The complexity of planar graph choosability *

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Abstract

A graph $G$ is $k$-choosable if for every assignment of a set $S(v)$ of $k$ colors to every vertex $v$ of $G$, there is a proper coloring of $G$ that assigns to each vertex $v$ a color from $S(v)$. We consider the complexity of deciding whether a given graph is $k$-choosable for some constant $k$. In particular, it is shown that deciding whether a given planar graph is 4-choosable is NP-hard, and so is the problem of deciding whether a given planar triangle-free graph is 3-choosable. We also obtain simple constructions of a planar graph which is not 4-choosable and a planar triangle-free graph which is not 3-choosable.

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1 Introduction

All graphs considered here are finite, undirected and simple (i.e., have no loops and no parallel edges). If \( G = (V, E) \) is a graph, and \( f \) is a function that assigns to each vertex \( v \) of \( G \) a positive integer \( f(v) \), we say that \( G \) is \( f \)-choosable if for every assignment of sets of integers \( S(v) \subseteq \mathbb{Z} \) for all vertices \( v \in V \), where \( |S(v)| = f(v) \) for all \( v \), there is a proper vertex coloring \( c : V \mapsto \mathbb{Z} \) so that \( c(v) \in S(v) \) for all \( v \in V \). The graph \( G \) is \( k \)-choosable if it is \( f \)-choosable for the constant function \( f(v) \equiv k \). The choice number of \( G \), denoted \( \text{ch}(G) \), is the minimum integer \( k \) so that \( G \) is \( k \)-choosable.

The study of choice numbers of graphs was initiated by Vizing in [11] and by Erdős, Rubin and Taylor in [2]. A characterization of all 2-choosable graphs is given in [2]. If \( G \) is a connected graph, the core of \( G \) is the graph obtained from \( G \) by repeatedly deleting vertices of degree 1 until there is no such vertex.

**Theorem 1.1 ([2])** A simple graph is 2-choosable if and only if the core of each connected component of it is either a single vertex, or an even cycle, or a graph consisting of two vertices with three even internally disjoint paths between them, where the length of at least two of the paths is exactly 2.

In the present paper we consider the complexity of deciding whether a given graph is \( k \)-choosable for some constant \( k \). It is shown in [2] that the following problem is \( \Pi_p^2 \)-complete: (for terminology see [3])

**BIPARTITE GRAPH (2,3)-CHOOSABILITY (BG (2,3)-CH)**

**INSTANCE:** A bipartite graph \( G = (V, E) \) and a function \( f : V \mapsto \{2, 3\} \).

**QUESTION:** Is \( G \) \( f \)-choosable?

Consider the following decision problem:

**BIPARTITE GRAPH \( k \)-CHOOSABILITY (BG \( k \)-CH)**

**INSTANCE:** A bipartite graph \( G \).

**QUESTION:** Is \( G \) \( k \)-choosable?

It is proved in [4] that this problem is \( \Pi_p^2 \)-complete for every constant \( k \geq 3 \). It follows easily from Theorem 1.1 that the case \( k = 2 \) is solvable in polynomial time.

The following results are known concerning the choice numbers of planar graphs:

**Theorem 1.2 ([9])** Every planar graph is 5-choosable.

**Theorem 1.3 ([12])** There exists a planar graph (with 238 vertices) which is not 4-choosable.

**Theorem 1.4 ([1])** Every bipartite planar graph is 3-choosable.

**Theorem 1.5 ([13])** There exists a planar triangle-free graph (with 166 vertices) which is not 3-choosable.
Theorem 1.6 ([10]) Every planar graph with girth 5 is 3-choosable.

The following two theorems improve upon Theorems 1.3 and 1.5 and use much simpler constructions.

Theorem 1.7 There exists a planar graph with 75 vertices which is not 4-choosable.

Theorem 1.8 There exists a planar triangle-free graph with 164 vertices which is not 3-choosable.

It follows easily from Theorems 1.1 and 1.4 that the choice number of a given bipartite planar graph can be determined in polynomial time. Consider the following decision problems:

**BIPARTITE PLANAR GRAPH (2,3)-CHOOSABILITY (BPG (2,3)-CH)**

INSTANCE: A bipartite planar graph $G = (V, E)$ and a function $f : V \mapsto \{2, 3\}$.

QUESTION: Is $G$ $f$-choosable?

**PLANAR TRIANGLE-FREE GRAPH 3-CHOOSABILITY (PTFG 3-CH)**

INSTANCE: A planar triangle-free graph $G$.

QUESTION: Is $G$ 3-choosable?

**PLANAR GRAPH 4-CHOOSABILITY (PG 4-CH)**

INSTANCE: A planar graph $G$.

QUESTION: Is $G$ 4-choosable?

**UNION OF TWO FORESTS 3-CHOOSABILITY (U2F 3-CH)**

INSTANCE: Two forests $F_1$ and $F_2$ with $V(F_1) = V(F_2)$.

QUESTION: Is the union of $F_1$ and $F_2$ 3-choosable?

We prove the following results:

Theorem 1.9 BIPARTITE PLANAR GRAPH (2,3)-CHOOSABILITY is $\Pi^p_2$-complete.

Theorem 1.10 PLANAR TRIANGLE-FREE GRAPH 3-CHOOSABILITY is $\Pi^p_2$-complete.

Theorem 1.11 PLANAR GRAPH 4-CHOOSABILITY is $\Pi^p_2$-complete.

The decision problem U2F 3-CH was formulated by M. Stiebitz [8] in light of the fact that every planar triangle-free graph is the union of two forests. The following Theorem can be derived easily from the constructions used in the proofs of Theorems 1.9 and 1.10.

Theorem 1.12 UNION OF TWO FORESTS 3-CHOOSABILITY is $\Pi^p_2$-complete.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. In section 2 we prove Theorems 1.7 and 1.8. The $\Pi^p_2$-completeness proof of the decision problem BPG (2,3)-CH taken from [2] forms the basis for the proof of Theorem 1.9 given in section 3. Section 4 contains the proofs of Theorems 1.10 and 1.11.
2 Two planar graphs

In this section we construct two planar graphs in order to prove Theorems 1.7 and 1.8.

Proof of Theorem 1.7 The graph \( H \) is constructed as follows: We take the disjoint union of the graphs \( \{ G_i : 1 \leq i \leq 12 \} \), where each \( G_i \) is a copy of the graph \( W_1 \) in Fig. 1. All the 12 vertices named \( u \) are identified, as well as all the 12 vertices named \( v \). The edge \((u, v)\) is added to obtain the graph \( H \), which is obviously planar. We claim that the graph \( H \) is not 4-choosable. To prove this, take \( S(u) = S(v) = \{7, 8, 9, 10\} \). Denote \( A = \{ (a, b) \in S(u) \times S(v) | a \neq b \} \), then surely \( |A| = 12 \). With every \( i, 1 \leq i \leq 12 \) we associate a different element \( p_i = (a, b) \in A \), and define the sets of every vertex of \( G_i \) except for \( u \) and \( v \) to be as in Fig. 1. It can be easily verified that there is no proper vertex coloring for this assignment, and therefore \( H \) is not 4-choosable. To see this, suppose the vertex \( u \) is colored with the color \( a \) and the vertex \( v \) is colored with the color \( b \), where \( (a, b) = p_i \in A \). The vertex \( w \) in the graph \( G_i \) can be colored with either the color 1 or the color 2, and in both cases the coloring in the graph \( G_i \) cannot be completed.

We now construct a planar graph \( H' \) which is not 4-choosable and has fewer vertices than \( H \). The graph \( H' \) is obtained from \( H \) by identifying the vertex \( y_2 \) of \( G_i \) with the vertex \( x_2 \) of \( G_{i+1} \) for every \( i, 1 \leq i < 12 \). We claim that \( H' \) is not 4-choosable. The previous definitions of \( S(u), S(v), A \) and \( p_i \) are used. For every \( i, 1 \leq i < 12 \) we do the following: Denote \( p_i = (a, b) \) and \( p_{i+1} = (c, d) \). The set of the vertex \( y_2 \) of \( G_i \) (which is the same as the set of the vertex \( x_2 \) of \( G_{i+1} \)) is chosen so that it contains the colors \( a, b, c \) and \( d \) (and maybe other colors if \( p_i \) and \( p_{i+1} \) are not disjoint). In the same manner as before, we conclude that \( H' \) is not 4-choosable. The graph \( H' \) is planar and has \( 2 + 12 \times 7 - 11 = 75 \) vertices. \( \square \)
**Proof of Theorem 1.8** The graph $H$ is constructed as follows: We take the disjoint union of the graphs $\{G_i : 1 \leq i \leq 9\}$, where each $G_i$ is a copy of the graph $W_2$ in Fig. 2. All the 9 vertices named $u$ are identified, as well as all the 9 vertices named $v$, to obtain the planar triangle-free graph $H$. We claim that the graph $H$ is not 3-choosable. To prove this, take $S(u) = \{10, 11, 12\}$ and $S(v) = \{13, 14, 15\}$. With every $i, 1 \leq i \leq 9$ we associate a different element $(a, b) \in S(u) \times S(v)$, and define the sets of every vertex of $G_i$ except for $u$ and $v$ to be as in Fig. 2. As in the proof of Theorem 1.7, we conclude that $H$ is not 3-choosable.

We now construct a planar triangle-free graph $H'$ which is not 3-choosable and has fewer vertices than $H$. The graph $H'$ is obtained from $H$ by identifying the vertex $y_2$ of $G_i$ with the vertex $x_2$ of $G_{i+1}$ for every $i$, $1 \leq i \leq 9$ (indices taken modulo 9). We claim that $H'$ is not 3-choosable. The previous definitions of $S(u)$ and $S(v)$ are used. Consider the following ordering of the elements of $S(u) \times S(v)$:

$$\{p_i\}_{i=1}^{9} = (10, 13), (10, 14), (10, 15), (11, 15), (11, 13), (11, 14), (12, 14), (12, 15), (12, 13).$$

For every $i, 1 \leq i \leq 9$ we do the following: Denote $p_i = (a, b)$ and $p_{i+1} = (c, d)$. The set of the vertex $y_2$
of \( G_i \) (which is the same as the set of the vertex \( x_2 \) of \( G_{i+1} \)) is defined as \( \{a, b, c, d\} \) (this is a set of size 3).

In the same manner as before, we conclude that \( H' \) is not 3-choosable. \( H' \) is a planar triangle-free graph and has \( 2 + 9 \times 18 = 164 \) vertices. \( \square \)

3 The choosability of bipartite planar graphs

The \( \Pi_p^2 \)-completeness proof of the decision problem \( BG (2,3)\)-CH taken from [2] forms the basis for the proof of Theorem 1.9 given in this section. The ordinary Planar Satisfiability problem is well known to be NP-complete ([3],[6]). We use a reduction from the following problem:

**RESTRICTED PLANAR SATISFIABILITY (RPS)**

**INSTANCE:** An expression of the form \((\forall U_1) \cdots (\forall U_k)(\exists V_1) \cdots (\exists V_r)\Phi\) such that (1) \( \Phi \) is a formula in conjunctive normal form with a set \( C \) of clauses over the set \( X = \{U_1, \ldots, U_k, V_1, \ldots, V_r\} \) of variables, (2) each clause involves exactly three distinct variables, (3) every variable occurs in at most three clauses, and (4) the graph \( G_\Phi = (X \cup C, \{xc | x \in c \in C \text{ or } \pi \in c \in C\}) \) is planar.

**QUESTION:** Is this expression true?

A similar problem is used in [5] for proving results concerning the complexity of list colorings. The same transformation used in [6] for proving that the decision problem Planar Quantified Boolean Formula is P-space-complete can be used for proving that the following problem is \( \Pi_p^2 \)-complete:

**ORDINARY PLANAR SATISFIABILITY (OPS)**

**INSTANCE:** An expression of the form \((\forall U_1) \cdots (\forall U_k)(\exists V_1) \cdots (\exists V_r)\Phi\) such that (1) \( \Phi \) is a formula in conjunctive normal form with a set \( C \) of clauses over the set \( X = \{U_1, \ldots, U_k, V_1, \ldots, V_r\} \) of variables, (2) each clause involves at most three distinct variables, (3) the graph \( G_\Phi = (X \cup C, \{xc | x \in c \in C \text{ or } \pi \in c \in C\}) \) is planar.

**QUESTION:** Is this expression true?

We apply ideas from [7] for proving the following lemma:

**Lemma 3.1** RESTRICTED PLANAR SATISFIABILITY is \( \Pi_p^2 \)-complete.

**Proof** It is easy to see that RPS \( \in \Pi_p^2 \). We transform OPS to RPS. Let the expression \( B \) be an instance of OPS, and suppose that \( B \) has the form \((\forall U_1) \cdots (\forall U_k)(\exists U_{k+1}) \cdots (\exists U_{k+r})\Phi\). Take a planar embedding of \( G_\Phi \). For every variable \( V \) we do the following: Let \((V,C_1), \ldots, (V,C_n)\) be the edges adjacent to the variable \( V \) in the graph \( G_\Phi \) in a clockwise order according to the planar embedding. Now introduce new variables \( V_1, \ldots, V_n \) and clauses \( V_i \lor V_{i+1}, i = 1, \ldots, n \) (indices taken modulo \( n \)), and replace the literals \( V, \overline{V} \)
in clauses $C_i$ by the literals $V_i, \overline{V}_i$, respectively, for $i = 1, \ldots, n$. The quantified variable $V$ is replaced with the variable $V_1$ quantified with the same quantifier. A new quantifier block existentially quantifying the variables $V_2, \ldots, V_n$ is appended to the list of quantifiers.

To every clause which involves exactly two variables we add a new variable $V$ and insert the quantified variable ($\forall V$) in the beginning of the expression. In a similar manner we handle clauses with only one variable. It is easily seen that the modified formula has the desired properties and that it is true if and only if $B$ is true.

**Proof of Theorem 1.9** It is easy to see that $\text{BPG } (2,3)\text{-CH} \in \Pi_2^p$. We transform $\text{RPS}$ to $\text{BPG } (2,3)\text{-CH}$. Let the expression $(\forall U_1) \cdots (\forall U_k)(\exists U_{k+1}) \cdots (\exists U_{k+r}) \Phi$, denoted as $B$, be an instance of $\text{RPS}$. We shall construct a bipartite planar graph $G = (V, E)$ and a function $f : V \mapsto \{2,3\}$ such that $G$ is $f$-choosable if and only if $B$ is true. Suppose that $\Phi$ has the following form: $C_1 \land C_2 \land \cdots \land C_m$ where each $C_i$ is of the form $(X_{i1} \lor X_{i2} \lor X_{i3})$ and each $X_{ij}$ is $U_s$ or $U_s$.

The basic ideas of constructs for the graph involve "propagators", "half-propagators", "multioutput propagators", and "initial graphs", with some nodes designated as input nodes, and some nodes designated as output nodes. In the following figures a number on a node will be the value $f$ takes on that node when $G$ is formed. The value on an in node will be acquired when it gets merged with an out node. A half-propagator is the graph in Fig. 3. A propagator can be made by merging the out node of any half-propagator with the in node of any other half-propagator. A multioutput propagator is shown in Fig. 4. The initial graphs are the graphs in Fig. 5 and 6.

The graph $G$ consists of the following. For each $i$ from 1 to $k$, we have a $\forall$-graph, with the out nodes named $U_i$ and $\overline{U}_i$. For each $i$ from $k + 1$ to $k + r$, we have a $\exists$-graph, with the out nodes names $U_i$ and $\overline{U}_i$. We think of the $C_i$’s as clauses, and think of $U_s$ and $\overline{U}_s$ as literals. For each literal $V$ we connect a multioutput propagator to the node named $V$, identifying the in node of the propagator with $V$. All the multioutput propagators look alike having $3m$ output nodes, one for each $ij$ where $1 \leq i \leq m$ and $1 \leq j \leq 3$.

Now we add $m$ new nodes (each with $f(C_i) = 3$) named $C_1, C_2, \ldots, C_m$. For each $i$ from 1 to $m$, and
each $j$ from 1 to 3, connect $C_i$ to the $ij$ node of the multioutput propagator attached to the node named $X_{ij}$.

That describes the graph $G$, which is obviously bipartite. Every variable occurs in at most three clauses, and therefore it occurs either at most once positive or at most once negative. Combining this with the fact that $G_\Phi$ is planar, we conclude that $G$ is planar.

We use here a different half-propagator from the one used in [2], and therefore the following properties needed for the proof should be verified for our half-propagator.

1. A 2-coloration will give the out node opposite color to that of the in node.

2. For any choice of a letter from the in node, and no matter what letters are put on nodes other than the in node, there is a compatible choice of letters from the remaining nodes of the half-propagator.

3. For any assignment of letters to nodes other than the in node, for any choice of a letter from the out node, there is at most one choice of letter incompatible with it on the in node. (This is a direct consequence of $K_{2,3}$ being 2-choosable)

4. There is an assignment of letters, and a choice of in letter, such that only one choice of a letter from the out node is compatible with it. (See Fig. 7)

The proof which appears in [2] can be used to conclude that $G$ is $f$-choosable iff $B$ is true. \qed
4 The choosability of planar graphs

In this section we prove Theorems 1.10 and 1.11.

Lemma 4.1 Let $G = (V, E)$ be an odd cycle, and suppose we have an assignment of sets of integers $S(v) \subseteq \mathbb{Z}$ for all vertices $v \in V$, where $S(v) = 2$ for all $v$. There exists a proper coloring $c : V \mapsto \mathbb{Z}$ so that $c(v) \in S(v)$ for all $v \in V$ if and only if not all the sets $S(v)$ are equal.

Proof Suppose first that not all the sets $S(v)$ are equal. Let $x_1$ and $x_k$ be adjacent vertices for which $S(x_1) \neq S(x_k)$, where $G$ is the cycle $x_1 - \cdots - x_k - x_1$. Choose a color $c_1 \in S(x_1) - S(x_k)$, and go in a sequence choosing $c_2 \in S(x_2) - \{c_1\}$, $c_3 \in S(x_3) - \{c_2\}$, \ldots until $c_k \in S(x_k) - \{c_{k-1}\}$. We have obtained a proper coloring of $G$, as needed.

If the sets $S(v)$ are equal there is no coloring as $\chi(G) = 3$. □

Lemma 4.2 Suppose that $C_1$ and $C_2$ are two disjoint copies of the odd cycle of length $k$, which we denote by $C_1 = x_1 - \cdots - x_k - x_1$ and $C_2 = y_1 - \cdots - y_k - y_1$. Let $G$ be composed of $C_1$ and $C_2$ together with the edges $(x_i, y_i)$, $i = 1, \ldots, k$. Suppose we have an assignment of sets of integers $S(v) \subseteq \mathbb{Z}$ for all vertices $v \in C_2$, where $S(v) = 3$ for all $v \in C_2$. Then there is at most one proper coloring of $C_1$ which cannot be completed to a proper coloring of $G$ by assigning to each vertex $v \in C_2$ a color from $S(v)$. 8
Proof Suppose that \( c \) is a proper coloring of \( C_i \) which cannot be completed to a proper coloring of \( G \). Denote \( c_i = c(x_i), \) \( i = 1, \ldots, k \). If follows from lemma 4.1 that there exist two colors \( a \) and \( b \) so that \( S(y_i) = \{a, b, c_i\}, \) \( i = 1, \ldots, k \). Since \( c \) is a proper coloring, surely \( \bigcap_{i=1}^{k} S(y_i) = \{a, b\} \). By applying lemma 4.1 again, we conclude that \( c \) is the only proper coloring with the required properties for the considered assignment of sets \( S(y_i) = \{a, b, c_i\} \). \( \square \)

Definition 4.3 A graph \( G = (V, E) \) is \( k \)-restrictly-choosable if \( G \) is \( f_v \)-choosable for every \( v \in V \), where the function \( f_v \) is defined as \( f_v(v) = k - 1 \) and \( f_v(w) = k \) for every \( w \in V - \{v\} \).

Definition 4.4 A graph \( G \) is \( k \)-choice-critical if \( G \) is \( k \)-choosable but not \( k \)-restrictly-choosable.

Definition 4.5 Let \( G = (V, E) \) be a graph, and suppose that \( u \) and \( v \) are two distinct vertices of \( G \). Let \( S \) be an assignment of sets of integers \( S(w) \subseteq Z \) for all vertices \( w \in V \). We denote by \( \text{incomp}(G, u, v, S) \) the set \( \{(a, b) \in S(u) \times S(v)\} \) there is no proper vertex coloring \( c : V \to Z \) so that \( c(u) = a, c(v) = b \) and \( c(w) \in S(w) \) for all \( w \in V \).

Lemma 4.6 Let \( W_2 = (V, E) \) be the graph in Fig. 2. If \( S \) is an assignment of sets of integers \( S(w) \subseteq Z \) for all vertices \( w \in V \), where \( S(w) = 3 \) for all \( w \), then \( |\text{incomp}(W_2, u, v, S)| \leq 1 \).

Proof Suppose that \( (a, b) \in \text{incomp}(W_2, u, v, S) \). It is easy to verify, by applying lemma 4.2, that \( a \neq b, a \in S(w), b \in S(x_4) \cap S(y_4) \) and \( \{a, b\} \subseteq S(x_2) \cap S(y_2) \). Combining lemma 4.2 with the fact that \( (a, b) \in \text{incomp}(W_2, u, v, S) \), we obtain that there exist a coloring of the vertices \( x_1, \ldots, x_4, w \) with the colors \( c_1, \ldots, c_5 \), respectively, and a coloring of the vertices \( y_1, \ldots, y_4, w \) with the colors \( d_1, \ldots, d_5 \), respectively, which have the properties stated in the lemma. It follows easily that \( S(w) = \{a, c_5, d_5\} \) and \( S(x_2) = \{a, b, c_2\} \).

In the same manner we can prove that if \( (g, h) \in \text{incomp}(W_2, u, v, S) \), then \( g \neq h, S(w) = \{g, c_5, d_5\} \) and \( S(x_2) = \{g, h, c_2\} \), which implies that \( g = a \) and \( h = b \). This proves that \( |\text{incomp}(W_2, u, v, S)| \leq 1 \), as needed. \( \square \)

We construct the graph \( H_1 \) as follows: We take the disjoint union of the graphs \( \{G_i : 1 \leq i \leq 6\} \), where each \( G_i \) is a copy of the graph \( W_2 \) in Fig. 2. All the 6 vertices named \( u \) are identified, as well as all the 6 vertices named \( v \), to obtain the planar triangle-free graph \( H_1 \).

Lemma 4.7 The graph \( H_1 \) is 3-choosable.

Proof Let \( S \) be an assignment of sets of integers \( S(w) \subseteq Z \) for all vertices \( w \in V \), where \( S(w) = 3 \) for all \( w \). Suppose first that there exists a color \( c \in S(u) \cap S(v) \). It follows immediately that by coloring \( u \) and \( v \) with the color \( c \) we can find a proper coloring.

Suppose next that \( S(u) \cap S(v) = \emptyset \). It follows from lemma 4.6 that \( |\text{incomp}(G_i, u, v, S)| \leq 1 \) for \( i = 1, \ldots, 6 \), and therefore \( |\text{incomp}(H_1, u, v, S)| \leq 6 \). Since \( |\text{incomp}(H_1, u, v, S)| < |S(u) \times S(v)| = 9 \), we conclude that a coloring is possible. \( \square \)
**Lemma 4.8** The graph $H_1$ is not 3-restrictly-choosable.

**Proof** Take $S(u) = \{10, 11\}$ and $S(v) = \{12, 13, 14\}$. Proceed as in the proof of Theorem 1.8. □

**Lemma 4.9** There exists a planar triangle-free graph which is 3-choice-critical.

**Proof** Combine lemmas 4.7 and 4.8. □

**Proof of Theorem 1.10** It is easy to see that PTFG $3$-CH$\in\Pi_2^p$. We transform BPG $(2,3)$-CH to PTG $3$-CH. Let the graph $G = (V, E)$ and the function $f : V \mapsto \{2, 3\}$ be an instance of BPG $(2,3)$-CH. We shall construct a planar triangle-free graph $G' = (V', E')$ such that $G'$ is 3-choosable if and only if $G$ is $f$-choosable. If follows from lemma 4.9 that there exists a planar triangle-free graph $W$ which is 3-choice-critical. Let $u$ be a vertex of $W$ for which $W$ is not $g_u$-choosable, where the function $g$ is defined as $g_u(u) = 2$ and $g_u(w) = 3$ otherwise. The graph $G'$ is obtained from $G$ by adding a disjoint copy of $W$ for every $v \in V(G)$ for which $f(v) = 2$, and connecting $v$ to the vertex $u$ of this copy.

Since both $G$ and $W$ are planar triangle-free graphs, it is easy to see that $G'$ is also a planar triangle-free graph (recall that $W$ has an embedding in the plane so that $u$ appears on the exterior face.) We first prove that if $G$ is $f$-choosable, then $G'$ is 3-choosable. Take an assignment of sets of integers $S(w) \subseteq Z$ for all vertices $w \in V'$, where $S(w) = 3$ for all $w$. The graph $W$ is 3-choosable, and so we find a proper coloring in each copy of $W$ in the graph $G'$. For each copy of $W$, the color chosen in the vertex $u$ is removed from the vertex of $G$ adjacent to $u$. The coloring can be completed, since $G$ is $f$-choosable.

We now prove that if $G'$ is 3-choosable, then $G$ is $f$-choosable. Suppose we have an assignment of sets of integers $S(w) \subseteq Z$ for all vertices $w \in V(G)$, where $|S(w)| = f(w)$ for all $w$. Take an assignment which proves that $W$ is not $g_u$-choosable, and put it in each copy of $W$ in the graph $G'$. Let $d$ be a new color. For each copy $W$, we add the color $d$ to the vertex $u$ of this copy and to its neighbor in $G$. Since $G'$ is 3-choosable, we can find a proper coloring $c$ of $G'$ assigning to each vertex a color from its set. The coloring $c$ restricted to $G$ implies that $G$ is $f$-choosable. □

In order to prove that deciding whether a given planar graph is 3-choosable is $\Pi_2^p$-complete (a weaker version of Theorem 1.10), it is possible to use the planar graph $W_3$ in Fig. 8. In a similar manner to the previous proofs, one can prove that $W_3$ is 3-choice-critical. The assignment given in Fig. 8 proves that $W_3$ is not 3-restrictly-choosable.

**Lemma 4.10** Let $W_1 = (V, E)$ be the graph in Fig. 1. If $S$ is an assignment of sets of integers $S(w) \subseteq Z$ for all vertices $w \in V$, where $S(w) = 4$ for all $w$, then $|incomp(W_1, u, v, S)| \leq 1$.

**Proof** Suppose that $\{a, b\} \in incomp(W_1, u, v, S)$. It is easy to verify, by applying lemma 4.1, that $a \neq b$, $a \in S(x_1) \cap S(y_1)$, $b \in S(x_3) \cap S(y_3)$ and $\{a, b\} \subseteq S(w) \cap S(x_2) \cap S(y_2)$. Combining lemma 4.1 with the
fact that \(\{a, b\} \in \text{incomp}(W_1, u, v, S)\), we obtain that there exist three distinct colors \(c, d\) and \(e\) so that \(S(x_2) = \{a, b, c, d\}\), \(S(x_1) = \{a, c, d, e\}\) and \(S(x_3) = \{b, c, d, e\}\).

In the same manner we can prove that if \((g, h) \in \text{incomp}(W_1, u, v, S)\), then \(g \neq h\), \(S(x_1) = \{g, c, d, e\}\) and \(S(x_3) = \{h, c, d, e\}\), which implies that \(g = a\) and \(h = b\). This proves that \(|\text{incomp}(W_1, u, v, S)| \leq 1\), as needed. □

Lemma 4.11 There exists a planar graph which is 4-choice-critical.

Proof Take 12 pairwise disjoint copies of the graph \(W_1\) in Fig. 1 and identify all the 12 vertices named \(u\) as well as all the 12 vertices named \(v\). Use lemma 4.10 and proceed as in the proofs of lemmas 4.7 and 4.8. □

Proof of Theorem 1.11 Apply lemma 4.11 as in the proof of Theorem 1.10. □

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