}(g(n) \cdot poly(|n|))$, where $poly(|n|)$ is a polynomial. This modification may be justified by the exponential growth of $f(n)$.) An overview of applied techniques used for exact algorithms can be found in [17].

The *treewidth* of a graph, introduced by Robertson and Seymour [14], has been intensively investigated in the last years, mainly because many NP-hard problems become solvable in polynomial time when restricted to graphs with small treewidth. These algorithms use a *tree-decomposition* (or a triangulation) of small width of the graph. In recent years [8] it has bee shown that the results on graphs of bounded treewidth (branchwidth) are not only of theoretical interest but can successfully be applied to find optimal solutions of lower time bounds for various optimization problems. Finding a small treewidth is useful and important in areas like artificial intelligence, databases, and logical-circuit design. See [1] for further references.

The *minimum fill-in* problem asks to find a triangulation (equivalently a tree-decomposition) with the minimum number of edges. This problem has applications in sparse matrix computations [15], database management [16], and knowledge base systems [13].

Computing the treewidth and minimum fill-in are NP-hard problems [2, 18]. Treewidth is known to be fixed parameter tractable, moreover, for a fixed k, the treewidth of size k can be computed in linear time (with a huge hidden constant) [4]. There exists also an approximation algorithm for treewidth, with a factor $logOPT$ [1, 5], and it is an open question if there exists a constant factor approximation.

*Department of Informatics, University of Bergen, N-5020 Bergen, Norway. yngvev@ii.uib.no

Both treewidth and minimum fill-in can be computed exactly in $\mathcal{O}^*(2^n)$ time by reformulating the problems to finding a special vertex ordering and using the technique proposed by Held and Karp [12] for the traveling salesman problem, or by using the algorithm of Arnborg et al.[2]. In 2004 Fomin, Kratsch, and Todinca [11] improved this bound to $\mathcal{O}^*(1.9601^n)$ by listing all the minimal separators and potential maximal cliques of the graph, and then using these to compute the treewidth and minimum fill-in for the graph. The most expensive operation used in [11] to obtain the $\mathcal{O}^*(1.9601^n)$ time bound is listing the potential maximal cliques. It is actually known from [7] that the number of potential maximal cliques in a graph is bounded by the number of *nice* potential maximal cliques in the graph.

In this paper we find a new theoretical bound ($\mathcal{O}^*(1.8135^n)$) for the number of nice potential maximal cliques in a graph, and thus also a new bound for the number of potential maximal cliques in the graph. This is obtained using a non constructive proof, and cannot be used directly to create a faster algorithm. The second result in this paper is a new way of partitioning the graph, such that any nice potential maximal clique can be represented by a vertex set of size $n/3$ or less, which is less than the $2n/5$ bound used in [11]. This new bound improves the time required to list all the potential maximal cliques to $\mathcal{O}^*(1.8899^n)$, and thus also the bound for computing the treewidth and minimum fill-in.

2 Basic definitions

We consider finite, simple, undirected, and connected graphs. Given a graph $G = (V, E)$, we denote the number of vertices as $n = |V|$ and the number of edges as $m = |E|$. For any non empty subset $W \subseteq V$, the subgraph of G induced by W is denoted by $G[W]$. The *neighborhood* of a vertex $u \in V$ is denoted by $N_G(u) = \{v \text{ for } uv \in E\}$, and $N_G[u] = N_G(u) \cup \{u\}$. In the same way we define the neighborhood of a set $A \subseteq V$ of vertices by $N_G(A) = \cup_{u \in A} N_G(u) \backslash A$, and $N_G[A] = N_G(A) \cup A$. A sequence $v_1 - v_2 - ... - v_k$ of distinct vertices describes a *path* if $v_i v_{i+1}$ is an edge for $1 \leq i < k$. The *length* of a path is the number of edges in the path. A *cycle* is defined as a path except that it starts and ends with the same vertex. If there is an edge between every pair of vertices in a set $A \subseteq V$, then the set A is called a *clique*.

The notation of treewidth is due to Robertson and Seymour [14]. A *tree decomposition* of a graph $G = (V, E)$, denoted by $TD(G)$, is a pair (X, T) such that $T = (V_T, E_T)$ is a tree and $X = \{X_i \mid i \in V_T\}$ is a family of subsets of V such that:

1. $\bigcup_{i \in V_T} X_i = V$;
2. for each edge $uv \in E$ there exists an $i \in V_T$ such that both u and v belong to X_i;
3. for all $v \in V$, the set of nodes $\{i \in V_T \mid v \in X_i\}$ induces a connected subtree of T.

The *width* of the tree decomposition is defined as maximum of $|X_i| - 1$ where $i \in V_T$, and the *treewidth* of the graph G ($tw(G)$) is the minimum width over all tree decompositions of G.

A *chord* of a cycle is an edge connecting two non-consecutive vertices of the cycle. A graph H is *chordal*, or equivalently *triangulated*, if it contains no induced chordless cycle of length ≥ 4. A graph $H = (V, E \cup F)$ is called a *triangulation* of $G = (V, E)$ if H is chordal. The edges in F are called *fill edges*. H is a *minimal triangulation* if $(V, E \cup F')$ is non-chordal for every proper subset F' of F. H is a *minimum triangulation* if there exists no edge set F' such that $|F'| < |F|$ and $(V, E \cup F')$ is chordal. The problem of finding the smallest value of $|F|$, such that $H = (V, E \cup F)$ is chordal is called the *minimum fill-in* problem, denoted $mfi(G)$ for the graph $G = (V, E)$.

A vertex set $S \subset V$ is a *separator* if $G[V \setminus S]$ is disconnected. Given two vertices u and v, S is a u, v-*separator* if u and v belong to different connected components of $G[V \setminus S]$, and S is then said to *separate* u and v. A u, v-separator S is *minimal* if no proper subset of

S separates u and v. In general, S is a *minimal separator* of G if there exist two vertices u and v in G such that S is a minimal u, v-separator. We denote by Δ_G the set of all minimal separators of G. The following two results will be used to list all minimal separators, and give an upper bound for the number of minimal separators.

Theorem 2.1 ([3]) *There is an algorithm listing all minimal separators of an input graph G in $\mathcal{O}(n^3|\Delta_G|)$ time.*

Theorem 2.2 ([11]) *For any graph G, $|\Delta_G| = \mathcal{O}(n \cdot 1.7087^n)$.*

For a set $K \subseteq V$, a connected component C of $G[V \setminus K]$ is a *full component associated* to K if $N(C) = K$. A vertex set $\Omega \subset V$ is called a *potential maximal clique* of G if there is a minimal triangulation H of G, such that Ω is a maximal clique in H. We denote by Π_G the set of all potential maximal cliques of G.

Theorem 2.3 (Bouchitté and Todinca [6]) *Let $K \subseteq V$ be a set of vertices and let $\mathcal{C}(K) = \{C_1, ..., C_p\}$ be the set of connected components of $G[V \setminus K]$. Let $\mathcal{S}(K) = \{S_1, S_2, ..., S_p\}$ where $S_i(K)$ is the set of vertices of K adjacent to at least one vertex of $C_i(K)$. Then K is a potential maximal clique if and only if:*

1. *$G[V \setminus K]$ has no full component associated to K, and*
2. *the graph on the vertex set K obtained from $G[K]$ by turning each $S_i \in \mathcal{S}(K)$ into a clique, is a complete graph.*

The following result is an easy consequence of Theorem 2.3.

Theorem 2.4 (Bouchitté and Todinca [6]) *There is an algorithm that, given a graph $G = (V, E)$ and a set of vertices $K \subseteq V$, verifies if K is a potential maximal clique of G. The time complexity of the algorithm is $\mathcal{O}(nm)$.*

Three different ways of representing a potential maximal clique is given in the next lemma. We will see that potential maximal cliques that can be represented by the two first of these already can be found and listed within a good time bound.

Lemma 2.5 ([11]) *Let Ω be a potential maximal clique of G, S be a minimal separator contained in Ω and C be the component of $G[V \setminus S]$ intersecting Ω. Then one of the following holds:*

1. *there is $a \in \Omega \setminus S$ such that $\Omega = N[a]$;*
2. *there is $a \in S$ such that $\Omega = S \cup (N(a) \cap C)$;*
3. *$\Omega = N(C \setminus \Omega)$.*

The number of potential maximal cliques covered by the first case is clearly bounded by n, since only one such potential maximal clique can exist for each vertex in the graph.

From [11] we have the following statement covering the second case. Let Ω be a potential maximal clique of G. The triple (S, a, b) is called a *separator representation* of Ω if S is a minimal separator of G, $a \in S$, $b \in V \setminus S$, and $\Omega = S \cup (N(a) \cap C_b(S))$, where $C_b(S)$ is the component of $G[V \setminus S]$ containing b. Note that for a given triple (S, a, b) one can check in polynomial time if (S, a, b) is the separator representation of a (unique) potential maximal clique Ω.

The number of unique potential maximal cliques in a graph, that have a separator representation is bounded by $n^2|\Delta_G|$, since there are $\mathcal{O}(n^2)$ triples for each separator. From Theorem 2.2 we have that $|\Delta_G| = \mathcal{O}(n \cdot 1.7087^n)$, thus the number of unique potential maximal cliques with a separator representation is of order $\mathcal{O}(n^3 \cdot 1.7087^n)$.

Let Ω be a potential maximal clique of a graph G, and let $S \subset \Omega$ be a minimal separator of G. We say that S is an *active separator* for Ω, if Ω is not a clique in the graph $G_{\mathcal{S}(\Omega)\setminus\{S\}}$, obtained from G by completing all the minimal separators contained in Ω, except S. If S is active, a pair of vertices $x, y \in S$ non adjacent in $G_{\mathcal{S}(\Omega)\setminus\{S\}}$ is called an *active pair*.

Theorem 2.6 (Bouchitté and Todinca [6]) *Let Ω be a potential maximal clique of G, S be a minimal separator contained in Ω and C be the component of $G[V \setminus S]$ intersecting Ω, and let $x, y \in S$ be an active pair. Then $\Omega \setminus S$ is a minimal x, y-separator in $G[C \cup \{x, y\}]$.*

We say that a potential maximal clique Ω is *nice* if at least one of the minimal separators contained in Ω is active for Ω.

Theorem 2.7 (Bouchitté and Todinca [7]) *Let Ω be a potential maximal clique of G, let u be a vertex of G, and let $G' = G[V \setminus \{u\}]$. Then one of the following holds:*

1. *Ω or $\Omega \setminus \{u\}$ is a potential maximal clique of G'.*
2. *$\Omega = S \cup \{u\}$, where S is a minimal separator of G.*
3. *Ω is nice.*

The following result can be found using Theorem 2.7.

Corollary 2.8 [11] *A graph G on n vertices has at most $n^2|\Delta_G| + n \cdot \Pi_{NG} = n^2 \cdot 1.701^n + n \cdot \Pi_{NG}$ potential maximal cliques, where Π_{NG} is the number of nice potential maximal cliques in the graph.*

Proof. This follows from the Theorems 2.7 and 2.2, and the proof of Theorem 16 of [11]. ■

Finally we can relate the upper bound for listing all potential maximal cliques of G to computing the treewidth $(tw(G))$ and minimum fill-in $(mfi(G))$ of G. Theorem 2.9 is the tool we need to obtain this.

Theorem 2.9 ([11]) *There is an algorithm that, given a graph G together with the list of its minimal separators Δ_G and the list of its potential maximal cliques Π_G, computes the threewidth and the minimum fill-in of G in $\mathcal{O}^*(|\Pi_G|)$ time. The algorithm also constructs optimal triangulations for the threewidth and the minimum fill-in.*

3 Theoretical upper bound for the number of potential maximal cliques

In this section we show that the upper bound for the number of potential maximal cliques in a graph is $\mathcal{O}(n^3 \cdot 1.8135^n)$. This bound is obtained by finding a new upper bound for the number of nice potential maximal cliques. This is done by computing two numbers: the number of potential maximal cliques of size less than αn and the number of potential maximal cliques of size at least αn, for $0 < \alpha < 1$.

Let Ω be a potential maximal clique of G and let x be a vertex in Ω. Let $C_{\Omega x}$ be the connected component of $G[V \setminus (\Omega \setminus \{x\})]$ containing x. Notice that $G[C_{\Omega x}]$ is connected, and that every component C of $G[(V \setminus \Omega)]$ such that $x \in N(C)$ is contained in $C_{\Omega x}$.

Corollary 3.1 *Let Ω be a potential maximal clique of G and let x be a vertex in Ω. Then $\Omega = N(C_{\Omega x}) \cup \{x\}$.*

Proof. This follows directly from Theorem 2.3, which gives a definition of a potential maximal clique. ■

We will say that the pair (Z, z) is a *vertex representation* of Ω if $Z = C_{\Omega z} \setminus \{z\}$, $z \in \Omega$, and $\Omega = N(Z \cup \{z\}) \cup \{z\}$.

Lemma 3.2 *Let Ω be a nice potential maximal clique, α be a constant such that $\alpha n = |\Omega|$. Then there exists a* vertex representation *(U, u) of Ω such that $|U| \leq \lceil (2n(1 - \alpha)/3 \rceil$.*

Proof. Let Ω be a nice potential maximal clique of G, S be a minimal separator active for Ω, $x, y \in S$ be an active pair, and z be a vertex contained in $\Omega \setminus S$.

Let us now prove that there exists a vertex u such that $|C_{\Omega u} \setminus \{u\}| \leq \lceil 2n(1-\alpha)/3 \rceil$. Partition the connected components of $G[V \setminus \Omega]$ into three sets: $A_1 = C_{\Omega x} \cap C_{\Omega y}$, $A_2 = C_{\Omega x} \setminus (C_{\Omega y} \cup \{x\})$, and $A_3 = (V \setminus \Omega) \setminus (A_1 \cup A_2)$.

Notice the following: $|A_1 \cup A_2 \cup A_3| = n(1-\alpha)$ since $A_1 \cup A_2 \cup A_3 = V \setminus \Omega$, A_1, A_2, A_3 is non intersecting, $C_{\Omega x} \setminus \{x\} = A_1 \cup A_2$, $C_{\Omega y} \setminus \{y\} \subseteq A_1 \cup A_3$, and $C_{\Omega z} \setminus \{z\} \subseteq A_2 \cup A_3$. One of the vertex sets A_1, A_2, A_3 will be of size at least $n(1-\alpha)/3$, thus the remaining two are of size at most $\lceil 2n(1-\alpha)/3 \rceil$. Let us without loss of generality assume that $|A_1| \geq n(1-\alpha)/3$, then $|A_2| + |A_3| \leq \lceil 2n(1-\alpha)/3 \rceil$. It follows that $|C_{\Omega z} \setminus \{z\}| \leq \lceil 2n(1-\alpha)/3 \rceil$ since $C_{\Omega z} \setminus \{z\} \subseteq A_2 \cup A_3$, and thus there exists a vertex representation (U, u) of Ω as claimed by the lemma. ∎

Lemma 3.3 *For a constant $0 < \alpha < 1$, and a graph G, the number of nice potential maximal cliques of size at least αn vertices is not more than $n \sum_{i=1}^{\lceil 2n(1-\alpha)/3 \rceil} \binom{n}{i}$.*

Proof. It follows from Lemma 3.2 that every potential maximal clique Ω of size at least αn has a vertex representation (X, x) such that $|X| \leq \lceil 2n(1-\alpha)/3 \rceil$. The idea of the proof is to give a bound for the number of such pairs.

The number of unique vertex sets of size $\lceil 2n(1-\alpha)/3 \rceil$ or less is $\sum_{i=1}^{\lceil 2n(1-\alpha)/3 \rceil} \binom{n}{i}$. For each such vertex set X we create a pair (X, x) for each vertex $x \in V \setminus S$, which give us the multiplication by n. ∎

Lemma 3.4 *For a constant $0 < \alpha < 1$, and a graph G, the number of nice potential maximal cliques of size less than αn vertices is not more than $2^{n(2+\alpha)/3}$.*

Proof. We know from Lemma 3.2 that every potential maximal clique Ω of size less than αn has a vertex representation (U, u) such that $|V \setminus (\Omega \cup U)| \geq n(1-\alpha)/3$.

We say that (x, X) is a *bad pair* associated to Ω if $\Omega = N(C_x) \cup \{x\}$, where C_x is the connected component of $G[X \cup \{x\}]$ containing x.

Let (x, X) be a bad pair associated to Ω_x and let (y, Y) be associated to Ω_y, where $\Omega_x \neq \Omega_y$. We want to prove that $(x, X) \neq (y, Y)$. Suppose that $x = y$ and that $X = Y$. From the definition of bad pair we know that $N(C_x) \cup \{x\} = N(C_y) \cup \{y\}$. Now we have a contradiction since $N(C_x) \cup \{x\} = \Omega_x$, $N(C_y) \cup \{y\} = \Omega_y$, and $\Omega_x \neq \Omega_y$.

Since (U, u) is a vertex representation of Ω, then $U \cup \{u\} = C_{\Omega u}$. Remember that $C_{\Omega u}$ is connected and that $|V \setminus N[C_{\Omega u}]| \geq n(1-\alpha)/3$. Thus we can create $2^{n(1-\alpha)/3}$ unique bad pairs u, X for Ω, by selecting $X = C_{\Omega u} \cup Z$, where Z is any of the $2^{n(1-\alpha)/3}$ subset of $V \setminus N[C_{\Omega u}]$.

It follows that $2^n \geq |\Pi_{NGs\alpha}| \cdot 2^{n(1-\alpha)/3}$, which can be restated as $|\Pi_{NGs\alpha}| \leq 2^{n(2+\alpha)/3}$, where $|\Pi_{NGs\alpha}|$ is the number of nice potential maximal cliques of size less than αn. ∎

Lemma 3.5 *The number of nice potential maximal cliques in a graph G with n vertices is $\mathcal{O}(n^2 \cdot 1.8135^n)$.*

Proof. Let Π_{NG} be the set of nice potential maximal cliques, $\Pi_{NGl\alpha}$ be the set of potential maximal cliques of size at least αn, and $\Pi_{NGs\alpha}$ be the set of potential maximal cliques of size less than αn. Then $|\Pi_{NG}| = |\Pi_{NGl\alpha}| + |\Pi_{NGs\alpha}| \leq n \cdot \sum_{i=1}^{\lceil 2n(1-\alpha)/3 \rceil} \binom{n}{i} + 2^{n(2+\alpha)/3}$. By making use of Stirling's formula and using $\alpha = 0.5763$ we obtain the bound $\mathcal{O}(n^2 \cdot 1.8135^n)$. ∎

Theorem 3.6 *For any graph G, Π_G = $\mathcal{O}(n^3 \cdot 1.8135^n)$.*

Proof. From Corollary 2.8 we have that the number of potential maximal cliques in G is less than $n^2|\Delta_G| + n \cdot \Pi_{NG} = n^3 \cdot 1.701^n + n \cdot \Pi_{NG}$ potential maximal cliques, where Π_{NG} is the number of nice potential maximal cliques in the graph. By inserting the result from Lemma 3.5 we get the new result that $\Pi_G = \mathcal{O}(n^3 \cdot 1.8135^n)$. ∎

4 Listing all the potential maximal cliques

In this section we show that any potential maximal cliqueof a graph with n vertices can be represented with $n/3$ vertices or less, thus it follows that all potential maximal cliquesof the graph can be listed in $\mathcal{O}^*(\binom{n}{n/3})$, or equivalent $\mathcal{O}^*(1.8899^n)$ time.

The idea is to show that every nice potential maximal clique which is not covered by the two first cases of Lemma 2.5 can be represented by a vertex set of size $n/3$ or less. From the results of [11] we know that the number of nice potential maximal cliques covered by the two first cases of Lemma 2.5 is bounded by $n + n^2|\Delta_G|$ and that the potential maximal cliques which is not nice can be generated from the nice potential maximal cliques.

Consider a nice potential maximal clique Ω of $G = (V, E)$. The pair (X, c) is called a *partial representation* of Ω if $c \in X \subset V$ and $\Omega = N(C_c) \cup (X \setminus C_c)$, where C_c is the connected component of $G[X]$ containing c.

The triple (X, x, c) is called an *indirect representation* of Ω if $x, c \notin X \subset V$ and $\Omega = N(C') \cup N(D_x) \cup \{x\})$, where C' is a connected component of $G[V \setminus N[X]]$ containing c, and a connected component C of $G[X]$ is contained in D_x if and only if $x \in N(C)$.

Let us now partition the graph, and show that $n/3$ vertices are sufficient to represent a nice potential maximal clique not covered by Case 1 or 2 of Lemma 2.5. Let Ω be a nice potential maximal clique only covered by Case 3 of Lemma 2.5 for a graph G, let S be active for Ω, and let $x, y \in S$ be an active pair. The vertex set R is given by $\Omega \setminus S$, and D_S be the set of full connected component of S in $G[V \setminus \Omega]$. The vertex set D_x consists of all connected components of $G[V \setminus (\Omega \cup D_S)]$, where x is contained in the neighborhood of the component. Formally a connected component C of $G[V \setminus (\Omega \cup D_S)]$ is contained in D_x if and only if $x \in N(C)$, and the same for D_y, a connected component C of $G[V \setminus (\Omega \cup D_S)]$ is contained in D_y if and only if $y \in N(C)$. The rest of the components are contained in D_r, $D_r = V \setminus (\Omega \cup D_S \cup D_x \cup D_y)$. Notice that D_S, D_x, D_y and D_r do not necessarily induce a connected subgraph of G. In order to find the final partition, we split S in the following sets $S_{\overline{x}}, S_{\overline{y}}, S_{\overline{xy}}, S_{xy}$, and these sets are defined as follows: $S_{\overline{x}} = (S \setminus N(D_x)) \cap N(D_y)$, $S_{\overline{y}} = (S \setminus N(D_y)) \cap N(D_x)$, $S_{\overline{xy}} = (S \setminus N(D_y)) \cap (S \setminus N(D_x))$, and $S_{xy} = (S \cap N(D_y)) \cap (S \cap N(D_x))$. It is important to notice that none of the previous vertex sets intersect. Figure 1 gives a sketch of how these sets relate to each other.

Before proceeding we need to define the vertex sets $Z_{\overline{x}}, Z_{\overline{y}}, Z_{\overline{r}}$, which are subsets of the vertex sets D_x, D_y, and D_r. Let $Z_{\overline{x}}$ be the smallest subset of D_y, such that $S_{\overline{x}} \subseteq N(Z_{\overline{x}})$, equivalently $Z_{\overline{y}}$ is the smallest subset of D_x, such that $S_{\overline{y}} \subseteq N(Z_{\overline{y}})$, and $Z_{\overline{r}}$ is the smallest subset of D_r, such that $S_{\overline{xy}} \subseteq N(Z_{\overline{r}})$. It is clear from the definition of $S_{\overline{x}}$ and $S_{\overline{y}}$ that the vertex sets $Z_{\overline{x}}$ and $Z_{\overline{y}}$ exist. From Lemma 2.5 we have that $\Omega = N(D_x \cup D_y \cup D_r)$, thus it follows that $Z_{\overline{r}}$ also exists. It is important to notice that $|Z_{\overline{x}}| \leq |S_{\overline{x}}|$, $|Z_{\overline{y}}| \leq |S_{\overline{y}}|$, and $|Z_{\overline{r}}| \leq |S_{\overline{xy}}|$, since every vertex in one of the vertex sets $Z_{\overline{x}}, Z_{\overline{y}}$, or $Z_{\overline{r}}$ has a unique neighbor in the corresponding $S_{\overline{x}}, S_{\overline{y}}$, or $S_{\overline{xy}}$ vertex set, and thus the worst case is that every vertex in $Z_{\overline{x}}, Z_{\overline{y}}$, or $Z_{\overline{r}}$ has only one neighbor in the corresponding set $S_{\overline{x}}, S_{\overline{y}}$, or $S_{\overline{xy}}$.

Lemma 4.1 *Every nice potential maximal clique of a graph G with n vertices can be found and listed by testing $n + n^2|\Delta_G| + n^2 \sum_{i=1}^{\lceil n/3 \rceil} \binom{n}{i}$ different vertex sets.*

Proof. From Corollary 2.8 we have that every nice potential maximal clique covered by case one and two of Lemma 2.5 can be found by testing $n + n^2|\Delta_G|$ different vertex sets.

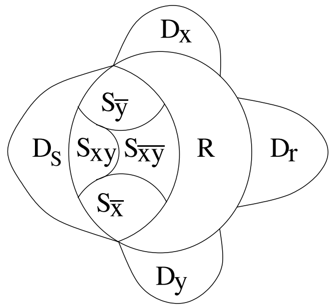

Figure 1: The figure shows a sketch of how the vertex sets $D_S, D_x, D_y, D_r, R, S_{\overline{x}}, S_{\overline{y}}, S_{\overline{xy}}$, and S_{xy} partition the graph G. None of the vertex sets intersects, and they do not necessarily induces a connected subgraph of the given graph G. We add the following statements, to make the figure more clear: $\Omega = S_{\overline{x}} \cup S_{\overline{y}} \cup S_{\overline{xy}} \cup S_{xy} \cup R$, for any connected component C in $G[D_S]$ $N(C) = S = S_{\overline{x}} \cup S_{\overline{y}} \cup S_{\overline{xy}} \cup S_{xy}$, $N(D_x) \subseteq \Omega$, $N(D_y) \subseteq \Omega$, and $N(D_r) \subseteq \Omega$.

Let us now use the vertex sets described above for the nice potential maximal clique Ω which is only covered by the third case. Notice that the vertex sets D_x and D_y are non empty since S, x, z or S, y, z then will be a separator representation of Ω, and thus covered by case two of Lemma 2.5. Notice also that $S_{\overline{xy}} = \emptyset$ if $D_r = \emptyset$, this follows from the definition of $S_{\overline{xy}}$, and the fact that $S \subset \Omega = N(D_x \cup D_y \cup D_r)$.

Let C_S be a connected component of $G[D_S]$, remember that $N(C_S) = S$. The pair $(Z, z) = (C_S \cup R, c)$ is a partial representation of Ω where $c \in C_S$, since $N(C_S) \cap R = \emptyset$, C_S induces a connected graph, and $\Omega = N(C_S) \cup R$. The triple $(X, x, c) = (D_x \cup Z_{\overline{x}} \cup Z_{\overline{r}}, x, c)$, where $c \in C_S$ is an indirect representation of Ω. First step is to recreate D_x and C_S from the triple. The connected component of $G[X \cup \{x\}]$ containing x is $D_x \cup \{x\}$, since $N(x) \cap (D_y \cup D_r) = \emptyset$, thus $N(x) \cap (Z_{\overline{x}} \cup Z_{\overline{r}}) = \emptyset$. The connected component of $G[V \setminus N(X)]$ containing c is C_S, since $S \subseteq N(X)$ and $(S \cup C_S) \cap X = \emptyset$. The potential maximal clique Ω can now be represented as $N(C_S \cup \{x\} \cup D_x) \cup \{x\}$. By the same arguments as for (X, x, c), $(Y, y, c) = (D_y \cup Z_{\overline{y}} \cup Z_{\overline{r}}, y, c)$, where $c \in C_S$ is an indirect representation of Ω.

Let us now prove that one of the vertex sets Z, X, Y contains at most $n/3$ vertices. First we partition the graph in the following three sets: $A = D_S \cup R$, $B = D_x \cup S_{\overline{x}} \cup S_{\overline{xy}}$, and $C = D_y \cup S_{\overline{y}} \cup D_r$. Clearly one of the sets A, B, C contains at most $n/3$ vertices since A, B, and C are pairwise non intersecting.

If $|A| \leq n/3$, then we use the pair (Z, z) to represent Ω. If $|B| \leq n/3$, then the triple (X, x, c) is used to represent Ω. We have to show that $|X| \leq |B|$, equivalently that $|D_x \cup Z_{\overline{x}} \cup Z_{\overline{r}}| \leq |D_x \cup S_{\overline{x}} \cup S_{\overline{xy}}|$. The result follows from the fact that all subsets on each side of $\leq$ are non intersecting, and the remark from the definition of $Z_{\overline{x}}$ and $Z_{\overline{r}}$ that $|Z_{\overline{x}}| \leq |S_{\overline{x}}|$, $|Z_{\overline{r}}| \leq |S_{\overline{xy}}|$. If none of the two first cases occurs, then $|C| \leq n/3$ and the triple (Y, y, c) is used to represent Ω. By the same arguments as for B, $|Y| \leq |C|$ can be reduced to $|Z_{\overline{r}}| \leq |D_r|$, which is trivially true since $Z_{\overline{r}} \subseteq D_r$.

The following procedure can be used to find Ω: For every vertex set $D \subset V$ such that $|D| \leq n/3$, test if (D, c) is a partial representation for every vertex $c \in D$, and if (D, x, c) is an indirect representation for every pair of vertices x, c, such that $x, c \notin D$. ∎

Theorem 4.2 *All potential maximal cliques of a graph G with n vertices can be listed in $\mathcal{O}^*(1.8899^n)$ time.*

Proof. The result follows by applying the bound found in Lemma 4.1 in the formula given in Corollary 2.8. ∎

Theorem 4.3 *For a graph G on n vertices, the treewidth and the minimum fill-in of G can be computed in $\mathcal{O}^*(1.8899^n)$ time.*

Proof. The result follows from the Theorems 2.9, 2.2, 2.1, and 4.3. ■

5 Concluding remarks

It is still an open question whether or not it is possible to list all potential maximal cliques in a graph in less than $\mathcal{O}^*(1.8899^n)$ time. The fact that the theoretical bound for the number of potential maximal cliques is $\mathcal{O}^*(1.8135^n)$ points in the direction of a better bound. Unfortunately there exits no nice algorithm for listing the potential maximal cliques of G in $\mathcal{O}^*(|\Pi_G|)$ time, like there exists for minimal separators [3].

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