Amenability: A (Somewhat) Brief Introduction

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Outline

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Groups

If A is a set, and $\star\colon A \times A \to A$ is an operation such that

- $a \star (b \star c) = (a \star b) \star c$;
- there exists e_A such that $a \star e_A = e_A \star a = a$;
- for each a there exists a^{-1} such that $a \star a^{-1} = a^{-1} \star a = e_A$,

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We abbreviate $a \star b$ as ab.

Subgroups, Quotient Groups

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- The equivalence classes under the relation $g \sim_N g'$ if $g^{-1}g' \in N$ form a group $gN :- [g]_\sim$ known as the *quotient group* G/N.

Some Groups

- The integers $\mathbb{Z}$ are a group under addition.
- The group of invertible $n \times n$ matrices over $\mathbb{C}$, $\mathrm{GL}_n(\mathbb{C})$, is a group under matrix multiplication.
- The subgroup $\mathrm{SO}(n) \subseteq \mathrm{GL}_n(\mathbb{R})$ consisting of $n \times n$ orthogonal matrices with determinant 1 is a group under multiplication.

Group Actions

Let G be a group, and X a set. Let $\rho\colon G \times X \to X$ be a function that satisfies, for all $g, h \in G$ and $x \in X$,

- $\rho(e_G, x) = x$;
- $\rho(g, \rho(h, x)) = \rho(gh, x)$.

Then, we say ρ is an *action* of G on X. We write $\rho(g, x) = g \cdot x$.

σ-Algebras and Measures

If X is a set, then a collection of subsets $\{A_i\}_{i\in I} = \mathcal{A} \subseteq P(X)$ is known as an *algebra* of subsets if

1. $\emptyset, X \in \mathcal{A}$;
2. for any $A_i \in \mathcal{A}$, $A_i^c \in \mathcal{A}$;
3. for any $A_i, A_j \in \mathcal{A}$, $A_i \cup A_j \in \mathcal{A}$.

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If, for any countable collection, $\{A_n\}_{n \geq 1} \subseteq \mathcal{A}$, condition (3) holds, then we say $\mathcal{A}$ is a σ*-algebra* of subsets.

σ-Algebras and Measures, Cont'd

If X is a set and $\mathcal{A}$ is a σ-algebra, then a map $\mu\colon \mathcal{A} \to [0,\infty]$ that satisfies:

- $\mu(\emptyset) = 0$;
- for disjoint sets $A, B \in \mathcal{A}$, $\mu(A \sqcup B) = \mu(A) + \mu(B)$,

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then we say μ is a *finitely additive* measure.If $\{A_n\}_{n\geq 1}$ is a countable collection of disjoint sets, then if μ satisfies

- $\mu\left(\bigcup_{n\geq 1} A_n\right) = \sum_{n\geq 1} \mu(A_n)$,

we say μ is a measure.

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Questions?

- If G is a group, is it possible to reconstruct G by using some subset of G?
- When may we find a finitely additive probability measure $\mu\colon P(G) \to [0,1]$ such that $\mu(E) = \mu(tE)$ for all $E \subseteq G$?
- Are these questions even related?

Free Groups

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- We define $F(a,b)$ to be the set of all "words" in the alphabet $\{a,b,a^{-1},b^{-1}\}$, subject to the condition that, for $w,w' \in F(a,b)$,

$$waa^{-1}w' \sim wa^{-1}aw' \sim ww'$$
$$wbb^{-1}w' \sim wb^{-1}bw' \sim ww'.$$

- Examples: $a^2bab^{-1}, b^{-1}a^2b^2ab \in F(a,b)$.

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A Curiosity, Cont'd

Similarly, we can do this for a, giving a decomposition of $F(a,b)$ in two separate ways:

$$\begin{aligned} F(a,b) &= b^{-1}W(b) \cup W\left(b^{-1}\right) \\ &= a^{-1}W(a) \cup W\left(a^{-1}\right). \end{aligned}$$

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Furthermore, note that $W(a), W(b), W\left(a^{-1}\right), W\left(b^{-1}\right)$ are disjoint.

These decompositions seem to be downright paradoxical — we take a part of the group, translate some of it, and get the whole group back!

Defining Paradoxical Decompositions

Let G be a group. A *paradoxical decomposition* of G consists of

- pairwise disjoint subsets $A_1, \ldots, A_n, B_1, \ldots, B_m \subseteq G$; and
- elements $g_1, \ldots, g_n, h_1, \ldots, h_m$;

such that

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If G admits a paradoxical decomposition, we say G is *paradoxical*.

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