

**Solution**

This problem is in NP since a claimed set  $\mathcal{P}$  of directed paths in  $G$  can be checked to have  $k$  pairwise vertex-disjoint paths in polynomial time. Since this appears to be a packing problem, let's try a reduction from Set Packing. An instance of Set Packing is a collection  $S_1, \dots, S_m$  of subsets of a set  $S = s_1, \dots, s_n$  and an integer  $k$ ; a solution is a collection  $S_{i_1}, \dots, S_{i_k}$  of the sets, no two of which intersect.

To reduce this to the problem posted, imagine that we build a strongly connected graph  $G = (V, E)$  where  $V = S$ . The collection of subsets  $S_1, \dots, S_m$  corresponds to a collection of vertices  $V_1, \dots, V_m$ , where vertices in the same subset form a directed path. In this reduction a set  $\mathcal{P}$  can be found.

We claim that a solution to Set Packing is "yes" if and only if a solution to the reduction is also "yes." Suppose we have a Set Packing solution  $Y$  of at least  $k$  subsets. Since the subsets are disjoint, the path they map to are pairwise vertex-disjoint. Conversely, each path  $\mathcal{P}$  corresponds to a subset in an instance of Set Packing. These paths are vertex-disjoint, so the subsets must be disjoint as well.