

Solution: In order to prove there is a $|f'| - |f|$ valued (s, t) -flow in G_f , it is first useful to bound these quantities. Starting with a bound on the flow of G_f , which will be referred to abstractly as f_{G_f} , the value of this flow will be the sum of the outbound flow from s in G_f minus the sum of the inbound flow to s , e.g. $|f_{G_f}| = \sum_w f(s \rightarrow w) - \sum_u f(u \rightarrow s)$.

$$|f_{G_f}| = \sum_w f(s \rightarrow w) - \sum_u f(u \rightarrow s) \quad (1)$$

$$\sum_w f(s \rightarrow w) \leq \sum_w c(s \rightarrow w) - |f| \quad (2)$$

$$\sum_u f(u \rightarrow s) \leq -|f| \quad (3)$$

$$-|f| \leq |f_{G_f}| \leq \sum_w c(s \rightarrow w) - |f| \quad (4)$$

The justification for (2) is by the definition of residual graphs - namely $c_f(s \rightarrow w) = c(s \rightarrow w) - f(s \rightarrow w)$. The justification for (3) is also by the definition of residual graphs, where all $u \rightarrow s \in E_f$ are backtrack edges such that $c_f(u \rightarrow s) = f(s \rightarrow u)$. Note for this equation I dropped the value of outbound edges, meaning I minimized full quantity in the case where none of the residual edges have a flow along them. Now we proceed to the bounds on the quantity $|f'| - |f|$ below.

$$0 \leq |f'| \leq \sum_w c(s \rightarrow w) \quad (5)$$

$$-|f| \leq |f'| - |f| \leq \sum_w c(s \rightarrow w) \quad (6)$$

The justification for (1) above is just satisfying the capacity constraint, and (2) just plugs in the bounds of $|f'|$ into $|f'| - |f|$. Seeing clearly now that the bounds of the quantities $|f'| - |f|$ and f_{G_f} are the same, it is sufficient to prove that the upper and lower bound values for f_{G_f} are attainable for all the values in the range to be attainable. Starting with the easy case, the quantity $-|f|$ is just flow in G_f that saturates all backtracking edges $u \rightarrow s$. This is clearly attainable because for any edge $u \rightarrow s$ with capacity c_f , there is a set of vertices s.t. $\sum_a a \rightarrow u = c_f$ since the original flow f satisfied the conservation constraint. This identity can be applied outwards to those vertices a and connected edges all the way to t . For the upper bound $\sum_w c(s \rightarrow w) - |f|$, it is clear that the capacity constraint can be kept to reach this quantity. Chiefly, the flow that saturates all edges $s \rightarrow w$ in G_f produces exactly this sum. It should be noted that the equality can most certainly be satisfied up to the sum $|f'|$, because if there was a bottleneck in some edge such that its flow in G_f and its value in f could not sum to its value f' , f' could not exist because it would be impossible that f' doesn't run into a bottleneck at the same edge.

Using the above knowledge, it can be said that f is a maximum flow iff there is no $s - t$ path in G_f in the following way. Consider the case where f is a maximum flow but there IS an $s - t$ path in G_f . In this case, this $s - t$ path means there exist $|f_{G_f}|$ with positive flow, or in other words, some f' such that $|f'| - |f| > 0$. But if that's the case, the $|f'| > |f|$, meaning f was not the maximum flow and we have a contradiction. Similarly, assuming there is some f that is not the maximum flow for which G_f has no $s - t$ path, it is clear that there is no such positive flow in G_f , or in other words no f' such that $|f'| - |f| > 0$. However if this is the case, then clearly $|f|$ is the maximum flow and we have another contradiction. ■