Overview of Fast Prime Generation

Introduction

As with tautology-checking and complementation, the fast prime generation algorithm uses a recursive “divide-and-conquer” approach. Given an initial cover, the algorithm recursively divides the cover into smaller pieces until termination conditions are met. Results are then returned and reassembled into a final solution. For prime generation, this solution is the set of all prime implicants of the initial function.

An important aspect of the algorithm (as with the earlier algorithms) is that properties of unate functions are exploited, to simplify the recursion. Therefore, this algorithm is another application of the “unate recursive paradigm”.

The algorithm below is the one currently used in espresso-exact to generate all prime implicants. It is described in Rudell’s thesis, ch. 2.5.1 (Handout #8). However, Rudell’s description is actually for more general “multi-valued” Boolean algebras so some of his notation may not be clear. This handout describes the same algorithm, but restricted to the more usual “binary-valued” (0/1) Boolean algebra.

An interesting historical note: The original espresso-exact program used a different prime generation algorithm, described in Rudell ch. 2.5.2. However, that algorithm was replaced by the consensus algorithm below (also, ch. 2.5.1) around 1987-88. The motivation for the change is described in Rudell ch. 2.5.3: this new algorithm has much better runtime.

The Prime Generation Problem:

Given a cover $F$ corresponding to the union of the ON-set and DC-set of a Boolean function $f$, return the set of all prime implicants of $f$.

Definitions.

First, some basic definitions. Given two products $p_1$ and $p_2$, the products differ in a variable $x$ if $p_1$ has literal $x$ and $p_2$ has literal $\overline{x}$ (or vice-versa). If both products have literal $x$, or both have literal $\overline{x}$, or if variable $x$ (complemented or uncomplemented) does not appear in at least one of the products, then the two products do not differ in variable $x$. For example, if $p_1 = abc'$ and $p_2 = acd'$, then (i) the two products differ in variable $c$, and (ii) the two products do not differ in variables $a$, $b$ and $d$.

The distance between two products is the number of inputs where they differ. Intuitively, the distance between two products indicates how far apart they are in a hypercube (at their closest points). In the above example, $p_1$ and $p_2$ differ in one variable, so they have distance 1. If $p_1 = ab'c'$ and $p_2 = a'b'c'd$, then the two products differ in two variables ($a$ and $c$), so their distance is 2.

If two products have distance 1 or greater, then they do not intersect, i.e., they have an empty intersection. If two products have distance 0, then they intersect. In this case, the intersecting cube, $q$, is formed in the usual way: If literal $x$ appears in either $p_1$ or $p_2$, then $x$ appears in $q$. If literal $\overline{x}$ appears in either $p_1$ or $p_2$, then $\overline{x}$ appears in $q$. If neither $x$ nor $\overline{x}$ appears in either of the products, then it does not appear in $q$, either. For example, the intersection of products $abc'$ and $bd$ is: $abc' \cap bd = abc'd$. Note that variable $d$ does not appear in $p_1$, but literal $d$ appears in $p_2$, so the literal $d$ appears in the intersection.

The consensus of two products will be defined if they do not intersect. If two products have distance 2 or greater, their consensus is empty (i.e. no consensus). Otherwise, if two products have distance 1 (that is,
As an example of consensus, suppose $p_1 = ab'c'$ and $p_2 = bc'd'$. Clearly, $p_1$ and $p_2$ do not intersect, since they differ in variable $b$. Since they only differ in variable $b$, $p_1$ and $p_2$ have distance 1. To form the consensus of $p_1$ and $p_2$, first (i) delete the $b$ variable from both, to get $ac'$ and $c'd'$, respectively. Next, (ii) intersect these two new cubes, to get: $ac' \cap c'd' = ac'd'$. Intuitively, cube $ac'd'$ "connects" $p_1$ and $p_2$, in the region where the two cubes are “adjacent” (i.e., in $ab'c'd'$ in $p_1$ and in $abc'd'$ in $p_2$).

The notion of consensus can be generalized from a pair of products to two sets of products. The consensus of two sets of products, $A$ and $B$, written $\text{consensus}(A, B)$, is simply formed by taking the consensus of each pair of products, one cube from $A$ and one cube from $B$. That is, it is the “pairwise” consensus of the two sets $A$ and $B$. The set of all resulting products is the consensus of sets $A$ and $B$.

**The Fast Prime Generation Algorithm**

We now describe a fast recursive algorithm for prime generation based on consensus.

**Overview**

Fast prime generation is based on simple idea. Given a function $f$ and a splitting variable $x$, each prime implicant of $f$ falls into one of 3 categories: either (i) it contains literal $x$, (ii) it contains literal $\overline{x}$, or (iii) it does not contain $x$ or $\overline{x}$. Category (i) contains primes in one half of the hypercube of the function (where $x = 1$). Category (ii) contains primes in the other half of the hypercube (where $x = 0$). Finally, Category (iii) contains primes which span both halves of the hypercube.

As an example, given the Boolean function $f$ with cover $F = xyz' + x'y' + y'z$, then $xyz'$ is in Category (i), $x'y'$ is in Category (ii), and $y'z$ is in Category (iii) ($x$ does not appear in this prime).

Category (i) and (ii) primes can be generated recursively, by finding the primes of two respective cofactors: $F_x$ and $F_{x'}$ (to be described shortly). The key interesting issue is how to find the remaining primes (Category (iii)), which span both halves of the hypercube.

The following fundamental theorem provides the answer:

**Prime Consensus Theorem.** Let $f$ be a Boolean function, with cover $F$ (which covers the entire ON-set and DC-set). Also, let $x$ be any input variable. Then the prime implicants of $f$ can be partitioned into 3 sets:

(i) $P_1$, which contains primes having literal $x$;
(ii) $P_0$, which contains primes having literal $\overline{x}$;
(iii) $P_-$, which contains primes with no $x$ or $\overline{x}$. Each prime $p$ in $P_-$ is the consensus of two other primes, $p_1$ and $p_0$, where $p_1$ is from $P_1$ and $p_0$ is from $P_0$. That is, $p = \text{consensus}(p_1, p_0)$, for some prime $p_1$ in $P_1$ and $p_0$ in $P_0$.

This key theorem states that every prime in category (iii) can be formed as the consensus of a prime from $P_1$ and a prime from $P_0$. Thus, if you already have sets $P_1$ and $P_0$, all remaining primes (i.e., those in $P_-$) can be simply generated, as follows:

For each pair of primes, $(p_1, p_0)$, where $p_1$ is in $P_1$ and $p_0$ is in $P_0$, generate the consensus cube $p_{1/0} = \text{consensus}(p_1, p_0)$. The resulting set $P_{1/0}$ of all such consensus cubes contains all the primes of $P_-$.  

More formally, this is noted as the consensus of the two sets: $P_{1/0} = \text{consensus}(P_1, P_0)$.
Finally, one small adjustment must be made: although set $P_1/0$ contains all prime implicants of $P^-$, $P_1/0$ may also contain some smaller non-primes! These non-primes must be deleted. To do this we introduce a new clean-up operator, which deletes smaller cubes:

**Definition: Single-Cube Containment (SCC).** Given any two cubes, $c_1$ and $c_2$, cube $c_1$ is single-cube contained in $c_2$, if $c_2$ contains (covers) $c_1$. For example, if $c_1 = w'y'$ and $c_2 = wxy'z$, then $c_2$ is single-cube contained in $c_1$. This definition can be extended to a set of cubes: given a set $C$ of cubes, $\{c_1, c_2, \ldots, c_n\}$, then the single-cube containment of set $C$ is the resulting set after applying single-cube containment to every pair of cubes. For example, if $C = \{abc, ab', bcd, ab'd, a'd, a'bcd\}$, then the single-cube containment of $C$ (written $\text{SCC}(C)$), is the set $\{abc, ab', bcd, a'd\}$.

Thus, SCC is a “clean-up operator”, which takes a set of cubes and deletes each cube which is completely contained in another cube in the set. Using SCC, we can now formally state how to generate $P^-$, if we are given sets $P_1$ and $P_0$:

$$P^- = \text{SCC}(\text{consensus}(P_1, P_0))$$

That is, the set $P^-$ is formed by taking the pairwise consensus of all cubes in $P_1$ and $P_0$, then deleting any resulting smaller (non-prime) cubes contained inside other cubes.

**Generating $P_1$ and $P_0$.**

The above result indicates how to generate $P^-$, if you are given $P_1$ and $P_0$. Next, we address how to generate $P_1$ and $P_0$. Set $P_1$ is the set of all primes which have literal $x$. To generate $P_1$, we first generate all primes of a cofactor of cover $F$: $\text{Primes}(F_x)$. Once these primes are generated, each result is ANDed with literal $x$. The resulting set contains all primes of $P_1$. However, as before, the set may also contain some non-primes, which are contained in $P^-$ consensus cubes. These will be deleted later.

Similarly, set $P_0$ is the set of all primes which have literal $x'$. To generate $P_0$, we first generate all primes of a cofactor of cover $F$: $\text{Primes}(F_{x'})$. Once these primes are generated, each result is ANDed with literal $x'$. The resulting set contains all primes of $P_0$. Again, the set may also contain some non-primes, which are contained in $P^-$ consensus cubes. These will be deleted later.

**Fast Prime Generation: Algorithm.**

Finally, we describe the complete prime algorithm used in *espresso-exact*. The algorithm generates the set of primes, by producing the 3 sets: $P_1$, $P_0$ and $P^-$. First, it recursively generates primes of $F_x$ and $F_{x'}$, and then AND’s them with literals ($x$ and $x'$). Then, once these are generated, it uses the Prime Consensus Theorem to produce $P^-$. Finally, it removes all non-primes. The result is the complete set of prime implicants of the original function:

**Recursive Prime Generation Theorem.** Let $f$ be a Boolean function, with cover $F$ (which covers the entire ON-set and DC-set). Also, let $x$ be any input variable. Then the prime implicants of $f$ can be generated as follows:

$$\text{Primes}(f) = \text{SCC}(A1 \cup A0 \cup \text{consensus}(A1, A0)),$$

where $A1 = x \cdot \text{Primes}(F_x)$ and $A0 = x' \cdot \text{Primes}(F_{x'})$.

This key theorem formally summarizes how the primes of $f$ can be generated recursively, and effectively is an outline of the algorithm. The problem of finding primes of $f$ is transformed into the problem of finding the primes of two simpler cofactors, $f_x$ and $f_{x'}$. These are used to generate $A1$ and $A0$. $A1$ contains all the primes of $P_1$, but may also contain non-primes which are contained in cubes of $P^-$. $A0$ contains all the primes of $P_0$, but may also contain non-primes which are contained in cubes of $P^-$. Once these two results are returned, they are then combined using consensus. Any non-primes are deleted, using the SCC operator. The result is the union of the resulting sets.
The theorem corresponds directly to an algorithm, as follows.

**Step #1.** Check if $F$ satisfies termination conditions (B1-B4 and U1 below). If so, immediately return the result, $Primes(F)$. The algorithm is done.

**Step #2.** If the algorithm is not done, and none of the termination conditions applies, then the cover is recursively split in two halves, and the same algorithm is now repeated on each half. A splitting (or branching) variable, $x$, is selected. Recursively compute two sets: (i) $A_1 = x \cdot Primes(F_x)$, and (ii) $A_0 = x' \cdot Primes(F_{x'})$. $A_1$ contains the primes of $P_1$ (and possibly some non-primes). $A_0$ contains the primes of $P_0$ (and possibly some non-primes). Finally, the two resulting sets, $A_1$ and $A_0$, are combined using consensus operator. After deleting non-primes (applying the SCC operator), the union of the 3 sets is the set of all primes of $f$.

**Choice of Splitting Variable.** The choice of splitting is important. The same strategy can be used, as is described in Handout #11: *Overview of Tautology Checking.*

**Basic Rules for Termination**

Basic rules are used to terminate recursion, as in tautology-checking and complementation. As in complementation (and unlike tautology-checking), an actual cover is returned: the set of all primes of the given function.

**B1. Cover $F$ includes the Universal Cube.** Here, $F$ is a tautology. Return a cover containing the universal cube.

**B2. Single-Input Dependence.** If the function depends on only one input $x$ (i.e., all other input columns contain only ‘-‘), and the $x$ column contains both 1’s and 0’s, then the function is a tautology. Return a cover containing the universal cube.

**B3. Cover $F$ is Empty.** A cover is empty if it contains no cube. In this case, the function is all 0. Return the empty cover (contains no cubes).

**B4. Cover $F$ contains a Single Cube.** In this case, the cube itself must be the only prime of the function. Return $F$ (which contains the single cube).

**Advanced Rules for Termination: Unateness Conditions**

An advanced rule can be applied, to terminate early. This rule can be used even if B1-B4 do not apply. The following powerful theorem, presented by Brayton *et al.*, describes the unate termination condition:

**Unate Prime Theorem.** Let $f$ be a Boolean function, with cover $F$ (which covers the entire ON-set and DC-set). If $F$ is a unate cover, then cover $F$ contains all of its prime implicants. In addition, $F$ may contain some non-primes, which can be deleted. That is:

$$Primes(f) = SCC(F).$$

This theorem states that, if $F$ is a unate cover, then $F$ must include every one of its prime implicants! In addition, $F$ may also include some non-primes. No further recursion is necessary. Once the non-primes are deleted using SCC operator, the resulting cover is precisely the set of all prime implicants of $f$. Thus, if $F$ is unate, we simply terminate and delete all non-primes, using the SCC operator. The result is exactly the set of all prime implicants of $F$. The resulting cover is simply returned: SCC($F$).

It is beyond the scope of the course to prove this theorem, but some intuition is presented in the class lectures. This theorem can be formalized into a termination rule:

**U1. Unate Cover.** If the cover $F$ is unate, then terminate. Return SCC($F$), which is precisely the set of all primes of $F$. 

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