

## COMPUTING CONGRUENCE LATTICES OF FINITE LATTICES

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ABSTRACT. An inequality between the number of coverings in the ordered set  $J(\mathbf{Con} \mathbf{L})$  of join irreducible congruences on a lattice  $\mathbf{L}$  and the size of  $\mathbf{L}$  is given. Using this inequality it is shown that this ordered set can be computed in time  $O(n^2 \log_2 n)$ , where  $n = |L|$ .

This paper is motivated by the problem of efficiently calculating and representing the congruence lattice  $\mathbf{Con} \mathbf{L}$  of a finite lattice  $\mathbf{L}$ . Of course  $\mathbf{Con} \mathbf{L}$  can be exponential in the size of  $\mathbf{L}$ ; for example, when  $\mathbf{L}$  is a chain of length  $n$ ,  $\mathbf{Con} \mathbf{L}$  has  $2^n$  elements. However, since  $\mathbf{Con} \mathbf{L}$  is a distributive lattice, it can be recovered easily from the ordered set of its join irreducible elements  $J(\mathbf{Con} \mathbf{L})$ . Indeed any finite distributive lattice  $\mathbf{D}$  is isomorphic to the lattice of order ideals of  $J(\mathbf{D})$  and this lattice is in turn isomorphic to the lattice of all antichains of  $J(\mathbf{D})$ , where the antichains are ordered by  $A \ll B$ , i.e., for each  $a \in A$  there is a  $b \in B$  with  $a \leq b$ . If  $\mathbf{P}$  is an ordered set of size  $n$  which has  $N$  order ideals, then there are straightforward algorithms to find the order ideals of  $\mathbf{P}$  which run in time  $O(nN)$ ; see, for example, [5]. In [10] Medina and Nourine give an algorithm which runs in time  $O(dN)$ , where  $d$  is the maximum number of covers of any element of  $\mathbf{P}$ . Thus we will concentrate on the problem of efficiently finding  $J(\mathbf{Con} \mathbf{L})$ .

### 1. PRELIMINARIES

Throughout this paper  $\mathbf{L}$  denotes a finite lattice.  $J(\mathbf{L})$  denotes the set of nonzero join irreducible elements and  $M(\mathbf{L})$  the set of nonunit meet irreducible elements. These sets are ordered by the induced order from  $\mathbf{L}$ . If  $a \in J(\mathbf{L})$ , then it has a unique lower cover in  $\mathbf{L}$  which we denote by  $a_*$ , and similarly if  $q \in M(\mathbf{L})$ , then  $q^*$  is the unique upper cover of  $q$ . The cover relation is denoted by  $a \prec b$ ;  $\text{Cg}(x, y)$  is the smallest congruence identifying  $x$  and  $y$ . Throughout the paper we let

$$(1) \quad n = |L| \quad m = |J(\mathbf{Con} \mathbf{L})|.$$

For an ordered set  $\mathbf{P}$  we define

$$\begin{aligned} E_{\leq} &= \{\langle a, b \rangle : a \leq b\}, & e_{\leq} &= |E_{\leq}|, \\ E_{\prec} &= \{\langle a, b \rangle : a \prec b\}, & e_{\prec} &= |E_{\prec}|. \end{aligned}$$

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For clarity we sometimes write  $E_{\leq}(\mathbf{P})$ , etc. Of course  $\mathbf{P}$  is determined from its underlying set  $P$  and any ‘edge’ set  $E$  with

$$(2) \quad E_{\prec} \subseteq E \subseteq E_{\leq}.$$

The transitive, reflexive closure of any such  $E$  is  $E_{\leq}$ , and  $E_{\prec}$  is the smallest set whose transitive, reflexive closure is  $E_{\leq}$ .  $E_{\prec}$  is alternatively known as the *covering relation*, the *transitive reduct*, and the *Hasse diagram* of  $\mathbf{P}$ . We are most interested in the case  $\mathbf{P} = J(\mathbf{Con L})$  and in this paper  $E_{\leq} = E_{\leq}(J(\mathbf{Con L}))$ , etc.

Chapter XI of [5] contains a discussion of algorithms for lattice theory including algorithms for calculating the congruence lattice of a finite lattice. It shows there is an algorithm which computes the set  $J(\mathbf{Con L})$  and an edge set  $E$  satisfying (2) in time  $O(n^2)$ . Of course  $\mathbf{L}$  is simple exactly when  $J(\mathbf{Con L})$  has only one element, and it is subdirectly irreducible if it has only one minimal element. Since the minimal elements can be found quickly from any  $E$  satisfying (2), this gives  $O(n^2)$  algorithms for testing the simplicity and subdirect irreducibility of  $\mathbf{L}$ . However, it does not give the full transitive, reflexive closure,  $E_{\leq}$ , which is needed for other purposes.

By Theorem 11.2 of [5] we can calculate  $E_{\leq}$  from any  $E$  satisfying (2) (not just  $E_{\prec}$ ) in time  $O(m^2 + me_{\prec} + e_{\leq})$ . It follows from part 3 of Lemma 1 below that  $m \leq n$  and thus  $E_{\leq}$  can be found in time  $O(n^3)$ . The main purpose of this paper is to improve this bound. We will show that  $E_{\leq}$  can be found in time  $O(n^2 \log_2 n)$ .

In order to do this we explore the connection between  $\mathbf{L}$  and  $J(\mathbf{Con L})$  more carefully. Namely, given a number  $e_{\prec}$ , we would like to know how small  $\mathbf{L}$  can be with  $e_{\prec} = e_{\prec}(J(\mathbf{Con L}))$ . In [8] and [9] Grätzer, Lakser, Rival, Schmidt, and Zaguia investigate the relation between  $m$  and  $n$ . As mentioned above,  $m \leq n$ . In [8] it is shown that for any ordered set  $\mathbf{P}$  of size  $m$  there is a lattice  $\mathbf{L}$  of size  $O(m^2)$  with  $J(\mathbf{Con L}) \cong \mathbf{P}$ . In [9] examples are given showing that no smaller power of  $m$  will work.

For our purposes we need a universal lower bound on the size of  $\mathbf{L}$  in terms of  $e_{\prec}$ . What we show is that given an ordered set  $\mathbf{P}$  with  $e_{\prec}$  covers, any  $n$ -element lattice  $\mathbf{L}$  with  $J(\mathbf{Con L}) \cong \mathbf{P}$  has

$$e_{\prec} \leq 2n \log_2 n.$$

We give examples showing that in a certain sense this is the best possible and we show how to derive the result of [9] as a corollary.

## 2. THE INEQUALITY

We begin with some lemmas. The first is elementary and well known; the second is new; the third is from [9].

**Lemma 1.** *Let  $\mathbf{L}$  be a finite lattice.*

1. *If  $a \prec b$  in  $\mathbf{L}$ , then  $\text{Cg}(a, b)$  is join irreducible.*
2. *If  $\theta \in J(\mathbf{Con L})$ , then there exist  $a \in J(\mathbf{L})$  and  $q \in M(\mathbf{L})$  with  $\theta = \text{Cg}(a, a_*) = \text{Cg}(q, q^*)$ .*
3. *The function  $a \mapsto \text{Cg}(a, a_*)$  maps  $J(\mathbf{L})$  onto  $J(\mathbf{Con L})$ .*

*Proof.* The first statement follows easily from Dilworth’s characterization of lattice congruences, Theorem 10.2 of [1], and does not require that  $\mathbf{L}$  be finite. Again by Dilworth’s theorem any (completely) join irreducible congruence  $\theta$  has the form  $\text{Cg}(x, y)$  for some  $x > y$ . Since  $\mathbf{L}$  is finite, there is a finite maximal chain from  $x$

down to  $y$ , and since  $\theta$  is join irreducible, one of the links of the chain must generate  $\theta$ . So we may assume  $x \succ y$  and if we choose  $q$  to be maximal above  $y$  but not  $x$ , then  $q$  is meet irreducible and  $\theta = \text{Cg}(q, q^*)$ , as desired. The third statement follows from the second.  $\square$

**Lemma 2.** *Suppose  $\theta \prec \phi$  in  $J(\text{Con } \mathbf{L})$ . Then one of the following holds.*

1. *There is an  $a \in J(\mathbf{L})$  and  $x \in L$  with  $a \succ a_* \succ x$  such that  $\text{Cg}(a, a_*) = \theta$  and  $\text{Cg}(a_*, x) = \phi$ .*
2. *There is a  $q \in M(\mathbf{L})$  and  $x \in L$  with  $q \prec q^* \prec x$  such that  $\text{Cg}(q, q^*) = \theta$  and  $\text{Cg}(q^*, x) = \phi$ .*

*Proof.* For  $a, b \in J(\mathbf{L})$  and  $q \in M(\mathbf{L})$  we define two relations by

- (3)  $a \nearrow q$  if and only if  $a \leq q^*$  and  $a \not\leq q$ ,
- (4)  $q \searrow b$  if and only if  $q \geq b_*$  and  $q \not\geq b$ .

Note that  $a \nearrow q$  if and only if  $a \vee q = q^*$ , and  $q \searrow b$  if and only if  $q \wedge b = b_*$ . Define  $\mathbf{G}(\mathbf{L}) = \langle V, \rightarrow \rangle$  to be the directed graph whose vertex set  $V$  is the disjoint union of (copies of)  $J(\mathbf{L})$  and  $M(\mathbf{L})$  and whose relation  $\rightarrow$  is the union of  $\nearrow$  and  $\searrow$ . Of course this graph determines a quasiorder. Let  $\equiv$  be the equivalence relation for this quasiorder:  $x \equiv y$  if and only if  $x \rightarrow^* y$  and  $y \rightarrow^* x$ , where  $\rightarrow^*$  represents a sequence, possibly of length 0, of edges. We let  $\mathbf{G}(\mathbf{L})/\equiv$  denote the induced ordered set on the equivalence classes. By Lemma 11.11 of [5]  $\mathbf{G}(\mathbf{L})/\equiv$  is isomorphic to  $J(\text{Con } \mathbf{L})$ .

Since  $\phi \succ \theta$ , there must be an edge of  $\mathbf{G}(\mathbf{L})$  going from an element in the  $\equiv$ -class corresponding to  $\theta$  to an element in the class corresponding to  $\phi$ . Suppose this edge has the form (3). This situation is diagrammed in Figure 1.

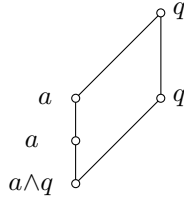


FIGURE 1

If  $a \wedge q = a_*$ , then we would have  $\theta = \text{Cg}(a, a_*) = \text{Cg}(q, q^*) = \phi$ , a contradiction. Thus  $a \wedge q < a_*$  and the first statement of the lemma holds with  $x = a \wedge q$ . Of course if the edge has the form (4), then the second statement of the lemma will hold.  $\square$

**Lemma 3.** *Let  $\mathbf{L}$  be a lattice, let  $A \subseteq L$ , and let  $b \in L$  be a lower bound of  $A$  in  $\mathbf{L}$ . Assume that  $\text{Cg}(b, a)$  is join irreducible and that  $\text{Cg}(b, a)$  and  $\text{Cg}(b, a')$  are incomparable for each  $a \neq a'$  in  $A$ . Then  $A$  is join irredundant.*

*Proof.* This is proved in [9].  $\square$

**Theorem 4.** *Let  $\mathbf{L}$  be a finite lattice. Then*

$$e_{\prec}(J(\text{Con } \mathbf{L})) \leq (|J(\mathbf{L})| + |M(\mathbf{L})|) \log_2 |L| \leq 2|L| \log_2 |L|.$$

*Proof.* Let  $r = |J(\mathbf{L})| + |M(\mathbf{L})|$  and  $e_{\prec} = e_{\prec}(J(\mathbf{Con L}))$  and  $t = \lceil e_{\prec}/r \rceil$ . By Lemma 2, associated with each cover in  $J(\mathbf{Con L})$  is an element of  $L$  which is either join or meet irreducible. Hence there is either a join irreducible element  $a$  satisfying the first possible conclusion of that lemma or a meet irreducible one satisfying the second. Thus by duality we may assume that there is a meet irreducible element  $q$  and elements  $x_1, \dots, x_t$  with  $q^* < x_i$  such that  $\phi_i = \text{Cg}(x_i, q^*)$  covers  $\theta = \text{Cg}(q, q^*)$ . Thus  $\phi_1, \dots, \phi_t$  form an antichain. So by Lemma 3  $x_1, \dots, x_t$  are join irredundant. Thus  $2^t \leq |L|$  and so  $e_{\prec}/r \leq \log_2 |L|$ , and the theorem follows.  $\square$

**Corollary 5.** *If  $\mathbf{L}$  is a lattice with  $n$  elements, then one can determine the ordered set  $J(\mathbf{Con L})$  and its order relation in time  $O(n^2 \log_2 n)$ .*

*Proof.* As we noted before we can find  $J(\mathbf{Con L})$  and its order relation in time  $O(m^2 + me_{\prec} + e_{\prec})$ . Since  $e_{\prec} \leq 2n \log_2 n$  and  $m \leq n$ , the result follows.  $\square$

Since the function  $x/\log_2 x$  is increasing for  $x \geq e$  (Euler’s constant), we get the following corollary to Theorem 4.

**Corollary 6.** *Let  $\mathbf{L}$  be a finite lattice and let  $e_{\prec} = e_{\prec}(J(\mathbf{Con L}))$ . If  $e_{\prec} \geq 3$ , then*

$$|L| \geq \frac{e_{\prec}}{2 \log_2 e_{\prec}}.$$

### 3. EXAMPLES

In this section we give some examples showing that the inequality of Theorem 4 cannot be improved. We also show that this theorem easily gives the result of [9].

**Example 7.** Let  $r_1, r_2$ , and  $s$  be positive integers and let  $\mathbf{K}_i = \mathbf{3} \times \mathbf{2}^{r_i-1}$  for  $i = 1, 2$ . Of course  $\mathbf{K}_1$  has a filter isomorphic to the three element chain  $\mathbf{3}$  and  $\mathbf{K}_2$  has an ideal isomorphic to  $\mathbf{3}$ . Using the gluing construction of Dilworth and Hall [3, 4], we can identify these two copies of  $\mathbf{3}$  and use the natural order to obtain a lattice  $\mathbf{K}$ . Let  $x$  denote the middle element of this three element chain in  $\mathbf{K}$ . Replace  $x$  with  $x_0 < x_1 < \dots < x_s$  and order the resulting set by saying  $z < x_i < y$  whenever  $z < x < y$  in  $\mathbf{K}$ . Let  $\mathbf{L}$  denote the resulting lattice. Note  $\mathbf{L}$  is obtained from  $\mathbf{K}$  by  $s$  applications of Alan Day’s doubling construction [2]. The diagram of  $\mathbf{L}$  is given in Figure 2 when  $r_1 = r_2 = 3$  and  $s = 3$ .

**Con L** is the lattice obtained by placing the Boolean algebra  $\mathbf{2}^r$  on top of the the Boolean algebra  $\mathbf{2}^s$ , where  $r = r_1 + r_2$ .  $J(\mathbf{Con L})$  is the complete bipartite ordered set with  $r$  top elements and  $s$  bottom elements. So

$$\begin{aligned} |L| &= s + 3 \cdot 2^{r_1-1} + 3 \cdot 2^{r_2-1} - 3, \\ e_{\prec}(J(\mathbf{Con L})) &= rs, \\ |J(\mathbf{L})| + |M(\mathbf{L})| &= 2r + 2s. \end{aligned}$$

Let  $e_{\prec}$  be an integer such that both  $\log_2 e_{\prec}$  and  $e_{\prec}/\log_2 e_{\prec}$  are integers and let  $r_1 = r_2 = \log_2 e_{\prec}$  (and so  $r = 2 \log_2 e_{\prec}$ ) and  $s = e_{\prec}/r$ . (This means  $e_{\prec}$  has the

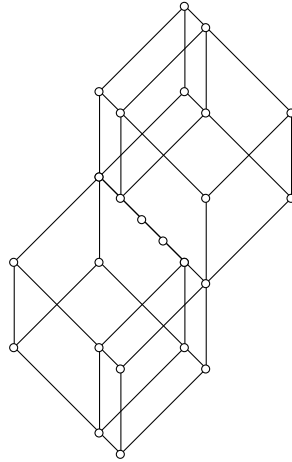


FIGURE 2.  $\mathbf{L}$  when  $r_1 = r_2 = 3$  and  $s = 3$ .

form  $2^{2^k}$ .) Then we have by Theorem 4

$$1 \leq \frac{(2e_{\prec}/2 \log_2 e_{\prec} + 4 \log_2 e_{\prec}) \log_2(6 \cdot 2^{\log_2 e_{\prec}-1} - 3 + e_{\prec}/2 \log_2 e_{\prec})}{e_{\prec}}$$

$$\leq \frac{(2e_{\prec}/2 \log_2 e_{\prec} + 4 \log_2 e_{\prec}) \log_2(3e_{\prec} + e_{\prec}/2 \log_2 e_{\prec})}{e_{\prec}}.$$

But the latter expression tends to 1 as  $e_{\prec}$  tends to  $\infty$ . It follows that Theorem 4 cannot be improved to state

$$e_{\prec}(\mathbf{J}(\mathbf{Con L})) \leq c(|\mathbf{J}(\mathbf{L})| + |\mathbf{M}(\mathbf{L})|) \log_2 |L|$$

for any  $c < 1$ .

If we take  $r_1 = r_2 = \frac{1}{2} \log_2 e_{\prec}$ , then  $|L| = 6 \cdot 2^{\frac{1}{2} \log_2 e_{\prec}-1} + e_{\prec}/\log_2 e_{\prec} - 3 \leq 3\sqrt{e_{\prec}} + e_{\prec}/\log_2 e_{\prec}$ . Thus  $|L|/e_{\prec} \rightarrow 0$  for these lattices, showing that an inequality of the form  $|L| \geq ce_{\prec}(\mathbf{J}(\mathbf{Con L}))$  cannot hold for any  $c > 0$ . Moreover, these parameters also show that

$$|\mathbf{J}(\mathbf{Con L})| \cdot e_{\prec}(\mathbf{J}(\mathbf{Con L})) \leq c \cdot |L|^2$$

fails for all  $c$ .

Finally, if  $m$  is even, let  $\mathbf{P}$  be the height 1 ordered set with  $m/2$  minimal elements,  $m/2$  maximal elements, and each minimal element below each maximal element. Then  $e_{\prec} = m^2/4$  and Corollary 6 shows that if  $\mathbf{L}$  is a lattice with  $\mathbf{J}(\mathbf{Con L}) \cong \mathbf{P}$ , then

$$|L| \geq \frac{m^2}{16 \log_2(m/2)}$$

and it follows that there is no  $\alpha$  such that the class of all such  $\mathbf{P}$ 's can be represented as  $\mathbf{J}(\mathbf{Con L})$  with the size of  $\mathbf{L}$  in  $O(m^{2-\alpha})$ , as was shown in [9].

#### 4. CALCULATING THE CONGRUENCE LATTICE AND AN APPLICATION

To actually compute  $\mathbf{Con L}$  we form the graph  $\mathbf{G}(\mathbf{L})$  and use Tarjan's linear time, depth first algorithm [11] to find the  $\equiv$ -classes and an edge set  $E$  satisfying

$E_{\prec} \subseteq E \subseteq E_{\leq}$ . We then find the transitive, reflexive closure,  $E_{\leq}$ , of  $E$ . If there are  $k$  classes of  $\equiv$ , we represent congruences as bit vectors of length  $k$ . Of course the components of such a bit vector correspond to elements of  $J(\mathbf{Con} \mathbf{L})$ , since  $J(\mathbf{Con} \mathbf{L}) \cong \mathbf{G}(\mathbf{L})/\equiv$ . A congruence  $\theta$  is represented by the vector which is 1 in those components corresponding to join irreducible congruences below  $\theta$ . For each  $a \in J(\mathbf{L})$  we calculate the bit vector for  $\text{Cg}(a, a_*)$ . (This is not just the vector with a 1 only in the component for  $\text{Cg}(a, a_*)$ ; in fact it is here that we need  $E_{\leq}$ .)

This representation is obviously compact. Meet and join are just the bitwise *and* and *or*. One can also decide if  $x \theta y$  and compute  $\mathbf{L}/\theta$  easily. For the latter we find

$$S_{\theta} = \{a \in J(\mathbf{L}) : \langle a, a_* \rangle \notin \theta\}.$$

The join closure of this set is a join subsemilattice of  $\mathbf{L}$  which is isomorphic to  $\mathbf{L}/\theta$  under the induced order from  $\mathbf{L}$ . The details are given in [5].

W. Geyer [6, 7] conjectured that, if  $\mathbf{L}$  is finite and a bounded homomorphic image of a free lattice, then  $|L| \leq |\text{Con} \mathbf{L}|$ . He tested this conjecture on several examples and noted that when, in addition,  $\mathbf{L}$  was subdirectly irreducible, equality held in all his examples. He asked me to use my computer program to try to find a counterexample. Associated with each completely join irreducible element of a free lattice is a finite, subdirectly irreducible lattice which is a bounded homomorphic image of a free lattice. Running the program on a wide selection of such elements produced a subdirectly irreducible lattice which is a bounded image of a free lattice with 53 elements whose congruence lattice had 52 elements. With this example in hand, it was not hard to construct a smaller example. An example with  $|L| = 12$  and  $|\text{Con} \mathbf{L}| = 11$  is given in Figure 3.

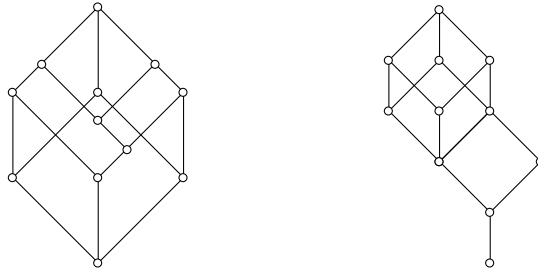


FIGURE 3.  $\mathbf{L}$  and  $\mathbf{Con} \mathbf{L}$ .

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