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# Some Properties of Inclusions of Multisets and Contractive Boolean Functions

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## Abstract

Consider the following curious puzzle: call an  $n$ -tuple  $\bar{X} = (X_1, \dots, X_n)$  of sets smaller than another  $n$ -tuple  $\bar{Y}$  if it has fewer *unordered sections*. We show that equivalence classes for this preorder are very easy to describe and characterize the preorder in terms of the simpler pointwise inclusion and the existence of a special boolean function  $f : \mathbf{B}^n \rightarrow \mathbf{B}^n$ . We also show that contrary to plain boolean functions or increasing boolean functions, the relevant boolean functions are not finitely generated, which might explain why this preorder is not easy to describe concretely.

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## Introduction: a puzzle

Choose a (fixed) set  $N$  and a (fixed) natural number  $n$ . We can consider the following partial order on  $\mathcal{P}_*(N)^n$ , the collection of  $n$ -tuples of *nonempty* subsets of  $N$ :

$$\bar{X} \subseteq \bar{Y} \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} \prod_{1 \leq i \leq n} X_i \subseteq \prod_{1 \leq i \leq n} Y_i .$$

Because we restrict to nonempty subsets, this preorder is just pointwise inclusion:

$$(X_1, \dots, X_n) \subseteq (Y_1, \dots, Y_n) \iff \forall 1 \leq i \leq n, X_i \subseteq Y_i .$$

Consider now a commutative version of the cartesian product where instead of the usual ordered  $n$ -tuples, we take “unordered  $n$ -tuples”.

**Definition 1.** If  $\bar{X} = (X_1, \dots, X_n)$  is an  $n$ -tuple of nonempty subsets of  $N$ , define  $\mathcal{S}(\bar{X})$ , the set of *unordered sections* of  $\bar{X}$ , as

$$\mathcal{S}(\bar{X}) \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} \left( \prod_{1 \leq i \leq n} X_i \right) / S_n , \tag{1}$$

where  $_ / S_n$  denotes quotienting by the action of the symmetric group  $S_n$ .

Note that strictly speaking,  $S_n$  does not really act on  $\prod_i X_i$  but on  $N^n$ . The definition does work, as the orbit of an element of  $\prod_i X_i$  is well defined even if not all the points of the orbits are themselves in  $\prod_i X_i$ . From now on, we will drop the adjective “unordered” and refer to an element of  $\mathcal{S}(\bar{X})$  simply as a section of  $\bar{X}$ . We now define the preorder  $\sqsubseteq$  on  $\mathcal{P}_*(N)^n$ :

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**Definition 2.** If  $\bar{X}$  and  $\bar{Y}$  are  $n$ -tuples of nonempty subsets of  $N$ , we define  $\bar{X} \sqsubseteq \bar{Y}$  to mean  $\mathcal{S}(\bar{X}) \subseteq \mathcal{S}(\bar{Y})$ . We write  $\bar{X} \approx \bar{Y}$  for “ $\bar{X} \sqsubseteq \bar{Y}$  and  $\bar{Y} \sqsubseteq \bar{X}$ ”, that is, for  $\mathcal{S}(\bar{X}) = \mathcal{S}(\bar{Y})$ .

Note that the relation  $\sqsubseteq$  is not antisymmetric as  $(X_{\sigma(1)}, \dots, X_{\sigma(n)}) \approx (X_1, \dots, X_n)$  for any permutation  $\sigma$ .

The aim of this note is to answer the following questions:

1. When do we have  $\bar{X} \approx \bar{Y}$ ?
2. What is the relation between  $\bar{X} \sqsubseteq \bar{Y}$  and  $\bar{X} \subseteq \bar{Y}$ ?

The problem is subtler than it appears and the first question makes for an interesting puzzle: while elementary, the proof is more complex than what most people initially think. Readers are thus encouraged to spend a couple of minutes playing with the problem before reading on.

*Related notions.* The notion of *system of representatives* was introduced by P. Hall in 1935 [1]. A system of representatives for the  $n$ -tuple of sets  $\bar{X}$  is simply an  $n$ -tuple  $\bar{x}$  such that  $x_i \in X_{\sigma(i)}$  for each  $i = 1, \dots, n$ , for some permutation  $\sigma$ . Equivalence classes of those under permutations are exactly the unordered sections of  $\bar{X}$  of Definition 1. A lot of attention has been devoted to systems of *distinct* representatives, also called *transversal*, where the components of  $\bar{x}$  are pairwise distinct [2]. Rather than looking at them individually, we look here at the collection of all possible systems of representatives. This shift of focus seems to be new in itself, as is the notion of contractive increasing boolean function that appears later. Relating the two will give a concise answer to the second question.

The fact that all the results contained in this note are elementary makes it all the more interesting, but also more likely that I missed some related notions in the existing literature, or maybe just an exercise in a classical textbook.<sup>1</sup>

*Notation.* To make formulas less verbose, we will abuse the vector notation by lifting “ $\in$ ” pointwise: just as  $\bar{X} \subseteq \bar{Y}$  means “ $\forall 1 \leq i \leq n, X_i \subseteq Y_i$ ”, the notation  $\bar{a} \in \bar{X}$  is a synonym for “ $a_i \in X_i$  for all  $1 \leq i \leq n$ ”. The (left) action of  $S_n$  on  $n$ -tuples is written with a dot and is defined as  $\sigma \cdot \bar{a} \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} (a_{\sigma^{-1}(1)}, \dots, a_{\sigma^{-1}(n)})$ . When talking about  $n$ -multisets (orbits for the action of  $S_n$ ), we identify an  $n$ -tuple with its orbit. In particular,  $\bar{a} \in \mathcal{S}(\bar{X})$  means that  $\sigma \cdot \bar{a} \in \bar{X}$  for some permutation  $\sigma$ , i.e., that  $a_i \in X_{\sigma(i)}$  for all  $1 \leq i \leq n$ .

## 1. The equivalence relation

The first question has a simple answer: equivalence is just equality up to a permutation of the sets. In other words, the failure of antisymmetry is captured by the remark coming after Definition 2.

**Proposition 1.** *Given any  $\bar{X}$  and  $\bar{Y}$  in  $\mathcal{P}_*(N)^n$ , we have*

$$\bar{X} \approx \bar{Y} \iff \exists \sigma \in S_n, \sigma \cdot \bar{X} = \bar{Y}. \quad (2)$$

This proposition is slightly surprising because the left side is definitionally equal to

$$\forall \bar{a} \in \bar{X}, \exists \sigma \in S_n, \sigma \cdot \bar{a} \in \bar{Y} \quad \text{and} \quad \forall \bar{b} \in \bar{Y}, \exists \sigma' \in S_n, \sigma' \cdot \bar{b} \in \bar{X}, \quad (3)$$

while the right side is definitionally equal to

$$\exists \sigma \in S_n, \left( \forall \bar{a} \in \bar{X}, \sigma \cdot \bar{a} \in \bar{Y} \text{ and } \forall \bar{b} \in \bar{Y}, \sigma^{-1} \cdot \bar{b} \in \bar{X} \right).$$

That the latter implies the former is trivial. Proposition 1 asserts the converse: in (3), we can choose the permutation uniformly for all the  $\bar{a} \in \bar{X}$  and  $\bar{b} \in \bar{Y}$ !

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<sup>1</sup>This problem comes from a very different area: denotational models of linear logic. In [3], the relation  $\mathcal{S}(\bar{X}) \subseteq T$  played an important role, where the set  $T$  was an arbitrary collection of  $n$ -multisets. Thinking about the preorder “ $\sqsubseteq$ ” was a natural step from there.

**Lemma 1.** *We have*

1. *If  $\overline{X} \sqsubseteq \overline{Y}$  then, for all  $1 \leq j \leq n$ , there is some  $1 \leq i \leq n$  s.t.  $X_i \subseteq Y_j$ .*
2. *If  $\overline{X} \approx \overline{Y}$  then  $X_{i_0} = Y_{j_0}$  for some pair  $i_0, j_0$ .*

PROOF. For the first point, suppose that there is some  $j_0$  satisfying  $X_i \not\subseteq Y_{j_0}$  for all  $1 \leq i \leq n$ . This means that there is an  $\bar{a} \in \overline{X}$  s.t.  $a_i \notin Y_{j_0}$  for all  $i$ . This  $\bar{a}$  cannot be a section of  $\overline{Y}$ . Contradiction!

The second point follows easily: starting from  $Y_1$  and repeatedly using the first point, we can construct an infinite chain of reverse inclusions:

$$Y_1 \supseteq X_{i_1} \supseteq Y_{j_2} \supseteq X_{i_2} \supseteq Y_{j_2} \supseteq \dots$$

Because there are finitely many  $X_i$ 's and  $Y_j$ 's, the chain must contain cycles. This gives an equality between some  $X_i$  and  $Y_j$ .  $\square$

Thus, if  $\overline{X} \approx \overline{Y}$ , one of the sets appears on both sides and we can start the construction of  $\sigma$  in (2). To finish the proof of Proposition 1 by induction on  $n$ , we need to show the following implication:

$$(Z, X_2, \dots, X_n) \approx (Z, Y_2, \dots, Y_n) \Rightarrow (X_2, \dots, X_n) \approx (Y_2, \dots, Y_n). \quad (4)$$

If the collection of unordered sections is seen as a “commutative cartesian product”, the next definition would be the corresponding “division”:

**Definition 3.** Let  $T$  be a collection of  $n$ -multisets and  $Z \in \mathcal{P}_*(N)$  we put

$$T \div Z \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} \left\{ (a_2, \dots, a_n) \mid \forall a \in Z, (a, a_2, \dots, a_n) \in T \right\}.$$

Implication (4) follows from the following lemma:

**Lemma 2.** *We have:*

$$\mathcal{S}(X_1, X_2, \dots, X_n) \div X_1 = \mathcal{S}(X_2, \dots, X_n). \quad (5)$$

PROOF. The “ $\supseteq$ ” inclusion follows from the definition.

For the “ $\subseteq$ ” inclusion, suppose  $(a_2, \dots, a_n) \in \mathcal{S}(\overline{X}) \div X_1$  and choose  $b \in X_1$ . By hypothesis, we necessarily have  $(b, a_2, \dots, a_n) \in \mathcal{S}(\overline{X})$ , i.e., there is a permutation  $\tau$  s.t.  $(b, a_2, \dots, a_n) \in (X_{\tau(1)}, \dots, X_{\tau(n)})$ .

If  $\tau(1) = 1$ , then  $\tau$  defines a permutation on  $\{2, \dots, n\}$  and we have  $(a_2, \dots, a_n) \in (X_{\tau(2)}, \dots, X_{\tau(n)})$ . We can conclude directly.

If  $\tau(1) \neq 1$ , up to permuting the sets  $X_2, \dots, X_n$  and choosing an appropriate element in the orbit of  $(a_2, \dots, a_n)$ , we can assume that  $\tau(1) = 2$ ,  $\tau(2) = 1$  and  $\tau(i) = i$  when  $2 < i \leq n$ , or in other words, that  $b \in X_2$ ,  $a_2 \in X_1$ , and  $a_i \in X_i$  whenever  $2 < i \leq n$ .

Put  $a_1 \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} a_2$ . Because  $a_1 = a_2 \in X_1$ , we have  $(a_1, a_2, \dots, a_n) \in \mathcal{S}(\overline{X})$  by hypothesis, that is,  $\sigma \cdot \bar{a} \in \overline{X}$  for some permutation  $\sigma$ . Note that since  $a_1 = a_2$ , we can interchange the values  $\sigma(1)$  and  $\sigma(2)$  and still have  $\sigma \cdot \bar{a} \in \overline{X}$ .

Let  $k \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} \min \{i \mid i > 0, \sigma^i(1) \in \{1, 2\}\}$ . Up to changing the values of  $\sigma(1)$  and  $\sigma(2)$ , we can assume that  $\sigma^k(1) = 1$  and that the set  $I \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} \{1, \sigma(1), \dots, \sigma^{k-1}(1)\}$  is the cycle containing 1. We define the set  $I^c$  as  $\{1, \dots, n\} \setminus I$ .

Rearrange the columns of

$$\begin{array}{cccccc} a_1 & a_2 & \dots & a_i & \dots & a_n \\ \bullet & \bullet & & \bullet & & \bullet \\ \mid \in & \mid \in & & \mid \in & & \mid \in \\ \bullet & \bullet & & \bullet & & \bullet \\ X_{\sigma(1)} & X_{\sigma(2)} & \dots & X_{\sigma(i)} & \dots & X_{\sigma(n)} \end{array}$$

into two parts:

$$\underbrace{\begin{array}{cccc} a_1 & a_{\sigma(1)} & \dots & a_{\sigma^{k-1}(1)} \\ \vdots \in & \vdots \in & & \vdots \in \\ X_{\sigma(1)} & X_{\sigma^2(1)} & \dots & X_{\sigma^k(1)} = X_1 \end{array}}_I \quad \underbrace{\begin{array}{cccc} a_2 & \dots & a_i & \dots \\ \vdots \in & & \vdots \in & \\ X_{\sigma(2)} & \dots & X_{\sigma(i)} & \dots \end{array}}_{I^c} .$$

The indices of  $\bar{X}$  on the left are exactly those in  $I$ , and so are the indices of  $\bar{a}$ . Thus, the indices of  $\bar{X}$  and  $\bar{a}$  on the right are exactly those in  $I^c$ . This shows that  $(a_i)_{i \in I^c}$  is a section of  $(X_i)_{i \in I^c}$ . Also, because each of  $\sigma(1), \dots, \sigma^{k-1}(1)$  is strictly more than 2 (by the definition of  $k$ ), we have  $a_{\sigma^i(1)} \in X_{\sigma^i(1)}$  for all  $1 \leq i \leq k-1$  by a previous hypothesis. This shows that the permutation

$$\rho : \{2, \dots, n\} \rightarrow \{2, \dots, n\}, \quad \rho(i) \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} \begin{cases} i & \text{if } i \in \{\sigma(1), \dots, \sigma^{k-1}(1)\} \\ \sigma(i) & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

satisfies  $\rho \cdot (a_2, \dots, a_n) \in (X_2, \dots, X_n)$ . This finishes the proof that  $(a_2, \dots, a_n)$  is indeed a section of  $(X_2, \dots, X_n)$ .  $\square$

## 2. The preorder

The initial question was not very formal and read as: “*What is the relation between  $\bar{X} \sqsubseteq \bar{Y}$  and  $\bar{X} \subseteq \bar{Y}$ ?*” It is obvious that  $\bar{X} \subseteq \bar{Y}$  implies  $\bar{X} \sqsubseteq \bar{Y}$ , but unfortunately, the converse does not hold, even if we consider  $n$ -tuples of sets up to permutations. For example, we have

$$\bar{X} := (\{3\}, \{1, 2, 3\}) \quad \sqsubseteq \quad \bar{Y} := (\{1, 3\}, \{2, 3\})$$

because the sections of  $\bar{X}$  are all sections of  $\bar{Y}$ :

$$\mathcal{S}(\bar{X}) = \{[3, 1], [3, 2], [3, 3]\} \quad \subset \quad \mathcal{S}(\bar{Y}) = \{[1, 2], [1, 3], [3, 2], [3, 3]\} .$$

However, one of the sets on the left side is strictly bigger than all the sets on the right side:  $\{1, 2, 3\} \supsetneq \{2, 3\}$  and  $\{1, 2, 3\} \supsetneq \{1, 3\}$ !

More generally,  $(Y_1 \cap Y_2, Y_1 \cup Y_2) \sqsubseteq (Y_1, Y_2)$  and any operator  $F$  on  $n$ -tuples of sets obtained by composing functions  $(Y_i, Y_j) \mapsto (Y_i \cap Y_j, Y_i \cup Y_j)$  on any pairs of coordinates,<sup>2</sup> will satisfy  $F(\bar{Y}) \sqsubseteq \bar{Y}$ . For example,

$$\begin{aligned} F(Y_1, Y_2, Y_3) & \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} (Y_1 \cap Y_3, Y_2 \cap (Y_1 \cup Y_3), Y_2 \cup (Y_1 \cup Y_3)) \\ & \sqsubseteq (Y_1 \cap Y_3, Y_2, Y_1 \cup Y_3) \\ & \sqsubseteq (Y_1, Y_2, Y_3) . \end{aligned}$$

We will characterize (Proposition 3) which  $F$ s on  $\mathcal{P}_*(N)^n$  satisfy  $F(\bar{Y}) \sqsubseteq \bar{Y}$  by looking at functions on  $\mathbf{B}^n$ .

**Definition 4.** Let  $\mathbf{B} \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} \{0, 1\}$  equipped with the order  $0 \leq 1$ . This is a complete lattice with operations written  $\vee$  and  $\wedge$ . The lattice structure is lifted pointwise to  $\mathbf{B}^n$ .

If  $u \in \mathbf{B}^n$ , the *weight* of  $u$  is the number of 1s in  $u$ . It is written  $|u|$ .

We write elements of  $\mathbf{B}^n$  as words: for example, “011101  $\in \mathbf{B}^6$ ”.

**Definition 5.** If  $a \in N$  and  $\bar{X} \in \mathcal{P}_*(N)^n$ , the *characteristic function of  $a$  along  $\bar{X}$* , written  $\chi_{\bar{X}}(a) \in \mathbf{B}^n$  is defined by  $(\chi_{\bar{X}}(a))_i = 1$  iff  $a \in X_i$ .

<sup>2</sup>provided the intersection isn’t empty to agree with Definition 1

Thus,  $\chi_{\overline{X}}(a)$  describes in which components of  $\overline{X}$  the element  $a$  appears, and  $|\chi_{\overline{X}}(a)|$  is the number of those components of  $\overline{X}$  which contain  $a$ . There is a necessary condition for  $\overline{X} \sqsubseteq \overline{Y}$ : “for all  $a \in N$ , if  $a$  appears in  $k$  components of  $\overline{Y}$ , then it appears in at most  $k$  components of  $\overline{X}$ ”. Concisely, this condition can be written as “ $|\chi_{\overline{X}}(a)| \leq |\chi_{\overline{Y}}(a)|$  for all  $a \in N$ ”. This condition is reminiscent of the condition appearing in Hall’s celebrated “marriage theorem” [1]. Like in the marriage theorem, this condition is also sufficient in the appropriate setting:

**Proposition 2.** *Given  $\overline{X}$  and  $\overline{Y}$  two  $n$ -tuples of non-empty subsets of  $N$  that satisfy*

1. *the function  $a \mapsto \chi_{\overline{Y}}(a)$  is bijective from  $N$  to  $\mathbf{B}^n \setminus \{0 \cdots 0\}$ ,*
2. *the function  $f : \chi_{\overline{Y}}(a) \mapsto \chi_{\overline{X}}(a)$  is increasing;*

*we have  $\overline{X} \sqsubseteq \overline{Y}$  if and only if  $|\chi_{\overline{X}}(a)| \leq |\chi_{\overline{Y}}(a)|$  for all  $a \in N$ .*

Looking at the example  $(\{3\}, \{1, 2, 3\}) \sqsubseteq (\{2, 3\}, \{1, 3\})$  might help to understand the conditions of the proposition. The first condition means that there is exactly one element that belongs only to  $Y_1$  (“2”), exactly one element that belongs only to  $Y_2$  (“1”) and exactly one element that belongs to both (“3”). When the first condition is satisfied, the second condition amounts to “when  $a$  appears in more sets than  $b$  on the right side, then  $a$  appears in more sets than  $b$  on the left side”. The graph of the resulting function  $f$  can be read below

$a :$	1	2	3	
$\chi_{\overline{Y}}(a) :$	01	10	11	
$\chi_{\overline{X}}(a) :$	01	01	11	.

Proposition 2 follows from a more general lemma:

**Lemma 3.** *We have  $\overline{X} \sqsubseteq \overline{Y}$  iff  $f(u) \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} \bigvee_{\chi_{\overline{Y}}(a) \leq u} \chi_{\overline{X}}(a)$  satisfies  $|f(u)| \leq |u|$  for all  $u$ .*

The function  $f$  is the least increasing function (for the extensional order) satisfying  $f(\chi_{\overline{Y}}(a)) \geq \chi_{\overline{X}}(a)$ .

PROOF. For the “ $\Leftarrow$ ” implication, suppose that  $\overline{a} \in \overline{X}$ . We want to show that  $\sigma \cdot \overline{a} \in \overline{Y}$  for some permutation  $\sigma$ . If we look at the bipartite graph  $G_{\overline{a}, \overline{Y}}$

$$G_{\overline{a}, \overline{Y}} \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} \begin{array}{cccc} a_1 & a_2 & \dots & a_n \\ \bullet & \bullet & & \bullet \\ \bullet & \bullet & \dots & \bullet \\ Y_1 & Y_2 & \dots & Y_n \end{array},$$

with an edge between  $a_i$  and  $Y_j$  when  $a_i \in Y_j$ , finding a  $\sigma$  s.t.  $\sigma \cdot \overline{a} \in \overline{Y}$  is equivalent to finding a perfect matching in  $G_{\overline{a}, \overline{Y}}$ . By Hall’s marriage theorem, this is equivalent to “every subset of  $\{a_1, \dots, a_n\}$  of cardinality  $p$  has at least  $p$  neighbors”.

Take some subset  $U \subseteq \{a_1, \dots, a_n\}$  of cardinality  $p$ . Because  $\overline{a}$  is a section of  $\overline{X}$ , this set has at least  $p$  neighbors in the corresponding  $G_{\overline{a}, \overline{X}}$  graph. Let  $u \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} \bigvee_{a \in U} \chi_{\overline{Y}}(a)$ . If  $a \in U$ , then  $\chi_{\overline{Y}}(a) \leq u$  by definition of  $u$ , so that  $\chi_{\overline{X}}(a) \leq f(u)$  by definition of  $f$ . We thus have  $\bigvee_{a \in U} \chi_{\overline{X}}(a) \leq f(u)$ . We get

$$p \leq \underbrace{\left| \bigvee_{a \in U} \chi_{\overline{X}}(a) \right|}_{\substack{\# \text{ of neighbors} \\ \text{of } U \text{ in } G_{\overline{a}, \overline{X}}}} \leq |f(u)| \leq |u| \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} \underbrace{\left| \bigvee_{a \in U} \chi_{\overline{Y}}(a) \right|}_{\substack{\# \text{ of neighbors} \\ \text{of } U \text{ in } G_{\overline{a}, \overline{Y}}}},$$

which concludes the “ $\Leftarrow$ ” implication.

For the “ $\Rightarrow$ ” implication, let  $\overline{X} \sqsubseteq \overline{Y}$  and  $p = |u| < |f(u)|$ . By definition of  $f$ , we can find a set  $\{a_1, \dots, a_k\} \subseteq N$  which satisfies  $\chi_{\overline{Y}}(a_i) \leq u$  for  $i = 1, \dots, k$  and  $\left| \bigvee_{1 \leq i \leq k} \chi_{\overline{X}}(a_i) \right| > p$ . In particular, we have

$$\left| \bigvee_{1 \leq i \leq k} \chi_{\overline{Y}}(a_i) \right| \leq p < \left| \bigvee_{1 \leq i \leq k} \chi_{\overline{X}}(a_i) \right|.$$

For each  $1$  in  $\bigvee_{i \leq k} \chi_{\overline{X}}(a_i)$  take one element of  $\{a_1, \dots, a_k\}$  that accounts for this  $1$ . Call the resulting tuple  $\overline{a}$ . Note that this might not be an  $n$ -tuple, but its length is strictly greater than  $p$  (and may contain repetitions). It is only a partial section of  $\overline{X}$ : to complete it into a section of the whole  $\overline{X}$ , simply add one element from each of the remaining (non-empty) sets. The result is also a section of  $\overline{Y}$  and in particular, each element of  $\overline{a}$  needs to fit in one component of  $\overline{Y}$ . This is impossible because there are at most  $p$  sets  $Y_j$  that can contain the elements of the tuple  $\overline{a}$ . Contradiction!

□

Lemma 3 does characterize the  $\sqsubseteq$  preorder but still looks a little ad-hoc. We now give a more concise characterization that relates  $\sqsubseteq$  with  $\subseteq$ , thus answering our initial question. First note that we can lift any  $f : \mathbf{B}^n \rightarrow \mathbf{B}^m$  to a function  $\mathcal{P}(N)^n \rightarrow \mathcal{P}(N)^m$ :

**Definition 6.** Suppose  $f : \mathbf{B}^n \rightarrow \mathbf{B}^m$ , define  $\widehat{f} : \mathcal{P}(N)^n \rightarrow \mathcal{P}(N)^m$  as

$$\widehat{f}(\overline{Y}) \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} \overline{X} \quad \text{with } a \in X_i \text{ iff } f(\chi_{\overline{Y}}(a)) \text{ has a } 1 \text{ at coordinate } i.$$

This transformation is, in a precise categorical sense, *natural*. It amounts to lifting the boolean operations  $\wedge$  and  $\vee$  to their set theoretic versions  $\cap$  and  $\cup$  in a way that is compatible with function composition. For example, with the “and/or” function  $(b_1, b_2) \mapsto (b_1 \wedge b_2, b_1 \vee b_2)$  we obtain  $(Y_1, Y_2) \mapsto (Y_1 \cap Y_2, Y_1 \cup Y_2)$ .

**Definition 7.** Call an increasing function  $f : \mathbf{B}^n \rightarrow \mathbf{B}^n$  *contractive* if it satisfies  $|f(u)| \leq |u|$  for all  $u \in \mathbf{B}^n$ .

A corollary to Lemma 3 is:

**Proposition 3.** For any  $\overline{X}$  and  $\overline{Y}$ , we have

$$\overline{X} \sqsubseteq \overline{Y} \iff \overline{X} \subseteq \widehat{f}(\overline{Y}) \quad \text{for some increasing, contractive } f : \mathbf{B}^n \rightarrow \mathbf{B}^n.$$

PROOF. We know that  $\overline{X} \sqsubseteq \overline{Y}$  is equivalent to having  $|f(u)| \leq |u|$  for all  $u$  in  $\mathbf{B}^n$ , where  $f$  is defined as in Lemma 3. This function  $f$  satisfies  $\overline{X} \subseteq \widehat{f}(\overline{Y})$ : use  $u \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} \chi_{\overline{Y}}(a)$  to check that  $a \in X_i$  is an element of the  $i$ -th set of  $\widehat{f}(\overline{Y})$ .

For the converse, suppose  $f$  is contractive increasing with  $\overline{X} \subseteq \widehat{f}(\overline{Y})$  and let  $\chi_{\overline{Y}}(a) \leq u$ . Suppose that  $\chi_{\overline{Y}}(a)$  contains a  $1$  in position  $i$ . This means that  $a \in X_i$  and thus  $a$  is in the  $i$ -th set of  $\widehat{f}(\overline{Y})$ . We can conclude that  $f(\chi_{\overline{Y}}(a))$  contains a  $1$  in position  $i$ . This implies that  $f(u)$  also contains a  $1$  in position  $i$ .

□

### 3. Contractive functions are not finitely generated

If one had a simple representation of contractive increasing boolean functions from  $\mathbf{B}^n$  to itself, then Proposition 3 would give a simple representation of the  $\sqsubseteq$  preorder. It is well known that all boolean functions  $\mathbf{B}^n \rightarrow \mathbf{B}^m$  with  $n$  inputs and  $m$  outputs can be represented by a boolean circuit using only “and”, “or” together with “not” cells. Strictly speaking, we also need constant values and need a way to forget or duplicate inputs. The complete set of cells is depicted in Figure 1, where the last cells are:

- constants 1 and 0 (zero input, one output),
- drop (one input, zero output),
- duplicate (one input, two outputs),
- crossing (two inputs, two outputs).

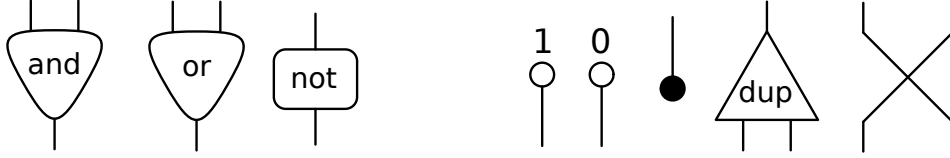


Figure 1: Boolean cells

These cells, together with a finite set of relations expressing properties of the operations (associativity, etc.), give a finite presentation of the monoidal category of boolean functions.<sup>3</sup> We can generate the subcategory of increasing functions by removing the “not” cell from the generators. Unfortunately, no such thing is possible for *contractive increasing* boolean functions.

**Proposition 4.** *Contractive increasing boolean functions are not finitely generated.*

In other words, any finite set of cells will either miss some contractive boolean function, or generate some non contractive boolean function.

First, a preliminary lemma:

**Lemma 4.** *Let  $f : \mathbf{B}^n \rightarrow \mathbf{B}^n$  be an increasing contractive boolean function; the following are equivalent:*

1.  $f$  is the action of a permutation  $u \mapsto \sigma \cdot u$  for some  $\sigma \in S_n$ ,
2.  $f$  is bijective,
3.  $f$  is injective on words of weight 1.

PROOF. Trivially, 1 implies 2 and 2 implies 3. Suppose now that  $f$  is increasing and contractive on  $\mathbf{B}^n$ . Suppose moreover that  $f$  is injective on words of weight 1. We can define a permutation  $\sigma$  on  $\{1, \dots, n\}$  by putting

$$\tau(i) = j \quad \text{iff} \quad f(e_i) = e_j$$

where  $e_i$  represents the word with a single 1 in position  $i$ . If  $u$  contains a 1 in position  $i$ , then, because  $f$  is increasing,  $f(u)$  must contain a 1 in position  $\tau(i)$ . Because  $f$  is contractive,  $f(u)$  cannot contain more 1s than there are in  $u$ . Thus, the 1s of  $f(u)$  correspond exactly to the images of the 1s of  $u$  along  $\tau$ :  $f$  is indeed the action of a permutation.  $\square$

PROOF (PROPOSITION 4). Suppose, by contradiction, that there is a finite set of cells that generates all increasing contractive boolean functions, and write  $m$  for the maximal arity of the cells in this set.

Any non-invertible function has a representation as in Figure 2 where

- the topmost rectangle contains only crossing (or invertible cells),
- the cell  $C$  is not invertible and has arity  $c \leq m$ ,
- and the lowermost rectangle contains the rest of the circuit.

By Lemma 4, we know that the cell  $C$  is not injective on inputs of weight 1. It means there are two input wires  $i_1$  and  $i_2$  s.t.  $C$  gives the same value on the two elements of  $\mathbf{B}^n$  consisting of 0s and a single 1 in position  $i_1$  or  $i_2$ . Because this is independent of the inputs  $\bar{v}$  on the  $n - m$  remaining wires, we obtain:

**Claim.** *Supposing contractive increasing boolean functions were finitely generated with a cells of arity less than  $m$ , then for any non-invertible contractive increasing boolean function  $f : \mathbf{B}^n \rightarrow \mathbf{B}^n$ , with  $n \geq m$ , we have:*

$$\exists \sigma \in S_n \quad \forall \bar{v} \in \mathbf{B}^{n-m} \quad f(\sigma(01.\bar{0}.\bar{v})) = f(\sigma(10.\bar{0}.\bar{v}))$$

<sup>3</sup>All of this has a precise algebraic meaning, see [4] for details.



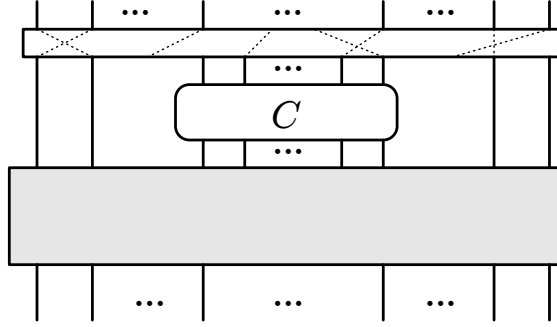


Figure 2: Circuits

The permutation  $\sigma$  is used to simplify the notation: it reorders the wires to put  $i_1$  and  $i_2$  in positions 1 and 2, and the remaining input wires for  $C$  in positions  $3, \dots, c$ .

For any maximal arity  $m$ , we will construct a (large)  $n$  together with a function  $f : \mathbf{B}^n \rightarrow \mathbf{B}^n$  that contradicts this fact: whenever we choose input wires  $i_1$  and  $i_2$  and put any  $m - 2$  other input wires to 0, we can complete the remaining input wires in such a way that putting  $i_1 \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} 0$  and  $i_2 \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} 1$ , or putting  $i_2 \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} 0$  and  $i_1 \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} 1$  makes a difference in the output of the function. Thus, this function will not be representable using the given set of cells.

Given a (large)  $n$ , define  $f : \mathbf{B}^n \rightarrow \mathbf{B}^n$  as:

$$f(u) \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} \begin{cases} 0^n & \text{if } |u| = 0 & (1) \\ 1 \ 0^{n-1} & \text{if } |u| = 1 & (2) \\ 1^k \ 0^{n-k} & \text{if } |u| = k \text{ is even} & (3) \\ 1101 \ 0^{n-4} & \text{if } u = 0 \dots 0 \ 110^l 1 \ 0 \dots 0, \text{ with } l > 0 & (4) \\ 1110 \ 0^{n-4} & \text{if } |u| = 3 \text{ but } u \text{ not of the previous shape} & (5) \\ 1^{2^k} 01 \ 0^{n-2^k-2} & \text{if } u = 0 \dots 0 \ 1^{2^k} 0^{2^k} 1 \ 0 \dots 0, \text{ with } k > 1 & (6) \\ 1^{2^k} 01 \ 0^{n-2^k-2} & \text{if } u = 0 \dots 0 \ 10^{2^k} 1^{2^k} \ 0 \dots 0, \text{ with } k > 1 & (7) \\ 1^{2^k} 10 \ 0^{n-2^k-2} & \text{in all the remaining cases.} & (8) \end{cases}$$

This function is contractive because we have  $|f(u)| = |u|$ . Moreover, it is increasing because whenever  $v$  is a successor<sup>4</sup> of  $u$ , we have  $f(v) > f(u)$ :

- $f(u) = 1^{2^k} 0 \dots$  when  $|u| = 2k$
- $f(u) = 1^{2^k} 10 \ 0 \dots$  or  $f(u) = 1^{2^k} 01 \ 0 \dots$  when  $|u| = 2k + 1$ .

Suppose input wires  $k_1, \dots, k_{m-2}$  are fixed to 0 and we want to differentiate between input wires  $i_1$  and  $i_2$ , with  $i_1 < i_2$ . By putting some 1s in the appropriate remaining wires, we can make  $f$  give different results when “ $i_1 \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} 0, i_2 \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} 1$ ” and “ $i_1 \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} 1, i_2 \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} 0$ ”.

- If there are two consecutive wires between  $i_1$  and  $i_2$  (but not touching  $i_2$ ) which are not among  $k_1, \dots, k_{m-2}$ , we put those two wires to 1 and all the other wires to 0. By lines (4) and (5) from the definition of  $f$ , we will get two different results.
- If not, the wires  $i_1$  and  $i_2$  cannot be too far apart. (There are at most  $2m - 2$  wires between them...) If we can find a sequence of  $2^k$  consecutive wires at distance  $2^k$  to the left of  $i_1$ , or a sequence of  $2^k$  consecutive wires at distance  $2^k$  to the right of  $i_2$ , we can put those wires to 1 and the rest to 0. By lines (6) and (8) or (7) and (8) of the definition of  $f$ , we will also get different results.

<sup>4</sup> $v$  is a *successors* of  $u$  if  $v > u$  and  $|v| = |u| + 1$ .

For this to work, we have to make sure  $n$  is big enough. At worst, the wires  $k_1, \dots, k_{m-2}$  can prevent us from finding an appropriate sequence  $m - 2$  times. In particular, if  $i_1$  is big enough (bigger than  $2^{m+1}$ ), such a sequence is bound to happen. The same is true when  $i_2$  is small enough compared to  $n$ . In the end, choosing  $n$  bigger than, say,  $2^{2m+2}$  plus an additional  $\varepsilon$  will guarantee that we can differentiate any  $i_1$  and  $i_2$  among any set of  $m$  wires. A more careful analysis shows that it is in fact enough to take  $n \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} 2^{m+1} + 4$ . This concludes the proof.  $\square$

An interesting subset of contractive increasing functions is the collection of *strictly increasing* boolean functions from  $\mathbf{B}^n$  to itself. It can easily be shown that  $f : \mathbf{B}^n \rightarrow \mathbf{B}^n$  is strictly increasing iff  $f$  is increasing and  $|f(u)| = |u|$  for all  $u \in \mathbf{B}^n$ . The proof of Proposition 4 also shows the following:

**Corollary 5.** *Strictly increasing boolean functions are not finitely generated.*

- [1] P. Hall, On representatives of subsets, *Journal of the London Mathematical Society* 10 (1935) 26–30.
- [2] L. Mirsky, *Transversal theory; an account of some aspects of combinatorial mathematics*, Mathematics in Science and Engineering, Elsevier Science, 1971.
- [3] P. Hyvernath, Predicate transformers and linear logic: yet another denotational model, in: J. Marcinkowski, A. Tarlecki (Eds.), 18th International Workshop CSL 2004, Vol. 3210 of *Lecture Notes in Computer Science*, Springer-Verlag, 2004, pp. 115–129.
- [4] Y. Lafont, Towards an algebraic theory of boolean circuits, *Journal of Pure and Applied Algebra* 184 (2003) 2003.
- [5] D. E. Knuth, *Combinatorial Algorithms*, Vol. 4A of *The Art of Computer Programming*, Addison-Wesley Professional, 2011.

None of the references in this bibliography is directly concerned with either the pre-order “ $\sqsubseteq$ ” or contractive increasing boolean functions. Any reference to papers or books mentioning them would be most welcome. Moreover, besides [1] or any book covering Hall’s theorem, none of them is actually a prerequisite to this note.

## An algorithm

Proposition 3 is more elegant but Lemma 3 has an interesting byproduct: it gives a concrete algorithm to check if  $\overline{X} \sqsubseteq \overline{Y}$ . For that, construct the function  $f$  from Lemma 3 and check that it satisfies the condition. Just as a proof of concept, here is the main part of the algorithm, in the Python programming language. Minor alterations have been made to make it more readable. The most difficult (and fun) part was to write the function `combinations`<sup>5</sup> that generates all the vectors of length  $n$  and weight  $w$  using one of the subtle algorithms from [5]:<sup>5</sup>

```
def check(N,n,X,Y):
    # N is a set, n is an integer, X / Y are tuples of sets.
    def combinations(w):
        # generates all vectors of weight w
        # omitted (see Knuth, or use you favorite method)
    def sup(u,v):
        # complexity: O(n)
        # computes the pointwise "or" on n-tuples
        # omitted (simple)
    def weight(u):
        # complexity: O(n)
        # computes the weight of an n-tuple
        # omitted (simple)
    def chi(a,Z):
        # complexity: O(n log(z)) (z is cardinality of Z)
        for i in range(n):
            # we use Python builtin "set" type
            if a in Z[i]:
                # so that "a in Z[i]" mean "a belongs to Z[i]"
                u[i] = 1
        return u

    F = {}
    # F is a finite map with at most 2^n elements,
    # access is logarithmic: O(log(2^n)) = O(n)
    for a in N:
        # complexity: c *
        chiX = chi(a,X)
        chiY = chi(a,Y)
        # n log(x)
        # + n log(y)
        F[chiY] = sup(F[chiY], chiX)
        # + 2n
    for w in range(n+1):
        # generating all tuples
        # complexity : about 2^n *
        for u in combinations(w):
            # n
            v = F[u]
            # + n *
            for i in range(n):
                #
                if u[i] == 1:
                    #
                    u[i] = 0
                    #
                    v = sup(v,F[u])
                    # n^2
                    u[i] = 1
            #
            F[u] = v
            #
            if weight(v) > w:
                # + n
                return False
        return True
    # if we reached this far, the condition is satisfied
```

If  $N$  has cardinality  $c$  and the components of  $\overline{X}$  and  $\overline{Y}$  have cardinalities at most  $x$  and  $y$ ; and if we suppose that the standard operations on sets and finite functions have logarithmic complexity, the hints in the comments give a total complexity of roughly  $O(cn(\log(x) + \log(y)) + 2^n n^3)$ . Because both  $x = O(c)$  and  $y = O(c)$ , we get a complexity of  $O(nc \log(c) + 2^n n^3)$ . If  $c$  is fixed, this is  $O(n^3 2^n)$ ; if  $n$  is fixed, this is  $O(c \log(c))$ . In almost all cases, this is better (and much easier to write) than the naive approach that checks if each  $\overline{a} \in \overline{X}$  is a section of  $\overline{Y}$ , even if we are allowed to use an oracle to guess the permutations.

<sup>5</sup>The complete file is available from <http://lama.univ-savoie.fr/~hyvernat/research.php>