

Leavitt path algebras: Something for everyone

algebra, analysis, graph theory, number theory

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University of New Mexico Mathematics Colloquium

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Overview

- 1 Leavitt path algebras: Introduction and Motivation
- 2 Algebraic properties
- 3 Projective modules
- 4 Connections and Applications

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Brief history, and motivating examples

An early theorem from undergraduate years:

Dimension Theorem for Vector Spaces. Every nonzero vector space V has a basis. Moreover, if \mathcal{B} and \mathcal{B}' are two bases for V , then $|\mathcal{B}| = |\mathcal{B}'|$.

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Dimension Theorem for Vector Spaces. Every nonzero vector space V has a basis. Moreover, if \mathcal{B} and \mathcal{B}' are two bases for V , then $|\mathcal{B}| = |\mathcal{B}'|$.

Note: V has a basis $\mathcal{B} = \{b_1, b_2, \dots, b_n\} \Leftrightarrow V \cong \bigoplus_{i=1}^n \mathbb{R}$ as vector spaces. So:

Dimension Theorem, Rephrased:

$$\bigoplus_{i=1}^n \mathbb{R} \cong \bigoplus_{i=1}^m \mathbb{R} \Leftrightarrow m = n.$$

Brief history, and motivating examples

The same Dimension Theorem holds for K any division ring.

For a module P over a ring R we can still talk about a *basis* for P . (Note: in general, not all modules *have* bases; those that do are called *free* R -modules.)

$\bigoplus_{i=1}^n R$ always has a basis having n elements, e.g.,

$$\{ e_1 = (1, 0, 0, \dots, 0), e_2 = (0, 1, 0, \dots, 0), \dots, e_n = (0, 0, 0, \dots, 1) \}$$

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Question: Is the Dimension Theorem true for rings in general?
That is, if R is a ring, and $\bigoplus_{i=1}^n R \cong \bigoplus_{i=1}^m R$ as R -modules, must $m = n$?

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Answer: NO

(But the answer is YES for many rings, e.g.: \mathbb{Z} , $M_2(\mathbb{R})$, $C(\mathbb{R})$)

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Example: Consider the ring S of linear transformations from an infinite dimensional \mathbb{R} -vector space V to itself.

Think of V as $\bigoplus_{i=1}^{\infty} \mathbb{R}$. Then think of S as $\text{RFM}(\mathbb{R})$.

Brief history, and motivating examples

Intuitively, S and $S \oplus S$ have a chance to be “the same”.

$M \mapsto (\text{Odd numbered columns of } M, \text{Even numbered columns of } M)$

Easy to find matrices Y_1, Y_2 for which this map is

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Similarly, we should be able to ‘go back’ from pairs of matrices to a single matrix, by interweaving the columns.

Easy to find matrices X_1, X_2 for which this map is
 $(M_1, M_2) \mapsto M_1X_1 + M_2X_2$.

Brief history, and motivating examples

These equations are easy to verify:

$$Y_1 X_1 + Y_2 X_2 = I,$$

$$X_1 Y_1 = I = X_2 Y_2, \quad \text{and} \quad X_1 Y_2 = 0 = X_2 Y_1.$$

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Using these, we get inverse maps:

$$S \rightarrow S \oplus S \quad \text{via } M \mapsto (MY_1, MY_2), \text{ and}$$

$$S \oplus S \rightarrow S \quad \text{via } (M_1, M_2) \mapsto M_1 X_1 + M_2 X_2.$$

For example:

$$M \mapsto (MY_1, MY_2) \mapsto MY_1 X_1 + MY_2 X_2 = M \cdot I = M.$$

Brief history, and motivating examples

Using exactly the same idea, let R be ANY ring which contains four elements y_1, y_2, x_1, x_2 satisfying

$$y_1x_1 + y_2x_2 = 1_R,$$

$$x_1y_1 = 1_R = x_2y_2, \quad \text{and} \quad x_1y_2 = 0 = x_2y_1.$$

Then $R \cong R \oplus R$.

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Easily:

$$R \cong R \oplus R \Rightarrow \bigoplus_{i=1}^m R \cong \bigoplus_{i=1}^n R \text{ for all } m, n \in \mathbb{N}.$$

Leavitt algebras

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Theorem

(William G. Leavitt, Trans. Amer. Math. Soc., 1962)

For every $m < n \in \mathbb{N}$ and field K there exists a K -algebra $R = L_K(m, n)$ with $\bigoplus_{i=1}^m R \cong \bigoplus_{i=1}^n R$, and all isomorphisms between free left R -modules result precisely from this one. Moreover, $L_K(m, n)$ is universal with this property.

Leavitt algebras

Similar to the $(1, 2)$ situation above:

$R \cong R^n$ if and only if there exist

$$x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n, y_1, y_2, \dots, y_n \in R$$

for which

$$\sum_{i=1}^n y_i x_i = 1_R \quad \text{and} \quad x_i y_j = \delta_{i,j} 1_R.$$

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$L_K(1, n)$ is the quotient

$$K \langle X_1, X_2, \dots, X_n, Y_1, Y_2, \dots, Y_n \rangle / \langle \left(\sum_{i=1}^n Y_i X_i \right) - 1_K; X_i Y_j - \delta_{i,j} 1_K \rangle$$

Note: $\text{RFM}(K)$ is much bigger than $L_K(1, 2)$.



Leavitt algebras

As a result, we have: Let S denote $L_K(1, n)$. Then

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For every field K and $n \geq 2$, $L_K(1, n)$ is simple.

Simplicity means:

$$\forall 0 \neq r \in R, \exists \alpha_i, \beta_i \in R \text{ with } \sum_{i=1}^n \alpha_i r \beta_i = 1_R.$$

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Actually, Leavitt proved that $L_K(1, n)$ satisfies a stronger property:

$$\forall 0 \neq r \in L_K(1, n), \exists \alpha, \beta \in L_K(1, n) \text{ with } \alpha r \beta = 1_{L_K(1, n)}.$$



Building rings from combinatorial objects

Many standard algebras can be built (essentially) as follows:

if S is a semigroup (written multiplicatively) and K is a field, form the *semigroup algebra* KS .

Symbols: finite sums $\sum_{s \in S} k_s s$.

Multiplication: Extend $ks \cdot k's' = kk'(ss')$.

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More Examples: matrix rings, group rings, incidence rings, multivariable polynomial rings, ...

General path algebras

Let E be a directed graph. (We will assume E is finite for this talk, but analysis can be done in general.) $E = (E^0, E^1, r, s)$

$$s(e) \bullet \xrightarrow{e} \bullet r(e)$$

The *path algebra of E with coefficients in K* is the K -algebra KS

$S =$ the set of all directed paths in E ,

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In particular, in KE ,

for each edge e , $s(e) \cdot e = e = e \cdot r(e)$

for each vertex v , $v \cdot v = v$

$$1_{KE} = \sum_{v \in E^0} v.$$

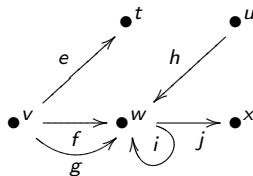
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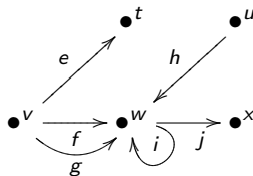
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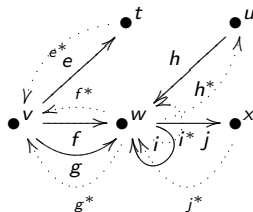
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$$(CK1) \quad e^*e = r(e); \quad f^*e = 0 \text{ for } f \neq e \text{ (for all edges } e, f \text{ in } E).$$

$$(CK2) \quad v = \sum_{\{e \in E^1 \mid s(e)=v\}} ee^* \text{ for each (non-sink) vertex } v \text{ in } E.$$

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Construct the path algebra $K\widehat{E}$. Consider these relations in $K\widehat{E}$:

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Definition

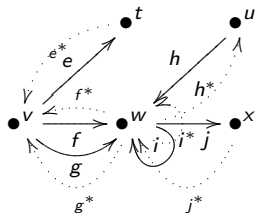
The Leavitt path algebra of E with coefficients in K

$$L_K(E) = K\widehat{E} / \langle (CK1), (CK2) \rangle$$

Leavitt path algebras: Examples

Some sample computations in $L_{\mathbb{C}}(E)$ from the Example:

$\widehat{E} =$



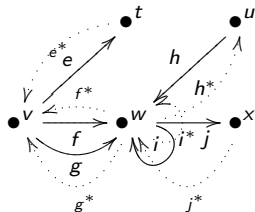
$$ee^* + ff^* + gg^* = v \quad g^*g = w \quad g^*f = 0$$

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$ff^* = \dots$ (no simplification)

Note: $(ff^*)^2 = f(f^*f)f^* = ff^*$

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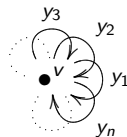
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$$E = \bullet v \begin{array}{c} \curvearrowright \\ \curvearrowleft \end{array} x$$

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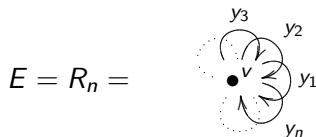
Leavitt path algebras: Examples

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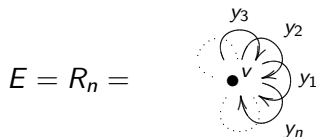


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while $L_K(R_n)$ has these SAME generators and relations, where we identify y_i^* with x_i .

Historical note, part 1

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June 2004: Some algebraists attend the CBMS lecture series

“Graph C^* -algebras: algebras we can see”,

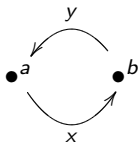
held at University of Iowa, given by Iain Raeburn.

Algebraic analogs of graph C^* -algebras are defined and investigated starting Fall 2004.

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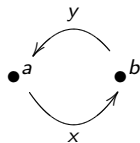
Some graph definitions

1. A *cycle*

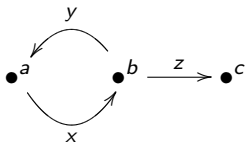


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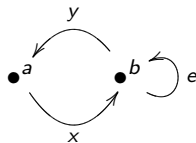
1. A *cycle*



2. An *exit* for a cycle.



or



Some graph definitions

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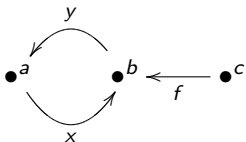
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3b. *connects to* a cycle.



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For which graphs E and fields K is $L_K(E)$ simple?

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Note $L_K(E)$ is simple for

$$E = \bullet \longrightarrow \bullet \cdots \cdots \longrightarrow \bullet \quad \text{since } L_K(E) \cong M_n(K)$$

and for

$$\text{and for } E = R_n = \begin{array}{c} y_3 \\ \curvearrowright \\ y_2 \\ \curvearrowright \\ \bullet^v \\ \curvearrowright \\ y_1 \\ \curvearrowright \\ y_n \end{array} \quad \text{since } L_K(E) \cong L_K(1, n)$$

but not simple for

$$E = R_1 = \bullet^v \curvearrowright x \quad \text{since } L_K(E) \cong K[x, x^{-1}]$$

Simplicity of Leavitt path algebras

Theorem

(A -, Aranda Pino, 2005) $L_K(E)$ is simple if and only if:

- 1 Every vertex connects to every cycle and to every sink in E ,
and
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Note: No role played by K .

Other ring-theoretic properties of Leavitt path algebras

We know precisely the graphs E for which $L_K(E)$ has various other properties, e.g.:

- 1 one-sided chain conditions
- 2 prime
- 3 von Neumann regular
- 4 two-sided chain conditions
- 5 primitive

Many more.

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Additional examples: Rf where f is idempotent (i.e., $f^2 = f$),
since $Rf \oplus R(1 - f) = R^1$.

So, for example, in $R = M_2(\mathbb{R})$, $P = M_2(\mathbb{R})e_{1,1} = \begin{pmatrix} * & 0 \\ * & 0 \end{pmatrix}$
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So $L_K(E)$ contains projective modules of the form $L_K(E)ee^*$ for
each edge e of E .

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$\mathcal{V}(R)$ denotes the isomorphism classes of finitely generated projective (left) R -modules. With operation \oplus , this becomes an abelian monoid. Note R itself plays a special role in $\mathcal{V}(R)$.

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Example. $R = K$, a field. Then $\mathcal{V}(R) \cong \mathbb{Z}^+$.

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Remarks:

- (1) Given a ring R , it is in general not easy to compute $\mathcal{V}(R)$.
- (2) $K_0(R)$ is the universal group of $\mathcal{V}(R)$.

The monoid M_E

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Associate to E the abelian monoid $(M_E, +)$:

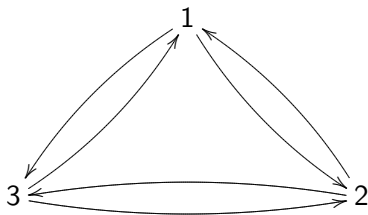
$$M_E = \left\{ \sum_{v \in E^0} n_v a_v \right\}$$

with $n_v \in \mathbb{Z}^+$ for all $v \in E^0$.

Relations in M_E are given by: $a_v = \sum_{\{e|s(e)=v\}} a_{r(e)}$.

The monoid M_E

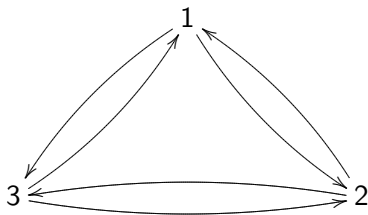
Example. Let F be the graph



So M_F consists of elements $\{n_1a_1 + n_2a_2 + n_3a_3\}$ ($n_i \in \mathbb{Z}^+$),
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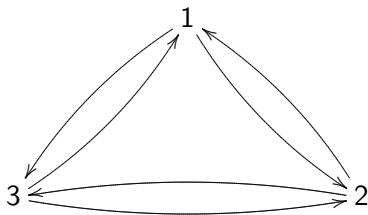


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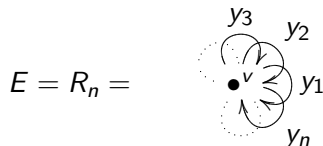
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It's not hard to get: $M_F = \{0, a_1, a_2, a_3, a_1 + a_2 + a_3\}$.

In particular, $M_F \setminus \{0\} \cong \mathbb{Z}_2 \times \mathbb{Z}_2$.

The monoid $\mathcal{V}(L_K(E))$

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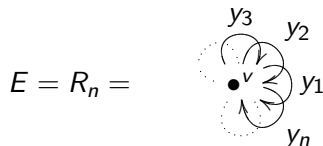
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So here, $M_E = \{0, a_v, 2a_v, \dots, (n-1)a_v\}$.

In particular, $M_E \setminus \{0\} \cong \mathbb{Z}_{n-1}$.

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(P. Ara, M.A. Moreno, E. Pardo, 2007)

For any row-finite directed graph E ,

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Moreover, $L_K(E)$ is universal with this property.

One (very nontrivial) consequence: Let S denote $L_K(1, n)$. Then

$$\mathcal{V}(S) = \{0, S, S^2, \dots, S^{n-1}\}.$$

Historical Note, Part 2

So we can think of Leavitt path algebras in two ways:

- 1) the “quotient of a path algebra” approach, and
- 2) the “universal algebra which supports M_E as its \mathcal{V} -monoid” approach.

These were developed in parallel.

The two approaches together have complemented each other in the development of the subject.

Purely infinite simplicity

Here's a property (likely unfamiliar to most of you ...)

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We call a unital simple ring R *purely infinite simple* if:

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Equivalent to: every left ideal contains an *infinite idempotent*:

If $0 \neq e = e^2 \in R$, then $Re = Rf \oplus Rg$ with $Re \cong Rf$ and $g \neq 0$.

Purely infinite simplicity for rings was introduced by Ara / Goodearl / Pardo in 2002.

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Moreover, in this situation, we can easily calculate $\mathcal{V}(L_K(E))$ using the Smith normal form of the matrix $I - A_E$.

- 1 Leavitt path algebras: Introduction and Motivation
- 2 Algebraic properties
- 3 Projective modules
- 4 Connections and Applications**

Ten Year Update

In addition to “expected” types of results, over the past ten years Leavitt path algebras have played an interesting / important role outside the subject per se.

- 1 Kaplansky’s question on prime non-primitive von Neumann regular algebras.
- 2 The realization question for von Neumann regular rings.
- 3 Connections to Lie algebras.
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- 5 Connections to various C^* -algebras, including real C^* -algebras

Matrices over Leavitt algebras

One such connection:

Let $R = L_{\mathbb{C}}(1, n)$. So ${}_R R \cong {}_R R^n$.

So this gives in particular $R \cong M_n(R)$ as rings.

Which then (for free) gives some additional isomorphisms, e.g.

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Also, ${}_R R \cong {}_R R^n \cong {}_R R^{2n-1} \cong {}_R R^{3n-2} \cong \dots$, which also in turn yield ring isomorphisms

$$R \cong M_n(R) \cong M_{2n-1}(R) \cong M_{3n-2}(R) \cong \dots$$

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Idea: 2 and 4 are nicely related, so these eight matrices inside $M_2(L(1, 4))$ “work”:

$$X_1 = \begin{pmatrix} x_1 & 0 \\ x_2 & 0 \end{pmatrix}, X_2 = \begin{pmatrix} x_3 & 0 \\ x_4 & 0 \end{pmatrix}, X_3 = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & x_1 \\ 0 & x_2 \end{pmatrix}, X_4 = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & x_3 \\ 0 & x_4 \end{pmatrix}$$

together with their duals

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if $d|n^t$ for some $t \in \mathbb{N}$, then $L(1, n) \cong M_d(L(1, n))$.

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On the other hand ...

If $R = L(1, n)$, then the “type” of R is $n - 1$. (Think: “smallest difference”). Bill Leavitt showed the following in his 1962 paper:

The type of $M_d(L(1, n))$ is $\frac{n-1}{g.c.d.(d, n-1)}$.

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(Note: $d|n^t \Rightarrow g.c.d.(d, n - 1) = 1$.)



Matrices over Leavitt algebras

Smallest interesting pair: Is $L(1, 5) \cong M_3(L(1, 5))$?

We are led “naturally” to consider these five matrices (and their duals) in $M_3(L(1, 5))$:

$$\begin{pmatrix} x_1 & 0 & 0 \\ x_2 & 0 & 0 \\ x_3 & 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix} \quad \begin{pmatrix} x_4 & 0 & 0 \\ x_5 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 \end{pmatrix} \quad \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 & x_1^2 \\ 0 & 0 & x_2 x_1 \\ 0 & 0 & x_3 x_1 \end{pmatrix} \quad \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 & x_4 x_1 \\ 0 & 0 & x_5 x_1 \\ 0 & 0 & x_2 \end{pmatrix} \quad \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 & x_3 \\ 0 & 0 & x_4 \\ 0 & 0 & x_5 \end{pmatrix}$$

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Everything went along nicely... **except**, we couldn't see how to generate the matrix units $e_{1,3}$ and $e_{3,1}$ inside $M_3(L(1, 5))$ using these ten matrices.

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Instead, this set (together with duals) works:

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Theorem

(A-, Ánh, Pardo; Crelle's J. 2008) For any field K ,

$$L_K(1, n) \cong M_d(L_K(1, n)) \Leftrightarrow \text{g.c.d.}(d, n-1) = 1.$$

Indeed, more generally,

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Along the way, some elementary (but new?) number theory ideas come into play.

Given n, d with $\text{g.c.d.}(d, n - 1) = 1$, there is a “natural” partition of $\{1, 2, \dots, n\}$ into two disjoint subsets.

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Here’s what made this second set of matrices work. Using this partition in the particular case $n = 5, d = 3$, then the partition of $\{1, 2, 3, 4, 5\}$ turns out to be the two sets

$$\{1, 4\} \quad \text{and} \quad \{2, 3, 5\}.$$

The matrices that “worked” are ones where we fill in the last columns with terms of the form $x_i x_1^j$ in such a way that i is in the same subset as the row number of that entry.

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Brief description: www.uccs.edu/gabrams

Matrices over Leavitt algebras

Corollary. (Matrices over the Cuntz C^* -algebras)

$$\mathcal{O}_n \cong M_d(\mathcal{O}_n) \Leftrightarrow g.c.d.(d, n-1) = 1.$$

(And the isomorphisms are explicitly described.)

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Proof. Show that $G_{n,r}^+$ can be realized as an appropriate subgroup of the invertible elements of $M_r(L_{\mathbb{C}}(1, n))$, and then use the explicit isomorphisms provided in the A -, Ánh, Pardo result.

What else is out there?

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$$(1) \quad L_K(E) \cong L_K(F) \Leftrightarrow \quad ? \quad ? \quad ?$$

Ideas from symbolic dynamics come into play here. Using some results on flow equivalence, we have been able to show:

Theorem. (A -, Louly, Pardo, Smith, 2011) If $L_K(E)$ and $L_K(F)$ are purely infinite simple Leavitt path algebras such that

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Question: Can we drop the determinant hypothesis?

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The answer will be interesting, however it plays out.

“Algebraic Kirchberg-Phillips Question”

What else is out there?

(2) For any graph E there is an intimate relationship between $L_{\mathbb{C}}(E)$ and $C^*(E)$. There are many theorems of the form:

$L_{\mathbb{C}}(E)$ has algebraic property $\mathcal{P} \Leftrightarrow C^*(E)$ has analytic property \mathcal{P}

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but the proofs are not direct! They all are based on showing that the two properties are both equivalent to

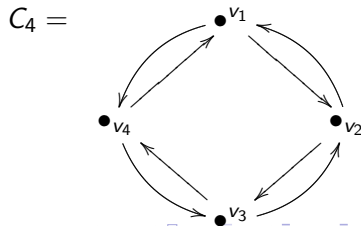
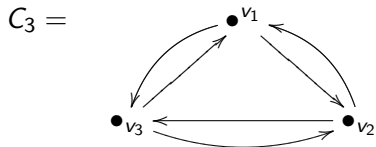
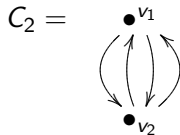
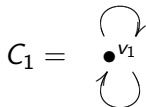
E has graph property \mathcal{Q} .

Why this happens is still a mystery.

What else is out there?

(3) Compute M_E for various classes of graphs.

The Cayley graph C_n for \mathbb{Z}_n with generators $\{1, -1\}$:



M_E for some Cayley graphs

Theorem:

M_E for some Cayley graphs

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$n \pmod{6}$	1	2	3	4	5	6
$M_{C_n} \setminus \{0\} \cong$	$\{0\}$	\mathbb{Z}_3	$\mathbb{Z}_2 \times \mathbb{Z}_2$	\mathbb{Z}_3	$\{0\}$	$\mathbb{Z} \times \mathbb{Z}$

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Other classes of Cayley-like graphs don't exhibit this sort of cyclic behavior in the corresponding graph monoids.

Questions?

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Thanks to the Simons Foundation.

Some elementary number theory

The partition of $\{1, 2, \dots, n\}$ induced by d when $\text{g.c.d.}(d, n - 1) = 1$

Suppose $\text{g.c.d.}(d, n - 1) = 1$. Write

$$n = dt + r \quad \text{with } 1 \leq r \leq d.$$

$$\text{Define } s := d - (r - 1).$$

Easy: $\text{g.c.d.}(d, n - 1) = 1 \Rightarrow \text{g.c.d.}(d, s) = 1$.

Consider the sequence $\{h_i\}_{i=1}^d \subseteq \{1, 2, \dots, d\}$, whose i^{th} entry is given by

$$h_i = 1 + (i - 1)s \pmod{d}.$$

Some elementary number theory

Because $\text{g.c.d.}(d, s) = 1$, basic number theory yields that the set of entries $\{h_1, h_2, \dots, h_d\}$ equals the set $\{1, 2, \dots, d\}$ (in some order).

Our interest lies in a decomposition of $\{1, 2, \dots, d\}$ effected by the sequence h_1, h_2, \dots, h_d , as follows.

Some elementary number theory

Let d_1 denote the integer for which

$$h_{d_1} = r - 1.$$

Define

$$\hat{S}_1 := \{h_i \mid 1 \leq i \leq d_1\}.$$

and $\hat{S}_2 := \{1, 2, \dots, d\} \setminus \hat{S}_1$.

Construct a partition $S_1 \cup S_2$ of $\{1, 2, \dots, n\}$ by extending mod d .

Matrices over Leavitt algebras

Computations when $n = 5, d = 3$.

$\gcd(3, 5 - 1) = 1$. Now $5 = 1 \cdot 3 + 2$, so that $r = 2, r - 1 = 1$, and define $s = d - (r - 1) = 3 - 1 = 2$.

Consider the sequence starting at 1, and increasing by s each step, and interpret mod d ($1 \leq i \leq d$). This will necessarily give all integers between 1 and d .

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Now break this set into two pieces: those integers up to and including $r - 1$, and those after. Since $r - 1 = 1$, here we get

$$\{1, 2, 3\} = \{1\} \cup \{2, 3\}.$$

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Now extend these two sets mod 3 to all integers up to 5.

$$\{1, 4\} \cup \{2, 3, 5\}$$



Some elementary number theory

Example. Suppose $n = 35$, $d = 13$. Then $\gcd(13, 35 - 1) = 1$.

$35 = 2 \cdot 13 + 9$, so $r = 9$, $r - 1 = 8$, and $s = d - (r - 1) = 13 - 8 = 5$.

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Now extend to $\{1, 2, \dots, 34, 35\}$ mod 13.

$$\{1, 3, 6, 8, 11, 14, 16, 19, 21, 24, 27, 29, 32, 34\} \cup \\ \{2, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 17, 18, 20, 22, 23, 25, 26, 28, 30, 31, 33, 35\}$$

