

# **A Theoretical and Empirical Investigation into the Equivalence of Graph Neural Networks and the Weisfeiler-Leman Algorithm**

From the faculty of Mathematics, Physics, and Computer Science approved for the purpose of obtaining  
the academic degree of Bachelor of Sciences.

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# **Abstract**

  Lorem Ipsum :D

## **Acknowledgements**

Thanks to everyone :D

# **Contents**

# 1 Introduction

This work aims to shed light on the representations learned by Graph Neural Networks (GNNs). In this section, we will discuss the prevalence of graphs and the crucial role GNNs play in analyzing them. We will delve into the methods we use to gain insights and highlight the significance of our approach. Lastly, we will provide an overview of the structure of this work.

## 1.1 Motivation

Graphs are ubiquitous in various fields of life. Despite not always being explicitly identified as such, the graph data model’s flexibility and simplicity make it an effective tool for modeling a diverse range of data. Examples of graph modeling applications include unexpected instances, such as modeling text or images as a graph, as well as more complex instances like chemical molecules, citation networks, or connectivity encodings of the World Wide Web ??.

Although machine learning has achieved remarkable success with image classification (e.g., ??) and text generation (e.g., ??) in the last decade, the lack of a significant breakthrough in machine learning for graphs can be attributed to the graph data model’s inherent flexibility and simplicity. While, for example, an image classifier constrains its input data to be a grid-like image or a text generator expects its input to be a linear sequence of words, machine learning models working on graphs cannot leverage any constraints on the format or size of their input graphs without limiting their generality.

To put this flexibility of the graph data model into perspective and give an idea of how ubiquitous graphs are in various fields, we refer back to the examples of image classifiers and text generators and demonstrate how seemingly natural the graph data model can encode their input data. For example, images can be encoded by a graph, such that each pixel of the image corresponds to a node in the graph holding its color value, and each node is connected to its neighboring pixel nodes. Similarly, for sequential data like text files, one can encode a directed graph where each word in this file is represented as a node with the word as a feature and connected outgoingly to the next following word. See ?? for an illustrative example of these encodings.

In recent years, a significant amount of research has been conducted to investigate Graph Neural Networks (GNNs). Among the most promising approaches are those utilizing the message-passing architecture, which was introduced by ? and ?. Empirically, this framework has demonstrated strong performance across various applications ????. However, its expressiveness is limited, as has been proved by the works of ?, as well as ?. These works establish a connection to the commonly used Weisfeiler-Leman<sup>1</sup> algorithm (1-WL), originally proposed by ? as a simple heuristic for the graph isomorphism problem. In particular, it has been proven that a GNN based on the message-passing architecture can, at most, be as good as the 1-WL algorithm in distinguishing non-isomorphic graphs. Furthermore, the 1-WL method demonstrates numerous similarities with the fundamental workings of the GNN architecture. It is, therefore, commonly believed that both methods are, to some extent, equivalent in their capacity to capture information in a graph.

<sup>1</sup>Based on <https://www.iti.zcu.cz/wl2018/pdf/leman.pdf>, we will use the spelling “Leman” here, as requested by A. Leman, the co-inventor of the algorithm.

<sup>2</sup>The image is from the CIFAR-10 collection made available by ?.

<sup>3</sup>The illustration of the skeletal formula of caffeine is taken from <https://commons.wikimedia.org>.

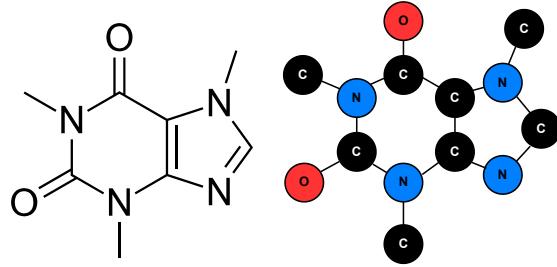
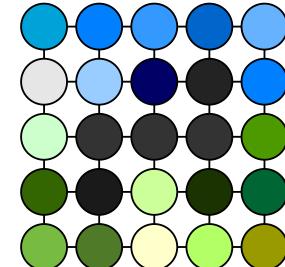
<sup>4</sup>All graphics were created using the free open source platform <https://www.draw.io>.

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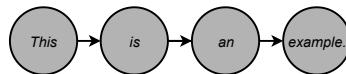


(a) Example for an image of a dog.<sup>2</sup>



(b) Example for the molecule caffeine.<sup>3</sup>

Example.txt
This is an example.



(c) Example for a text file.

Figure 1: Here are some examples of how graphs can be used to encode information in a variety of domains. Please note that these examples are just a sample, and in actual practice, more detailed encodings are usually utilized to capture additional information.<sup>4</sup>

## 1.2 Research Questions & Contributions

Test

## 1.3 Methodology

In this work, we introduce a novel framework, which we coined “1-WL+NN,” which involves applying the 1-WL algorithm to an input graph and further processing the resulting information using a feedforward neural network. Thereby, we obtain a trainable framework suited for all kinds of graph-related tasks, such as graph classification, node regression, and more. We will prove later on that both frameworks, 1-WL+NN and GNN, are theoretically equivalent, such that each function computed by a 1-WL+NN can also be computed by a GNN model and vice versa. With this framework in hand, we can investigate the representations learned by a GNN.

The interesting property of this framework compared to GNNs, which is also the original idea that inspired this work, is the fundamental difference in how both frameworks learn and optimize themselves when applied to a specific task. Take, for example, an arbitrary classification task. While the first part of a 1-WL+NN model starts by applying the 1-WL algorithm to its input graph and retrieves a highly informative representation of this graph, the second part, the learnable feedforward neural network, must find common patterns in this very detailed representation that coincides with the classes of the task, such that the model makes good predictions. In comparison, while a GNN is theoretically as expressive as the 1-WL algorithm, we imagine that such a model first leans to find common patterns as early as possible in the input graph and will drop irrelevant information as soon as possible before making a class prediction.

To put both learning behaviors into perspective: while the 1-WL+NN is given a maximally informative representation and needs to find the important information to make a good

prediction, a GNN works the other way around and needs to learn how it constructs its own informative representation of the input graph and how to leverage this information for making a prediction. Therefore, we expect 1-WL+NN models to perform sufficiently well on their training data but expect poor generalization capabilities due to the too-informative representations computed by the 1-WL algorithm. In contrast, we expect more promising generalization capabilities of GNNs in comparison since they optimize for the best representation of their input graphs and might leverage this information more efficiently.

We will use this novel framework and various empirical experiments to compare both frameworks on multiple datasets to establish a deeper understanding of the representations learned by GNNs.

## 1.4 Outline

For the ease of readability, we split this work into two parts. The first part investigates and establishes the theoretical equivalence between the frameworks of 1-WL+NN and GNNs. In contrast, the second part discusses our different experiments and their empirical results and insights into GNNs.

In detail, this work starts with ??, where we discuss related work, milestones in GNNs over the past decade, essential properties of the 1-WL algorithm, and a subset of interesting connections between GNNs and the 1-WL algorithm. Afterward, we will start with ??, which begins with ???. Here, we will introduce formal definitions for both frameworks, as well as a set of notations we will use throughout the theoretical part. Afterward, in ??, we will introduce four theorems that each present a connection between both frameworks and combined prove the equivalence of both frameworks. Finally, we will prove each theorem individually after another in corresponding subsections.

The second part will deal with ...

## 2 Background and Related Work

In this section, we will briefly introduce the foundation of our research by explaining the origins of each method, mentioning important recent advances, and providing a brief overview of the connections between them.

### 2.1 Weisfeiler-Leman Algorithm

The (1-dimensional) Weisfeiler-Leman algorithm (1-WL), proposed by ?, was initially designed as a simple heuristic for the *graph isomorphism problem*, but due to its interesting properties, its simplicity, and its good performance, the 1-WL algorithm gained a lot of attention from researchers across many fields. One of the most noticeable properties is that the algorithm color codes the nodes of the input graph in such a way that in each iteration, each color encodes a learned local substructure.

It works by coloring all nodes in each iteration the same color that fulfills two properties: 1. the nodes already share the same color, and 2. the count of each color of their direct neighbors is equal. The algorithm continues as long as the number of colors changes in each iteration. For determining whether two graphs are non-isomorphic, the heuristic is applied to both graphs simultaneously. It concludes that the graphs are non-isomorphic as soon as the

number of occurrences of a color differs between them. We present a more formal definition of the algorithm in the following part in ??.

Since the *graph isomorphism problem* is difficult to solve due to the best known complete algorithm only running in deterministic quasipolynomial time (?), the 1-WL algorithm, running in deterministic polynomial time, cannot solve the problem completely. Moreover, ? constructed counterexamples of non-isomorphic graphs that the heuristic fails to distinguish, e.g., see ?? . However, following the work of ?, this simple heuristic is still quite powerful and has a very low probability of failing to distinguish non-isomorphic graphs when both graphs are uniformly chosen at random as the number of nodes tends to infinity.

To overcome the limited expressiveness of the 1-WL algorithm, it has been generalized to the  $k$ -dimensional Weisfeiler-Leman algorithm ( $k$ -WL) by ??, as well as ?<sup>5</sup>. This version works with  $k$ -tuples over the  $k$ -ary Cartesian product of the set of nodes. Interestingly, this created a hierarchy for the expressiveness of determining non-isomorphism, such that for all  $k \in \mathbb{N}$  there exists a pair of non-isomorphic graphs that can be distinguished by the  $(k+1)$ -WL but not by the  $k$ -WL (?).

## 2.2 Graph Neural Networks

The utilization of machine learning techniques, previously proven effective in various domains, for graph analysis has been a well-established topic in the literature for several decades. However, researchers faced challenges in effectively adapting these techniques to graphs of diverse sizes and complexities in the early stages. Notably, the seminal works by Sperduti (1997), Scarselli (2008), and Micheli (2009) emerged as prominent examples of successful applications in this regard.

The idea of leveraging machine learning techniques, previously proven effective in various domains, for graph-related tasks has been a well-established topic in the literature for the past decades. However, in the early stages, researchers faced challenges in effectively adapting these techniques to work on graphs of arbitrary sizes and complexities. Notably, the works by ??, and ? were the first prominent examples of successful applications in this regard.

However, it was not until the emergence of more advanced models that the scientific community truly recognized the significance and potential of Graph Neural Networks (GNNs). Noteworthy among these advancements were the work of ?, who introduced a differentiable approach for generating unique fingerprints of arbitrary graphs, as well as ?, who applied gated recurrent units to capture graphs of various sizes, while ? utilized diffusional convolutions for the same purpose. Of particular significance, however, were the contributions of ?? and ?, which extended the concept of convolution from its traditional application on images to the domain of arbitrary graphs.

After the early success of these GNNs, ? introduced a unified architecture for GNNs. The authors observed a recurring pattern in how information is exchanged and processed among many of these works, including many mentioned in the paragraph above. Leveraging these observations, ? devised the message-passing architecture as a generalized framework for GNNs. Models using this architecture can be referred to as Message-Passing-Neural-Network (MPNN); however, throughout this thesis, we will use the term GNN and MPNN interchangeably, as the focus of this thesis is solely on the message-passing architecture. This architecture uses the input graph as its basis for computation and computes new node features for the graph in

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<sup>5</sup>In ? on page 27, László Babai explains that he, together with Rudolf Mathon, first introduced this algorithm in 1979. He adds that the work of ? introduced this algorithm independently of him.

each layer. Each new node feature is derived by aggregating the nodes and neighboring node features. After applying each layer of a GNN model, a representation of the entire graph is obtained by applying a pooling function (see YingMorris2018). This representation is then further processed by common machine learning techniques like a multilayer perceptron for the final output. We will present a more formal definition of this architecture in the following part; however, important to note is that the information exchange in the graph across nodes is limited to a one-hop neighbor per layer.

With this general framework and the empirical success of some models using this message-passing architecture, the question of how expressive models based on this architecture can be gained a lot of attention in the scientific community. Many papers immediately established connections to the 1-WL algorithm, among the most prominent being ? and ?. These connections seem natural, as both methods share similar properties in terms of how they process graph data. Most strikingly, both methods never change the graph structurally since they only compute new node features in each iteration. Moreover, both methods use a one-hop neighborhood aggregation as the basis for computing the new node feature. Following this intuition, ? as well as ? showed that the expressiveness of GNN is upper-bounded by the 1-WL in terms of distinguishing non-isomorphic graphs. Moreover, ? proposed a new  $k$ -GNN architecture that operates over the set of subgraphs of size  $k$ . Interestingly, ? as well as ? have shown that the proposed hierarchy over  $k \in \mathbb{N}$  is equivalent to the  $k$ -WL hierarchy in terms of its ability to distinguish non-isomorphic graphs, i.e., if there is a  $k$ -GNN that can distinguish two non-isomorphic graphs, it is equivalent to say that the  $k$ -WL algorithm can also distinguish these graphs.

Although there are other modifications of the message-passing architecture besides the theoretical concept of  $k$ -GNN to increase the expressiveness of GNNs in terms of distinguishing non-isomorphism, e.g., using node identifiers ?, adding random node features ??, adding directed flows ? and many more. Relatively few works have been published that attempt to understand the representation learned from a standard GNN.

Notable works include ?, where the author, in addition to the normal learning process, optimized GNNs to preserve a notion of distance in their representation and examined the effectiveness of GNNs in utilizing such representations. However, their insights can only be applied to these specially trained GNNs, not standard ones. In another publication, ? presented mathematical proof and empirical confirmation showing how much structural information is encoded by modern GNN models. The research highlights that GNN models like DGCNN (?) and GAT (?) encode all nodes with the same feature vector, while in contrast, models like GCN (?) and GIN (?) encode nodes after  $k$  layer of message-passing with features that relate with the number of walks of length  $k$  form each node, disregarding the local structure within the nodes are contained.

# **Part I**

# **Theoretical Equivalence**

### 3 Preliminaries

First, we introduce a couple of notions and definitions that will be used throughout this thesis. In particular, the definitions will be crucial in the following section containing the proofs. We start with general notations, introduce a general graph definition, and familiarize the reader with the Weisfeiler-Leman algorithm. We will introduce each framework independently, first the 1-WL+NN and then GNN. In the end, we will briefly introduce important properties of collections of functions computed by both methods.

#### 3.1 General Notation

Let  $\mathbb{N}$  denote the set of natural numbers such that  $\mathbb{N} := \{0, 1, 2, \dots\}$ . By  $[n]$ , we denote the set  $\{0, \dots, n\} \subset \mathbb{N}$  for each  $n \in \mathbb{N}$ . Further, with  $\{\dots\}$  we denote a multiset formally defined as a 2-tuple  $(X, m)$ , where  $X$  is a set of all unique elements and  $m : X \rightarrow \mathbb{N}_{\geq 1}$  a mapping that maps each element in  $X$  to the number of its occurrences in the multiset.

#### 3.2 Graphs

We will briefly introduce a formal definition for graphs and coloring on graphs.

**Definition 1** (Graph). A graph  $G$  is defined as a 3-tuple denoted by  $G := (V, E, l)$ . This tuple consists of a set of nodes  $V \subset \mathbb{N}$ , a set of edges  $E \subseteq V \times V$ , and a labeling function  $l : M \rightarrow \Sigma$ . The domain  $M$  of the labeling function can be either  $V$ ,  $V \cup E$ , or  $E$ , and the codomain  $\Sigma$  is a finite alphabet with  $\Sigma \subset \mathbb{N}^k$ , where  $k \in \mathbb{N}$ . In the context of this thesis, the assigned values by the labeling function are referred to as either labels or features, depending on the dimension of  $\Sigma$ . Additionally, the set of all graphs is denoted by  $\mathcal{G}$ .

Furthermore, a graph  $G$  can be either directed or undirected based on the definition of its set of edges  $E$ . If  $E \subseteq \{(v, u) \mid v, u \in V\}$ , it represents a directed graph, whereas if  $E \subseteq \{(v, u), (u, v) \mid v, u \in V, v \neq u\}$  such that for every  $(v, u) \in E$  there exists  $(u, v) \in E$ , it defines an undirected graph. Additionally, for ease of notation, we will use the  $V(G)$  and  $E(G)$  to denote the set of nodes and the set of edges of  $G$ , respectively, as well as  $l_G$  to denote the label function of  $G$ . With  $\mathcal{N}(v)$  for  $v \in V(G)$  we denote the set of neighbors of  $v$  defined as  $\mathcal{N}(v) := \{u \mid (u, v) \in E(G)\}$ .

**Definition 2** (Graph Coloring). A coloring of a Graph  $G$  is a function  $C : V(G) \rightarrow \mathbb{N}$  that assigns each node in the graph a color (here, a positive integer). Further, a coloring  $C$  induces a partition  $\mathcal{P}$  on the set of nodes, for which we define  $C^{-1}$  being the function that maps each color  $c \in \mathbb{N}$  to its class of nodes with  $C^{-1}(c) = \{v \in V(G) \mid C(v) = c\}$ . In addition, we define  $h_{G,C}$  as the histogram of graph  $G$  with coloring  $C$  that maps every color in the image of  $C$  under  $V(G)$  to the number of occurrences. In detail,  $\forall c \in \mathbb{N} : h_{G,C}(c) := |\{v \in V(G) \mid C(v) = c\}| = |C^{-1}(c)|$ .

#### Permutation-invariance and -equivariance

We use  $S_n$  to denote the symmetric group over the elements  $[n]$  for any  $n \in \mathbb{N}_{\geq 1}$ .  $S_n$  consists of all permutations over these elements. Let  $G$  be a graph with  $V(G) = [n]$ , applying a permutation  $\pi \in S_n$  on  $G$ , is defined as  $G_\pi := \pi \cdot G$  where  $V(G_\pi) = \{\pi(1), \dots, \pi(n)\}$  and  $E(G_\pi) = \{(\pi(v), \pi(u)) \mid (v, u) \in E(G)\}$ . We will now introduce two key concepts for classifying functions on graphs.

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**Definition 3** (Permutation Invariant). Let  $f : \mathcal{G} \rightarrow \mathcal{X}$  be an arbitrary function, then  $f$  is *permutation-invariant* if and only if for all  $G \in \mathcal{G}$ , where  $n_G := |V(G)|$  and for every  $\pi \in S_{n_G}$ :  $f(G) = f(\pi \cdot G)$ .

**Definition 4** (Permutation Equivariant). Let  $f : \mathcal{G} \rightarrow \mathcal{X}$  be an arbitrary function, then  $f$  is *permutation-equivariant* if and only if for all  $G \in \mathcal{G}$ , where  $n_G := |V(G)|$  and for every  $\pi \in S_{n_G}$ :  $f(G) = \pi^{-1} \cdot f(\pi \cdot G)$ .

### 3.3 Weisfeiler and Leman Algorithm

The Weisfeiler-Leman algorithm consists of two main parts, first the coloring algorithm and second the graph isomorphism test. We will introduce them in this section.

#### The Weisfeiler-Leman Graph Coloring Algorithm

The 1-WL algorithm computes a node coloring of its input graph in each iteration. In detail, a color is assigned to each node based on the colors of its neighbors and its own current color. The algorithm continues until convergence is reached, resulting in the final coloring of the graph. We will now formally define this process and provide an illustrated example in ??.

**Definition 5** (1-WL Algorithm). Let  $G = (V, E, l)$  be a labeled graph. In each iteration  $i$ , the 1-WL algorithm computes a node coloring  $C_i : V(G) \rightarrow \mathbb{N}$ . In the initial iteration  $i = 0$ , the coloring is set to  $C_0 = l$  if  $l$  exists. Otherwise, for all  $v \in V(G)$ ,  $C_0(v)$  is assigned an arbitrary constant value  $c \in \mathbb{N}$ . For  $i > 0$ , the algorithm assigns a color to  $v \in V(G)$  as follows:

$$C_i(v) = \text{RELABEL}(C_{i-1}(v), \{C_{i-1}(u) \mid u \in \mathcal{N}(v)\}),$$

where `RELABEL` injectively maps the above pair to a unique, previously not used, color. The algorithm terminates when the number of colors between two iterations does not change, meaning the algorithm terminates after iteration  $i$  if the following condition is satisfied:

$$\forall v, w \in V(G) : C_i(v) = C_i(w) \iff C_{i+1}(v) = C_{i+1}(w).$$

Upon terminating we define  $C_\infty := C_i$  as the stable coloring, such that  $1\text{-WL}(G) := C_\infty$ .

The colorings computed in each iteration always converge to the final one, such that the algorithm always terminates. In more detail, ? showed that it always holds after at most  $|V(G)|$  iterations. For an illustration of this algorithm, see ???. Moreover, based on the work of ? about efficient refinement strategies, ? proved that the stable coloring  $C_\infty$  can be computed in time  $\mathcal{O}(|V(G)| + |E(G)| \cdot \log |V(G)|)$ .

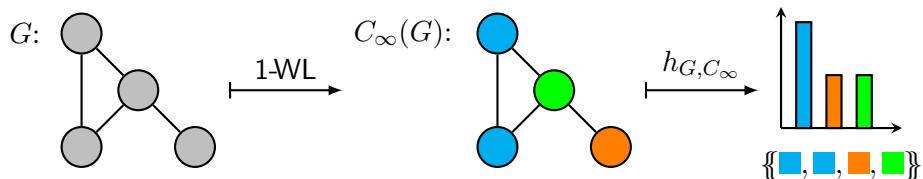


Figure 2: An example of the final coloring computed by applying the 1-WL algorithm on the graph  $G$ . The graph  $G$  consists of 4 nodes with all their labels being set to the same color.

It is important to understand that since the algorithm was originally developed as a simple heuristic for the *graph isomorphism problem*, which is an inherently discrete problem, the 1-WL algorithm in its simplest form, as we presented it here, does only work on graphs with discrete, one-dimensional node labels. Although it is quite easy to adapt the algorithm to respect discrete edge labels of a graph by using them as weights in the neighborhood aggregation (?), modifying its definition to work with continuous graph features is more complex. Numerous proposed modifications have been put forward to address this integration in the literature, such as those discussed by ?. However, note that this particular topic will not be further investigated in this thesis, although its mention holds value for the following section.

### The Weisfeiler-Leman Graph Isomorphism Test

**Definition 6** (1-WL Isomorphism Test). To determine if two graphs  $G, H \in \mathcal{G}$  are non-isomorphic ( $G \not\cong H$ ), one applies the 1-WL coloring algorithm on both graphs “in parallel” and checks after each iteration if the occurrences of each color are equal, else the algorithm would terminate and conclude non-isomorphic. Formally, the algorithm concludes non-isomorphic in iteration  $i$  if there exists a color  $c$  such that:

$$|\{v \in V(G) \mid c = C_i(v)\}| \neq |\{v \in V(H) \mid c = C_i(v)\}|.$$

Note that this test is only sound and not complete for the *graph isomorphism problem*. Counterexamples can be easily constructed where the algorithm fails to distinguish non-isomorphic graphs. See ??, discovered and proven by ?.

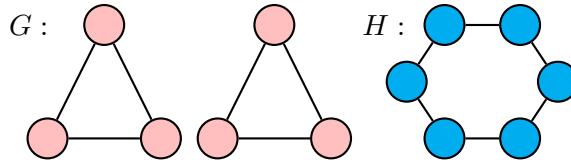


Figure 3: This is an example of two graphs  $G$  and  $H$  that are non-isomorphic but cannot be distinguished by the 1-WL isomorphism test.

### Implications of the Weisfeiler-Leman Algorithm

In this section, we introduce two basic concepts: the 1-WL relation and the notion of 1-WL-Discriminating property for permutation invariant functions.

**Definition 7** (1-WL Relation). For any graphs  $G, H \in \mathcal{X}$  we will denote  $G \simeq_{1WL} H$  if the 1-WL isomorphism test can not distinguish both graphs. Note that due to the soundness of this algorithm, if  $G \not\simeq_{1WL} H$ , we always can conclude that  $G \not\cong H$ .

The  $\simeq_{1WL}$  relation can further be classified as an equivalence relation, as it is reflexive, symmetric and transitive. With this, we introduce a notation of its equivalence classes. Let  $\mathcal{X} \subseteq \mathcal{G}$  and  $G \in \mathcal{X}$ , then we denote with  $\mathcal{X}/\simeq_{1WL}(G) := \{G' \in \mathcal{X} \mid G \simeq_{1WL} G'\}$  its equivalence class.

**Definition 8** (1-WL-Discriminating). Let  $\mathcal{C}$  be a collection of permutation invariant functions from  $\mathcal{X}$  to  $\mathbb{R}$ . We say  $\mathcal{C}$  is **1-WL-Discriminating** if for all graphs  $G_1, G_2 \in \mathcal{X}$  for which the 1-WL isomorphism test concludes non-isomorphic ( $G_1 \not\simeq_{1WL} G_2$ ), there exists a function  $h \in \mathcal{C}$  such that  $h(G_1) \neq h(G_2)$ .

### 3.4 1-WL+NN

As the previous section shows, the 1-WL algorithm is quite powerful in identifying a graph's substructures and distinguishing non-isomorphic graph pairs. With the 1-WL+NN framework, we define functions that utilize this structural information to derive further application-specific insights.

**Definition 9** (1-WL+NN). A 1-WL+NN model consists of three components that are applied sequentially to its input: 1. the 1-WL algorithm, 2. an encoding function  $f_{\text{enc}}$  operating on multisets of  $\mathbb{N}$ , and 3. an arbitrary multilayer perceptron MLP. In detail, the model computes the function  $\mathcal{B}$  as follows:

$$\mathcal{B} : \mathcal{G} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^k, G \mapsto \text{MLP} \circ f_{\text{enc}}(\{\{1\text{-WL}(G)(v) \mid v \in V(G)\}\}),$$

where “1-WL( $G$ )” is the coloring computed by the 1-WL algorithm when applied on  $G$ , and  $k \in \mathbb{N}$  is an arbitrary constant. For a better understanding and an illustrative explanation, see ??.

It is worth noting that this definition can be easily adjusted to accommodate node or edge-related tasks by applying the encoding function  $f_{\text{enc}}$  and the multilayer perceptron MLP elementwise to the colors of the multiset. However, for the purposes of this thesis, we will not delve into these variations, as our main focus will be on graph-wide tasks such as graph classification or regression, which possess greater theoretical interest and are more prevalent in most datasets. Furthermore, all the theoretical findings presented in this thesis can also be applied to 1-WL+NN models designed for node or edge tasks.

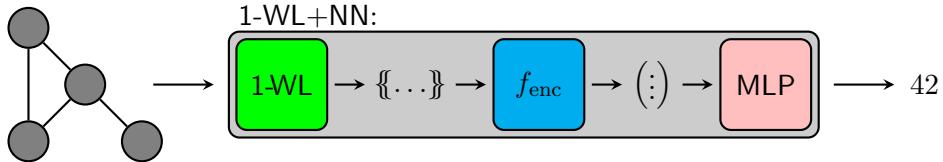


Figure 4: This simplified illustration explains the components that make up a 1-WL+NN model and how each one processes the input. In detail, the model takes the graph on the left as input and first applies the 1-WL algorithm, thereby obtaining a multiset of the colors assigned by the algorithm. Then the encoding function  $f_{\text{enc}}$  is applied, resulting in a fixed-size vector further processed by the multilayer perceptron MLP. The output of the MLP is then propagated as the 1-WL+NN models output, here the number 42.

### 3.5 Graph Neural Networks (Message Passing)

A Graph Neural Network (GNN) is a composition of multiple layers, where each layer computes a new feature for each node and edge. Each GNN layer thus technically obtains a new graph structurally identical to the previous one but contains new feature information. After an input graph has been passed through all layers, a final readout function is applied that pools all graph features and derives a task-related output. With this, it is possible to apply a GNN to every graph, regardless of its size, as the “computation” will only take place on the nodes and edges of the graph.

Note that in the following, we will restrict the definition only to consider node features; however, one can easily extend it to include edge features as well.

**Definition 10** (Graph Neural Network). Let  $G = (V, E, l)$  be an arbitrary graph. A Graph Neural Network (GNN) is a composition of multiple layers and a final readout function where each layer  $t$  is represented by a function  $f^{(t)}$ . The initial layer at  $t = 0$  is a functioning of the format  $f^{(0)} : V(G) \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^{1 \times d}$  that is consistent with  $l$  and translates all labels into a vector representation. In contrast, for every  $t > 0$ ,  $f^{(t)}$  is recursively defined as:

$$f^{(t)}(v) = f_{\text{merge}}^{(t)}(f^{(t-1)}(v), f_{\text{agg}}^{(t)}(\{f^{(t-1)}(w) \mid w \in \mathcal{N}(v)\})),$$

where  $f_{\text{merge}}^{(t)}$  is an arbitrary function that maps the aforementioned tuple to a vector, effectively “merging” them, while  $f_{\text{agg}}^{(t)}$  is an arbitrary function that maps the multiset to a vector, effectively “aggregating” it.

The readout function, referred to as **READOUT**, is applied after the input graph has been passed subsequently through all layers and is defined as follows:

$$\text{READOUT}(\{f^{(t)}(v) \mid v \in V(G)\}).$$

This function pools the information from every node feature, processes it, and calculates a fixed-size output vector for the entire graph.

In summary, a GNN model will compute the function  $\mathcal{A}$  as follows:

$$\mathcal{A} : \mathcal{G} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^k, G \mapsto \text{READOUT}(\{f^{(T)}(v) \mid v \in V(G)\}),$$

where  $T$  is the number of layer of the GNN, and  $k \in \mathbb{N}$  an arbitrary constant. To enable end-to-end training of a GNN, it is essential that all its components are differentiable. Therefore, we require all  $f^{(t)}$  merge and  $f^{(t)}$  agg functions, along with the final **READOUT** function, to be differentiable.

Note that, due to our definition of the “aggregation” function and the “readout” function to operate over multisets, both functions are permutation invariant by definition. With this, we can conclude that the total composition  $\mathcal{A}$  is permutation-invariant, and with similar reasoning, it is also differentiable. This property enables us to train  $\mathcal{A}$  like any other machine learning method in an end-to-end fashion, regardless of the underlying encoding used for graphs. The definition and notation used here are inspired by ? and ?.

To bridge the gap from the theoretical definition to practical instance of the definition, we will now introduce three distinct GNNs. Specifically, we will explore the Graph Convolutional Network (GCN) proposed by ?, the Graph Isomorphism Network (GIN) introduced by ?, and the Graph Attention Network (GAT) presented by ?. These GNNs will serve as empirical baselines in ???. The update equations for each GNN layer, denoted as  $f^{(t)}$  in the definition, are listed in ??.

Commonly employed readout functions in this context often involve straightforward pooling techniques like elementwise summation, mean calculation, or maximum extraction. These pooling operations are typically followed by a multilayer perceptron, which performs additional processing on the aggregated information.

Common readout functions for GNNs, often involve simple pooling techniques like elementwise summation, averaging or maximum extraction. These pooling operations are typically followed by a multilayer perceptron, which performs additional processing on the aggregated information.

Finish  
GNNs

Model	Update Equation
GCN	$f^{(t)}(v) = \text{ReLU} \left( \sum_{u \in \mathcal{N}(v) \cup \{v\}} \frac{W^{(t)}}{\sqrt{(1+d(v))(1+d(u))}} f^{(t-1)}(u) \right)$
GIN	$f^{(t)}(v) = \text{MLP}^{(k)} \left( (1 + \epsilon^{(k)}) f^{(t-1)}(v) + \sum_{u \in \mathcal{N}(v)} f^{(t-1)}(u) \right)$
GAT	$f^{(t)}(v) = \sigma \left( \sum_{u \in \mathcal{N}(v)} \alpha_{vu} W^{(t)} f^{(t-1)}(u) \right)$

Table 1: Overview of the update equations used by popular GNN configuration. This format is inspired by ?.

## 4 Theoretical Connection

This section is the main part of our theoretical investigation of the two frameworks. We will present four intriguing theorems, which will be proven separately afterward. In detail, the first two theorems will establish an equivalence between the two frameworks when the input set of graphs is finite. In comparison, the last two theorems will go one step further and establish a connection for continuous functions computed by 1-WL+NN and GNNs and prove a somewhat weaker connection between them.

In the first two theorems, we focus on a finite collection of graphs, which we denote by  $\mathcal{X} \subset \mathcal{G}$ .

**Theorem 11** (Finite Case: “GNN  $\subseteq$  1-WL+NN”). Let  $\mathcal{C}$  be a collection of functions from  $\mathcal{X}$  to  $\mathbb{R}$  computable by GNNs, then  $\mathcal{C}$  is also computable by 1-WL+NN.

**Theorem 12** (Finite Case: “1-WL+NN  $\subseteq$  GNN”). Let  $\mathcal{C}$  be a collection of functions from  $\mathcal{X}$  to  $\mathbb{R}$  computable by 1-WL+NN, then  $\mathcal{C}$  is also computable by GNNs.

With these two theorems, we showed the equivalence between both frameworks. Specifically, every function computed by 1-WL+NN working over any arbitrary  $\mathcal{X} \subset \mathcal{G}$  is also computable by a GNN, and vice versa. Notice that we did not leverage any constraints on the encoding of graphs throughout the first two theorems and their corresponding proves but instead kept it general.

Having established a connection between the two frameworks on a finite subset of graphs, we wanted to further demonstrate the expressive power of 1-WL-Discriminating by investigating a connection between the two frameworks for continuous feature spaces and continuous functions. However, since the *graph isomorphism problem* is an inherently discrete problem, the 1-WL algorithm, as outlined in ??, is only defined as a discrete and discontinuous function operating on discrete colors, such that extending the definition of the 1-WL algorithm to a continuous function working over continuous values is not very trivial and, to our knowledge, has not yet been widely investigated. Therefore, we assume in the proofs and the following theorems that a continuous version of the 1-WL algorithm exists.

We define the set of graphs with continuous features using the following definition:

**Definition 13.** Let  $X$  be a compact subset of  $\mathbb{R}$  including 0. We decode graphs with  $n$  nodes as a matrix  $G \in X^{n \times n}$ , where  $G_{i,i}$  decodes the label of node  $i$  for  $i \in [n]$ , and  $G_{i,j}$  with  $i \neq j \in [n]$  decodes an edge from node  $i$  to  $j$  and a corresponding edge features. Furthermore, we say that there is an edge between node  $i$  and  $j$  if and only if  $G_{i,j} \neq 0$ . Additionally, if  $G$  encodes an

undirected graph,  $G$  is a symmetric matrix. For simplicity, we denote  $\mathcal{X} := X^{n \times n}$  throughout the next two theorems and their respective proofs.

**Theorem 14** (Continuous Case: “GNN  $\subseteq$  1-WL+NN”). Let  $\mathcal{C}$  be a collection of continuous functions from  $\mathcal{X}$  to  $\mathbb{R}$  computable by 1-WL+NN. If  $\mathcal{C}$  is 1-WL-Discriminating, then there exists a collection of functions  $\mathcal{C}'$  computable by 1-WL+NN that is GNN-Approximating.

**Theorem 15** (Continuous Case: “1-WL+NN  $\subseteq$  GNN”). Let  $\mathcal{C}$  be a collection of continuous functions from  $\mathcal{X}$  to  $\mathbb{R}$  that is GNN-Approximating, then  $\mathcal{C}$  is also 1-WL-Discriminating.

Immediately from the last theorem follows the corollary:

**Corollary 16.** There exists a collection  $\mathcal{C}$  of function from  $\mathcal{X}$  to  $\mathbb{R}$  computable by GNNs that is 1-WL-Discriminating.

*Proof.* The collection of all functions from  $\mathcal{X}$  to  $\mathbb{R}$  computable by GNNs is trivially GNN-Approximating, such that we can apply ?? with which the proof concludes.  $\square$

Since we only wanted to show the expressive power of 1-WL-Discriminating and made the major assumption of the existence of a continuous 1-WL algorithm, we have included the proofs of ???? in the Appendix in ??.

By putting both theorems into perspective, we can now argue that even for continuous functions 1-WL+NN and GNNs can compute almost the same functions. Each framework can approximate the other framework arbitrarily well. We can conclude that the ability 1-WL-Discriminating is very powerful, so we can assume that 1-WL+NN is sufficiently expressive for the upcoming empirical part.

#### 4.1 Proof of ??

We will prove ?? by introducing a couple of small lemmas, which combined prove the theorem. In detail, in ??, we show the existence of a collection computed by 1-WL+NN that is 1-WL-Discriminating. In ?????? we derive properties of 1-WL+NN functions we will use throughout ?????? with which we prove the theorem. We took great inspiration for ?????? from the proof presented in section 3.1 in the work of ?.

**Lemma 17.** There exists a collection  $\mathcal{C}$  of functions from  $\mathcal{X}$  to  $\mathbb{R}$  computable by 1-WL+NN that is 1-WL-Discriminating.

*Proof.* We define  $f_c$  for  $c \in \mathbb{N}$  as the encoding function that returns the number of nodes colored as  $c$ . With this, we can construct the collection of functions  $C$  as follows:

$$C := \{\mathcal{B}_c : \mathcal{X} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}, G \mapsto \text{MLP}_{\text{id}} \circ f_c(\{\{1\text{-WL}(G)(v) \mid v \in V(G)\}\}) \mid c \in \mathbb{N}\},$$

where  $\text{MLP}_{\text{id}}$  is a dummy multilayer perceptron that returns its input. Since every function  $\mathcal{B}_c \in C$  is composed of the 1-WL algorithm, an encoding function, and a multilayer perceptron, each function is computable by 1-WL+NN, and consequently also the whole collection.

Let  $G_1, G_2 \in \mathcal{X}$  with  $G_1 \not\simeq_{1\text{-WL}} G_2$ . Further, let  $C_1, C_2$  be the final colorings computed by the 1-WL algorithm when applied on  $G_1, G_2$  respectively. Due to  $G_1 \not\simeq_{1\text{-WL}} G_2$ , there exists a color  $c \in \mathbb{N}$  such that  $h_{G_1, C_1}(c) \neq h_{G_2, C_2}(c)$ . Such that  $\mathcal{B}_c \in C$  exists with  $\mathcal{B}_c(G_1) \neq \mathcal{B}_c(G_2)$ .  $\square$

**Lemma 18** (1-WL+NN Equivalence). Let  $\mathcal{B}$  be a function over  $\mathcal{X}$  computable by 1-WL+NN, then for every pair of graphs  $G_1, G_2 \in \mathcal{X}$  : if  $G_1 \simeq_{1\text{-WL}} G_2$  than  $\mathcal{B}(G_1) = \mathcal{B}(G_2)$ .

*Proof.* Let  $\mathcal{B}$  be an arbitrary function over  $\mathcal{X}$  computable by 1-WL+NN, then  $\mathcal{B}$  is composed as follows:  $\mathcal{B}(\cdot) = \text{MLP} \circ f_{\text{enc}} \{\{1\text{-WL}(\cdot)(v) \mid v \in V(G)\}\}$ . Further, let  $G_1, G_2 \in \mathcal{X}$  be arbitrary graphs with  $G_1 \simeq_{1\text{-WL}} G_2$ , then by definition of the relation  $\simeq_{1\text{-WL}}$  we know that  $1\text{-WL}(G_1) = 1\text{-WL}(G_2)$ . With this, the equivalence follows immediately.  $\square$

**Lemma 19** (1-WL+NN Permutation Invariance). Let  $\mathcal{B}$  be a function over  $\mathcal{X}$  computable by 1-WL+NN, then  $\mathcal{B}$  is permutation invariant.

*Proof.* Let  $G_1, G_2 \in \mathcal{X}$  be arbitrary graphs with  $G_1 \simeq G_2$  and  $\mathcal{B}$  an arbitrary function computable by 1-WL+NN. Since the 1-WL algorithm is sound, we know that  $G_1 \simeq G_2$  implies  $G_1 \simeq_{1\text{-WL}} G_2$ . Using ??, we can therefore conclude that:  $\mathcal{B}(G_1) = \mathcal{B}(G_2)$ .  $\square$

**Lemma 20** (1-WL+NN Composition). Let  $\mathcal{C}$  be a collection of functions computable by 1-WL+NN. Further, let  $h_1, \dots, h_n \in \mathcal{C}$  and  $\text{MLP}^*$  an multilayer perceptron, than the function  $\mathcal{B}$  composed of  $\mathcal{B}(\cdot) := \text{MLP}^*(h_1(\cdot), \dots, h_n(\cdot))$  is also computable by 1-WL+NN.

*Proof Sketch.* Assume the above and let  $f_1, \dots, f_n$  be the encoding functions, as well as  $\text{MLP}_1, \dots, \text{MLP}_n$  be the multilayer perceptrons used by  $h_1, \dots, h_n$  respectively. The idea of this proof is that we construct an encoding function  $f^*$  that “duplicates” its input and applies each encoding function  $f_i$  individually. We also construct a multilayer perceptron  $\text{MLP}^*$  that takes in the output of  $f^*$  and simulates all  $\text{MLP}_1, \dots, \text{MLP}_n$  simultaneously. Afterward, the given  $\text{MLP}^*$  will be applied on the concatenation of the output of all  $mlp_i$ s. See ?? for a sketch of the proof idea. For the complete proof, please refer to the Appendix in ??.

$$G \xrightarrow{1\text{-WL}} \{1 - WL(G)(v) \mid v \in V(G)\} \xrightarrow{f^*} \begin{bmatrix} f_1(M_G) \\ \vdots \\ f_n(M_G) \end{bmatrix} \xrightarrow{\text{MLP}^*} \text{MLP}^*\left(\begin{bmatrix} \text{MLP}_1(f_1(M_G)) \\ \vdots \\ \text{MLP}_n(f_n(M_G)) \end{bmatrix}\right)$$

Figure 5: The proof idea for ??, how the constructed functions  $f^*$  and  $\text{MLP}^*$  will work on input  $G \in \mathcal{X}$ . Here we denote with  $M_G$  the multiset of colors of the nodes of  $G$  after applying the 1-WL algorithm.

$\square$

**Lemma 21.** Let  $\mathcal{C}$  be a collection of functions from  $\mathcal{X}$  to  $\mathbb{R}$  computable by 1-WL+NN that is 1-WL-Discriminating. Then for all  $G^* \in \mathcal{X}$ , there exists a function  $h_{G^*}$  from  $\mathcal{X}$  to  $\mathbb{R}$  computable by 1-WL+NN, such that for all  $G \in \mathcal{X}$ :  $h_{G^*}(G) = 0$ , if and only if,  $G \simeq_{1\text{-WL}} G^*$ .

*Proof.* Assume the above. For any  $G_1, G_2 \in \mathcal{X}$  with  $G_1 \not\simeq_{1\text{-WL}} G_2$ , let  $h_{G_1, G_2} \in \mathcal{C}$  be the function distinguishing them, with  $h_{G_1, G_2}(G_1) \neq h_{G_1, G_2}(G_2)$ . We define the function  $\bar{h}_{G_1, G_2}$  working over  $\mathcal{X}$  as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \bar{h}_{G_1, G_2}(\cdot) &= |h_{G_1, G_2}(\cdot) - h_{G_1, G_2}(G_1)| \\ &= \max(h_{G_1, G_2}(\cdot) - h_{G_1, G_2}(G_1), 0) + \max(h_{G_1, G_2}(G_1) - h_{G_1, G_2}(\cdot), 0) \\ &= \text{ReLU}(h_{G_1, G_2}(\cdot) - h_{G_1, G_2}(G_1)) + \text{ReLU}(h_{G_1, G_2}(G_1) - h_{G_1, G_2}(\cdot)) \end{aligned} \quad (0.1)$$

Note, that in the equations above “ $h_{G_1, G_2}(G_1)$ ” is a fixed constant and the resulting function  $\bar{h}_{G_1, G_2}$  is non-negative. Let  $G_1 \in \mathcal{X}$  now be fixed, we will construct the function  $h_{G_1}$  with the

desired properties as follows:

$$h_{G_1}(\cdot) = \sum_{G_2 \in \mathcal{X}, G_1 \not\simeq_{\text{WL}} G_2} \bar{h}_{G_1, G_2}(\cdot). \quad (0.2)$$

Since  $\mathcal{X}$  is finite, the sum is finite and therefore well-defined. Next, we will prove that for a fixed graph  $G_1 \in \mathcal{X}$ , the function  $h_{G_1}$  is correct on input  $G \in \mathcal{X}$ :

1. If  $G_1 \simeq_{\text{WL}} G$ , then for every function  $\bar{h}_{G_1, G_2}$  of the sum with  $G_1 \not\simeq_{\text{WL}} G_2$ , we know, using ??, that  $\bar{h}_{G_1, G_2}(G)$  is equal to  $\bar{h}_{G_1, G_2}(G_1)$  which is by definition 0, such that  $h_{G_1}(G) = 0$ .
2. If  $G_1 \not\simeq_{\text{WL}} G$ , then  $\bar{h}_{G_1, G}(G)$  is a summand of the overall sum, and since  $\bar{h}_{G_1, G}(G) > 0$ , we can conclude  $h_{G_1}(G) > 0$  due to the non-negativity of each function  $\bar{h}_{G_1, G_2}$ .

Using ??, we can conclude that for any  $G \in \mathcal{X}$ ,  $h_G$  is computable by 1-WL+NN, as we can encode ?? via a multilayer perceptron where the factor “ $h_{G_1, G_2}(G_1)$ ” of ?? is just a constant.  $\square$

**Lemma 22.** Let  $\mathcal{C}$  be a collection of functions from  $\mathcal{X}$  to  $\mathbb{R}$  computable by 1-WL+NN so that for all  $G^* \in \mathcal{X}$ , there exists  $h_{G^*} \in \mathcal{C}$  satisfying  $h_{G^*}(G) = 0$  if and only if  $G \simeq_{\text{WL}} G^*$  for all  $G \in \mathcal{X}$ . Then for every  $G^* \in \mathcal{X}$ , there exists a function  $\varphi_{G^*}$  computable by 1-WL+NN such that for all  $G \in \mathcal{X}$ :  $\varphi_{G^*}(G) = \mathbf{1}_{G \simeq_{\text{WL}} G^*}$ .

*Proof.* Assuming the above. Due to  $\mathcal{X}$  being finite, we can define for every graph  $G^*$  the constant:

$$\delta_{G^*} := \frac{1}{2} \min_{G \in \mathcal{X}, G \not\simeq_{\text{WL}} G^*} |h_{G^*}(G)| > 0.$$

With this constant, we can use a so-called “bump” function working from  $\mathbb{R}$  to  $\mathbb{R}$  that is similar to the indicator function. We define this function for parameter  $a \in \mathbb{R}$  with  $a > 0$  as:

$$\begin{aligned} \psi_a(x) &:= \max\left(\frac{x}{a} - 1, 0\right) + \max\left(\frac{x}{a} + 1, 0\right) - 2 \cdot \max\left(\frac{x}{a}, 0\right) \\ &= \text{ReLU}\left(\frac{x}{a} - 1\right) + \text{ReLU}\left(\frac{x}{a} + 1\right) - 2 \cdot \text{ReLU}\left(\frac{x}{a}\right) \end{aligned} \quad (0.3)$$

The interesting property of  $\psi_a$  is that it maps every value  $x$  to 0, except when  $x$  is being drawn from the interval  $(-a, a)$ . In particular, it maps  $x$  to 1 if and only if  $x$  is equal to 0. See ?? for a plot of the relevant part of this function with exemplary values for  $a$ .

We use these properties to define for every graph  $G^* \in \mathcal{X}$  the function  $\varphi_{G^*}(\cdot) := \psi_{\delta_{G^*}}(h_{G^*}(\cdot))$ . We will quickly demonstrate that this function is equal to the indicator function, for this let  $G^*$  be fixed and  $G$ , an arbitrary graph from  $\mathcal{X}$ , the input:

1. If  $G \simeq_{\text{WL}} G^*$ , then  $h_{G^*}(G) = 0$  resulting in  $\varphi_{G^*}(G) = \psi_{\delta_{G^*}}(0) = 1$ .
2. If  $G \not\simeq_{\text{WL}} G^*$  then  $h_{G^*}(G) \neq 0$ , such that  $|h_{G^*}(G)| > \delta_{G^*}$  so that  $h_{G^*}(G) \notin (-\delta_{G^*}, \delta_{G^*})$  resulting in  $\varphi_{G^*}(G) = 0$ .

Note that we can encode  $\varphi_{G^*}$  using ?? via a multilayer perceptron, where  $\delta_{G^*}$  is a constant. With ?? we can therefore conclude that  $\varphi_{G^*}$  is computable by 1-WL+NN for every graph  $G^* \in \mathcal{X}$ .  $\square$

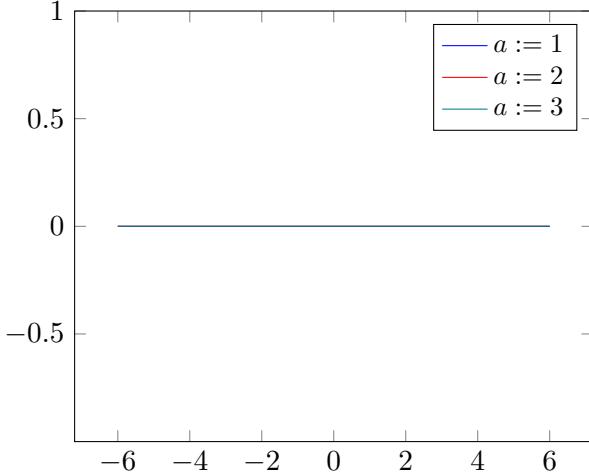


Figure 6: Illustration of the so-called ‘‘bump’’ function  $\psi_a(x)$  used in the proof of ?? with different exemplary values for  $a$ .

**Lemma 23.** Let  $\mathcal{C}$  be a collection of functions from  $\mathcal{X}$  to  $\mathbb{R}$  computable by 1-WL+NN such that for all  $G^* \in \mathcal{X}$ , there exists  $\varphi_{G^*} \in \mathcal{C}$  satisfying  $\forall G \in \mathcal{X} : \varphi_{G^*}(G) = \mathbf{1}_{G \simeq_{1\text{-WL}} G^*}$ . Then every function computable by a GNN is also computable by 1-WL+NN.

*Proof.* Assume the above. For any function  $\mathcal{A}$  computed by a GNN that works over  $\mathcal{X}$  to  $\mathbb{R}$ , we show that it can be decomposed as follows for any  $G \in \mathcal{X}$  as input:

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{A}(G) &= \left( \frac{1}{|\mathcal{X}/\simeq_{1\text{-WL}}(G)|} \sum_{G^* \in \mathcal{X}} \mathbf{1}_{G \simeq_{1\text{-WL}} G^*} \right) \cdot \mathcal{A}(G) \\ &= \frac{1}{|\mathcal{X}/\simeq_{1\text{-WL}}(G)|} \sum_{G^* \in \mathcal{X}} \mathcal{A}(G^*) \cdot \mathbf{1}_{G \simeq_{1\text{-WL}} G^*} \\ &= \sum_{G^* \in \mathcal{X}} \frac{\mathcal{A}(G^*)}{|\mathcal{X}/\simeq_{1\text{-WL}}(G^*)|} \cdot \varphi_{G^*}(G) \end{aligned} \quad (0.4)$$

where we denote with  $\mathcal{X}/\simeq_{1\text{-WL}}(G^*)$  the set of all graphs  $G$  over  $\mathcal{X}$  that are equivalent to  $G^*$  according to the  $\simeq_{1\text{-WL}}$  relation.

Since  $\mathcal{A}$  is permutation-invariant and GNNs are, at most, as good as the 1-WL algorithm in distinguishing non-isomorphic graphs, we can use the fact that for every pair of graphs  $G, H \in \mathcal{X}$  with  $G \simeq_{1\text{-WL}} H$ :  $\mathcal{A}(G) = \mathcal{A}(H)$ . Therefore, we can decompose  $\mathcal{A}$  as indicated in ?? and encode it using a multilayer perceptron where  $\frac{\mathcal{A}(G^*)}{|\mathcal{X}/\simeq_{1\text{-WL}}(G^*)|}$  is a constant, and  $\varphi_{G^*} \in \mathcal{C}$  encodes the indicator function. Combined with the ??, we can conclude that  $\mathcal{A}$  is computable by 1-WL+NN. Important to note, we can only do this since  $\mathcal{X}$  is finite, making the overall sum finite and the cardinality of  $\mathcal{X}/\simeq_{1\text{-WL}}(G^*)$  well-defined for all graphs.  $\square$

## 4.2 Proof of ??

In this section we will prove the converse direction. We start with ??, where we introduce an upper bound that we will use in ?? to show that there exists a collection of GNN-computable functions that is 1-WL-Discriminating. After that, we will prove a composition lemma with ?? which is similar to the one we introduced in the previous section. From this point on, the proof continues as in the previous section and concludes the property to be proved in ??.

**Lemma 24.** Let  $G$  be an arbitrary graph with  $n := |V(G)|$  the number of nodes and  $C : V(G) \rightarrow \mathbb{N}$  an arbitrary coloring of the graph  $G$ . Then the total number of possible tuples of the form:

$$(C(v), \{\{C(u) \mid u \in \mathcal{N}(v)\}\}),$$

for all  $v \in V(G)$  can be upper bounded by:

$$n \cdot \sum_{i=0}^{n-1} \binom{n+i-1}{i}.$$

*Proof.* Assume the above. For the first entry of the tuple, at most  $n$  different colors exist since there are  $n$  nodes. For the second entry, each node  $v \in V(G)$  can have between 0 and  $n-1$  neighbors, such that the total number of possibilities is the sum over each cardinality of a multiset with  $n$  different colors. In the end, we soundly combine both results by multiplying both together.  $\square$

**Lemma 25** (GNN 1-WL-Discriminating). There exists a collection  $\mathcal{C}$  of functions from  $\mathcal{X}$  to  $\mathbb{R}$  computable by GNNs that is 1-WL-Discriminating. Meaning for every  $G_1, G_2 \in \mathcal{X}$  with  $G_1 \not\simeq_{\text{WL}} G_2$  there exists  $\mathcal{A} \in \mathcal{C}$  such that  $\mathcal{A}(G_1) \neq \mathcal{A}(G_2)$ .

*Proof.* Since  $\mathcal{X}$  is finite, we define  $n := \max\{|V(G)| \mid G \in \mathcal{X}\}$  to be the maximum number of nodes of a graph in  $\mathcal{X}$ , and  $k := \max\{l_G(v) \mid v \in V(G), G \in \mathcal{X}\}$  to be the largest label of any node of a graph in  $\mathcal{X}$ . Using ??, we can compute an upper bound  $m$  using  $n$  for the number of distinct tuples. Note that, this bound holds true for all graphs in  $\mathcal{X}$ . We will now construct a GNN with  $n$  layers working on input  $G$  as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} f^{(0)}(v) &:= l_G(v), \text{ and} \\ f^{(t)}(v) &:= \text{RELABEL}_{m,t}(f^{(t-1)}(v), \{\{f^{(t-1)}(u) \mid u \in \mathcal{N}(v)\}\}), \quad 0 < t < n. \end{aligned}$$

Here  $\text{RELABEL}_{m,t}$  is a function that maps the tuples injectively to an integer of the set:

$$\{i \in \mathbb{N} \mid k + (t-1) \cdot m + 1 \leq i \leq k + t \cdot m\}.$$

This function exists as by the soundness of the upper bound of ??, the cardinality of its co-domain is greater or equal than the one of its domain. Thereby, and with the injectiveness of  $\text{RELABEL}_{m,t}$ , we ensure that each GNN layer maps a tuple to a new, previously unused color. Therefore, every layer of this GNN computes a single iteration of the 1-WL algorithm. Further, since the 1-WL algorithm converges after at most  $|V(G)| \leq n$  iterations, we set the number of layers to  $n$ . We ensure that the coloring computed by this GNN after  $n$  layers when applied on any graph  $G \in \mathcal{X}$  is similarly expressive as the coloring computed by the 1-WL algorithm when applied on  $G$ .

We define the collection  $\mathcal{C}$  of functions computable by GNNs that is 1-WL-Discriminating as:

$$\mathcal{C} := \{\mathcal{A} : \mathcal{X} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}, G \mapsto \text{Readout}_c(\{f^{(n)}(v) \mid v \in V(G)\}) \mid c \in \mathbb{N}\},$$

where  $\text{Readout}_c$  is the READOUT function that returns the number of nodes colored as  $c$  in the coloring of  $f^{(n)}$ .  $\square$

Similar to the proof in the previous section, we will use ?? to introduce the ability to construct GNNs that take in as input multiple GNNs and then apply a multilayer perceptron to the combined output.

**Lemma 26** (Composition GNN). Let  $C$  be a collection of function computable by GNNs. Further, let  $\mathcal{A}_1, \dots, \mathcal{A}_n \in C$  and  $\text{MLP}^\bullet$  a suitable multilayer perceptron, then  $\hat{\mathcal{A}}(\cdot) := \text{MLP}(\mathcal{A}_1(\cdot), \dots, \mathcal{A}_n(\cdot))$  is also computable by a GNN.

*Proof.* Further, for any  $x \in \mathbb{R}^d$ , we will use the notation  $x[i]$  to indicate the  $i$ .th element of the vector  $x$ . Additionally, we indicate the merge and aggregation function used in layer  $t$  by  $\mathcal{A}_i$  as  $f_{\text{merge},i}^{(t)}$  and  $f_{\text{agg},i}^{(t)}$ . Similarly, does  $\text{Readout}_i$  indicate the READOUT function and  $f_i^{(0)}$  the input function of  $\mathcal{A}_i$ .

We will prove the lemma by constructing  $\hat{\mathcal{A}}$ . Let  $T$  be the maximum number of layers of all  $\mathcal{A}_1, \dots, \mathcal{A}_n$ . We construct the GNN  $\hat{\mathcal{A}}$  with  $T$  layers, with the input layer working as follows on an input graph  $G$ :

$$\forall v \in V(G) : \hat{f}^{(0)}(v) := \begin{bmatrix} f_1^{(0)}(v) \\ \vdots \\ f_n^{(0)}(v) \end{bmatrix},$$

and each other layer  $0 < t \leq K$  uses the merge  $\hat{f}_{\text{merge}}^{(t)}$  and aggregation  $\hat{f}_{\text{agg}}^{(t)}$  functions as defined below:

$$\begin{aligned} \hat{f}_{\text{merge}}^{(t)}(\hat{f}^{(t-1)}(v), \text{Agg}) &:= \begin{bmatrix} f_{\text{merge},1}^{(t)}(\hat{f}^{(t-1)}(v)[1], \text{Agg}[1]) \\ \vdots \\ f_{\text{merge},n}^{(t)}(\hat{f}^{(t-1)}(v)[n], \text{Agg}[n]) \end{bmatrix}, \quad \text{and} \\ \hat{f}_{\text{agg}}^{(t)}(\{\!\{ \hat{f}^{(t-1)}(w) \mid w \in \mathcal{N}(v) \}\!}) &:= \begin{bmatrix} f_{\text{agg},1}^{(t)}(\{\!\{ f^{(t-1)}(w)[1] \mid w \in \mathcal{N}(v) \}\!}) \\ \vdots \\ f_{\text{agg},n}^{(t)}(\{\!\{ f^{(t-1)}(w)[n] \mid w \in \mathcal{N}(v) \}\!}) \end{bmatrix}. \end{aligned}$$

Note that, not all  $\mathcal{A}_i$  will be comprised of  $K$  layers. For these cases we define the missing functions as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} f_{\text{merge},i}^{(t)}(\hat{f}^{(t-1)}(v), \text{Agg}) &:= \hat{f}^{(t-1)}(v), \quad \text{and} \\ f_{\text{agg},i}^{(t)}(\{\!\{ f^{(t-1)}(w) \mid w \in \mathcal{N}(v) \}\!}) &:= 0. \end{aligned}$$

These functions do not change anything, and only forward the result of the actual computation of  $\mathcal{A}_i$  to the last layer. Finally, we construct the READOUT function of  $\hat{\mathcal{A}}$  as follows:

$$\text{READOUT}(\{\!\{ \hat{f}^{(T)}(v) \mid v \in V(G) \}\!}) := \text{MLP} \circ \begin{bmatrix} \text{READOUT}_1(\{\!\{ \hat{f}^{(T)}(v)[1] \mid v \in V(G) \}\!}) \\ \vdots \\ \text{READOUT}_n(\{\!\{ \hat{f}^{(T)}(v)[n] \mid v \in V(G) \}\!}) \end{bmatrix}.$$

□

As a consequence of the previous two lemmas, we find ourselves in a similar position as at the beginning of the proof in ???. Specifically, we have established, through ???, the existence of a collection  $C$  of functions that can be computed by GNNs and can effectively distinguish any pair of graphs that are also distinguishable by the 1-WL algorithm. Furthermore, with ??, we have demonstrated that the composition of multiple GNNs and a multilayer perceptron

remains computable by a single GNN. Consequently, we can also apply the findings of [????](#) to GNNs. Thus, we can conclude that for any fixed  $G^* \in \mathcal{X}$ , the indicator function  $\varphi_{G^*}$  working over  $\mathcal{X}$  with:

$$\forall G \in \mathcal{X} : \quad \varphi_{G^*}(G) := \begin{cases} 1, & \text{if } G \simeq_{\text{WL}} G^* \\ 0, & \text{else} \end{cases},$$

is computable by a GNN.

**Lemma 27.** Let  $\mathcal{C}$  be a collection of functions from  $\mathcal{X}$  to  $\mathbb{R}$  computable by GNNs so that for all  $G^* \in \mathcal{X}$ , there exists  $\varphi_{G^*} \in \mathcal{C}$  satisfying  $\forall G \in \mathcal{X} : \varphi_{G^*}(G) = \mathbb{1}_{G \simeq_{\text{WL}} G^*}$ . Then every function computable by 1-WL+NN is also computable by a GNN.

*Proof.* Assume the above. For any function  $\mathcal{B}$  computed by 1-WL+NN that works over  $\mathcal{X}$  to  $\mathbb{R}$ , we show that it can be decomposed as follows for any  $G \in \mathcal{X}$  as input:

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{B}(G) &= \left( \frac{1}{|\mathcal{X}/\simeq_{\text{WL}}(G)|} \sum_{G^* \in \mathcal{X}} \mathbb{1}_{G \simeq_{\text{WL}} G^*} \right) \cdot \mathcal{B}(G) \\ &= \frac{1}{|\mathcal{X}/\simeq_{\text{WL}}(G)|} \sum_{G^* \in \mathcal{X}} \mathcal{B}(G^*) \cdot \mathbb{1}_{G \simeq_{\text{WL}} G^*} \\ &= \sum_{G^* \in \mathcal{X}} \frac{\mathcal{B}(G^*)}{|\mathcal{X}/\simeq_{\text{WL}}(G^*)|} \cdot \varphi_{G^*}(G) \end{aligned} \tag{0.5}$$

where we denote with  $\mathcal{X}/\simeq_{\text{WL}}(G^*)$  the set of all graphs  $G$  over  $\mathcal{X}$  that are equivalent to  $G^*$  according to the  $\simeq_{\text{WL}}$  relation. Further, with [??](#) we know that for any  $G_1, G_2 \in \mathcal{X}$  with  $G_1 \simeq_{\text{WL}} G_2 : \mathcal{B}(G_1) = \mathcal{B}(G_2)$ .

We can encode  $\mathcal{B}$  as stated in [??](#) via a multilayer perceptron with  $\frac{\mathcal{B}(G^*)}{|\mathcal{X}/\simeq_{\text{WL}}(G^*)|}$  being constants and  $\varphi_{G^*} \in \mathcal{C}$  encoding the indicator function. Combined with the [??](#), we can conclude that  $\mathcal{B}$  is computable by 1-WL+NN. Important to note, we can only do this since  $\mathcal{X}$  is finite, making the overall sum finite and the cardinality of  $\mathcal{X}/\simeq_{\text{WL}}(G^*)$  well-defined for all graphs.  $\square$

## **Part II**

# **Empirical Testing**

Give a short Outline

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## 5 Setup

Introduction to this section!

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### 5.1 Datasets

We will first explain our choice of datasets and introduce each dataset individually. Afterward, we will explore essential observations that are to be considered when assessing the actual empirical results.

#### Choice of Datasets

In selecting the datasets for our thesis, we adhered to two fundamental principles to ensure the robustness and diversity of our evaluation for GNN and 1-WL+NN models. The first principle focuses on using widely recognized benchmark datasets that have been extensively employed in previous studies. This principle enables us and readers to make meaningful comparisons with existing results. The second principle focuses on choosing datasets that are distinct from one another in terms of both their application domains and the way they encode information in graphs.

To fulfill the first principle, we opted for datasets from the TUDataset library. This library, curated by ?, serves as a widely recognized standard for evaluating graph-related methods.

Regarding the second principle, we incorporated the insights from ?, who developed a comprehensive taxonomy of common graph benchmark datasets. Their work examined the degree to which information is encoded in graph structures compared to node features with respect to solving the task of the datasets. Based on their taxonomy, they categorized datasets into three distinct classes:

1. Datasets in which the most crucial information for solving the task is contained in the node features.
2. Datasets similar to the first category, but with the significant exception that the node degree strongly correlates with the node features. In these datasets, utilizing simple structural information, such as computing the node degree, is as beneficial for solving the task as using the original node features.
3. Datasets where the most crucial information is encoded within the graph structure itself.

These categories help us understand how information is encoded in various datasets, such that we aim to choose datasets from all three categories.

As a result of considering these two principles, we selected the following datasets for our thesis: ENZYMES, IMDB-BINARY, MUTAG, NCI1, PROTEINS, and REDDIT-BINARY for classification tasks, and ALCHEMY(10K) and ZINC for regression tasks. For an overview of the elemental properties of each dataset, see ???. We will now shortly introduce each dataset individually:

ENZYMES, provided by ?, is a dataset consisting of proteins in their tertiary structure, categorized into six distinct enzyme classes. Each node represents a secondary structure, and has an edge to its three spatially closest nodes. Furthermore, each node feature encodes the type of secondary structure (*helix*, *sheet* or *turn*), as well as physical and chemical information.

IMDB-BINARY, provided by ?, is a dataset comprising ego networks. Each node in the network represents an actor/actress, and a unidirectional edge exists between two nodes if and only if the corresponding actors played together in a movie. The task involves determining whether each ego network's genre is *action* or *romance*.

MUTAG, provided by ?, is a dataset comprising Nitroaromatic compounds. Each compound is represented by a graph in which nodes represent atoms, with their types encoded as node features, and edges represent atomic bonds. The task involves determining whether a given compound has a mutagenic effect on *Salmonella typhimurium* bacteria.

NCI1, provided by ?, comprises graph representations of chemical compounds. In these graphs, nodes represent atoms, and edges represent atomic bonds. Moreover, the atom types are encoded in the node features. The overall task involves determining whether a given compound is active or inactive in inhibiting non-small cell lung cancer.

PROTEINS, provided by ?, contains proteins encoded similarly to ENZYMES. The task here is to determine whether each graph represents an enzyme.

REDDIT-BINARY, provided by ?, involves graphs that are derived from popular Reddit communities. The nodes in these graphs represent users who are active in the community, while the edges represent interactions between the users. The task is to identify whether a graph belongs to a community that is focused on questions and answers, or one that is focused on discussions.

ALCHEMY(10K), provided by ?, consists of organic molecules, with each node representing an atom and each edge representing an atomic bond. Additionally, each node feature encodes various properties for each atom, while each edge encodes the bond type and distance between

Table 2: Dataset statistics and properties for graph-level prediction tasks. This table has been adapted from ?.

Dataset	Properties						
	Number of graphs	Number of classes/targets	$\emptyset$ Number of nodes	$\emptyset$ Number of edges	Node labels	Edge labels	Taxonomy Category
Classification	ENZYMEs	600	6	32.6	62.1	✓	✗
	IMDB-BINARY	1 000	2	19.8	96.5	✗	✗
	MUTAG	188	2	17.9	19.8	✓	✗
	NCI1	4 110	2	29.9	32.3	✓	✗
	PROTEINS	1 113	2	39.1	72.8	✓	✗
	REDDIT-BINARY	2 000	2	429.6	497.8	✗	✗
Reg.	ALCHEMY (10K)	12000	12	10.1	20.9	✓	✓
	ZINC	12000	12	10.1	20.9	✓	✓

atoms. The overall task is to compute 12 different continuous quantum mechanical properties for each graph. Note that we do not utilize the entire dataset, only a subset with a fixed training split. In detail, the training data comprises 10.000 samples, while the validation and test set each consists of 1000 graphs.

### Analysis of the Datasets

To ensure the reliability and fairness of our evaluation, one of our initial steps was to assess the balance of our selected datasets for classification. We employed the normalized Shannon index to evaluate the balance of a dataset, where a value close to 0 indicates maximum imbalance, while a value close to 1 signifies perfect balance. See ?? in the Appendix for a formal definition of this metric.

Table 3: An overview of the normalized Shannon index calculated for each dataset.

	Dataset					
	ENZYMEs	IMDB-MULTI	MUTAG	NCI1	PROTEINS	REDDIT-BINARY
Shannon index	1	1	0.920	1	0.973	1

?? provides an overview of the normalized Shannon index computed for each selected dataset. Upon analyzing the data, we observed that all the datasets exhibit high balance, as all their values are close to 1. This finding assures us that the datasets do not suffer significant class imbalances, which will remain important in the following section.

In addition to the balance of all datasets, another important aspect is understanding the upper bound of performance achievable by both GNN and 1-WL+NN models on these datasets. Unlike in other areas of machine learning where multilayer perceptron models can achieve near-perfect performance due to their universal approximation capabilities (?), GNN and 1-WL+NN models have inherent limitations on their expressiveness. This restriction stems from the fact that the expressiveness of the 1-WL algorithm limits the performance of both frameworks. In detail, if

the 1-WL algorithm can not distinguish a pair of graphs in a dataset, then neither a GNN nor a 1-WL+NN model can.

While we have pointed out that the 1-WL algorithm is, in general, quite powerful in distinguishing pairs of graphs in ??; we also explained that it is not complete. Therefore, assuming that GNN or 1-WL+NN models exist that can achieve almost perfect accuracy on all classification datasets is not reasonable. Thus, we calculated the theoretical maximum accuracy achievable by the perfect model for each dataset. In detail, we even investigated how many iterations of the 1-WL algorithm it takes to achieve this accuracy. For a comprehensive overview of the accuracies achievable on all datasets, please refer to ?. In this table, we have included the accuracy achievable when running the 1-WL algorithm for 0 iterations, which essentially means taking the initial node features as the coloring for iteration 0 and assessing the expressiveness of this initial coloring.

Table 4: An overview of the maximum theoretical classification accuracy achievable for each dataset based on the number of 1-WL iterations in percent. A hyphen “-” indicates that the maximum accuracy has converged with fewer iterations, implying that further iterations do not improve the accuracy. Additionally, datasets marked with a “\*” indicates that these datasets do not have initial node features, such that we initialize their features with a constant for all nodes.

1-WL	Dataset					
	ENZYMES	IMDB-BINARY*	MUTAG	NCI1	PROTEINS	REDDIT-BINARY*
Iterations: 0	81.4	60.6	93.1	91.3	91.9	83.9
Iterations: 1	100.0	88.6	95.7	99.5	99.7	100.0
Iterations: 2	-	-	99.5	99.8	-	-
Iterations: 3	-	-	100.0	99.8	-	-
Iterations: 4	-	-	-	-	-	-
Max Accuracy	100.0	88.6	100.0	99.8	99.7	100.0

Upon examining the results, we observe that all datasets exhibit perfect or near-perfect theoretical classification accuracies. This result makes interpreting results obtained from actual 1-WL+NN or GNN models later on more straightforward. Additionally, the accuracy achievable after each number of iterations provides a theoretical lower limit on the number of message-passing layers a GNN must be composed of to be even capable of achieving this accuracy.

We have conducted the same analyzes on additional datasets, as their results might be valuable to the reader. For these, see ?? in the Appendix.

## 5.2 Choice of Models

In selecting our models, we aimed to use techniques that are relatively generic and not highly specialized for any of the datasets. Consequently, we opted for a basic set of models to maintain simplicity and versatility.

### 1-WL+NN Models

Our primary consideration for the 1-WL+NN models revolves around choosing an encoding function, as all other components are fixed. To keep things straightforward, we decided to

employ encoding functions consisting of two main components. Firstly, an optional preprocessing step that operates on the colors computed by the 1-WL algorithm. Secondly, a basic pooling function for transforming the color histogram into a fixed-size vector.

In more detail, the optional preprocessing step involves a simple look-up table. If utilized, this step maps each color injectively to a vector in the range of  $[-1, 1]^n$ , where the value of  $n$  is a hyperparameter. By encoding the color information into higher dimensions, this approach aims to enhance efficiency during subsequent processing steps. For the second step, the pooling component, we selected elementary functions such as elementwise Max, Mean, and Summation (Sum). In summary, each of the 1-WL+NN models can be uniquely identified by their encoding functions; therefore, we will refer to each model by their encoding function:

$$\text{Embedding} = \{\text{Max}, \text{Mean}, \text{Sum}\} \quad \text{or} \quad \{\text{Max}, \text{Mean}, \text{Sum}\},$$

where “Embedding” indicates the use of the optional preprocessing step.

## GNN Models

As mentioned in the introduction to this section, our focus is on keeping the models basic. Hence, we opted for GIN by ?, GCN by ?, and GAT by ? as the base architecture for the message-passing layers. Each of these architectures was chosen for specific reasons.

Firstly, we included GIN as an obvious candidate because it can be configured to be as expressive as the 1-WL algorithm. This characteristic makes it interesting when comparing it to 1-WL+NN models. Next, we also included GCN based on its good empirical success in recent years. Furthermore, the insights provided by ? demonstrated that, in a certain sense, the node features computed by GCN and GIN are similar, making GCN a reasonable alternative to GIN in cases where the advantage of GIN’s expressiveness is not needed. Lastly, we added GAT as an alternative approach to the other two models. In detail, ? also showed that the node features computed by GAT are entirely different from those computed by GIN or GCN.

Regarding the choice of Readout functions, we decided to utilize functions that are composed of two components. The first component is one of the elementwise pooling functions, such as max, mean, or Sum, to aggregate the information from a graph representation into a fixed-size vector. Secondly, we incorporate a multilayer perceptron to process the aggregated information further.

In summary, each of the GNN models can be uniquely identified by their GNN architecture and the pooling function utilized; therefore, we will refer to each model by these two properties:

$$\{\text{GAT}, \text{GCN}, \text{GIN}\} - \{\text{Max}, \text{Mean}, \text{Sum}\}.$$

Note that the selection of the Readout function creates similarities between the GNN and 1-WL+NN models. These similarities play a crucial role in ensuring that any empirical differences observed between the two frameworks are not attributed to the utilization of more powerful techniques.

## 5.3 Experimental Setup

To have confidence in our results we ran for each dataset and each model a hyperparameter sweep, in which we tested for example the difference configurations

python 3.10, pytorch und pytorch-geometric (use footnotes from outline). Use of Wheights and Biases as data logging instance, HPC, Colab und meine eigene Hardware - > summierte

overall computation time. Standard procedure, training with 10-fold and repition and a split of training, validation and test dataset.

## 6 Results

Introduction to this section!

### 6.1 Explain how results look like

Shortly explain, their performance and how they typically learn. Grafiken über das mean train\_acc, val\_acc, test\_acc vs. epochs.

#### 1-WL+NN

Explain most important parameters such as k-wl mit der wl accuracy on. Show how it relates to the datasets by showing the table of theoretical accuracies, Grafiken über das mean train\_acc, val\_acc, test\_acc vs. epochs.

#### GNN

Show performance of different GNN models -> Boxplot of different pooling functions Grafiken über das mean train\_acc, val\_acc, test\_acc vs. epochs.

### 6.2 Test Accuracy

Show a big table with all test-accuracies and its standard deviaton and highlight in bold face, the best one. Asses the std of both model types.

### 6.3 Overfitting Behaviour

Compare the difference between training data performance vs test accuracy accross both models

### 6.4 Aggregate Analysis

Explain what aggregates are and show tSNE with the of the best models with SVM  
Also use KNN to assess how good the actuall aggregates are differentiable. -> local clusters ?

## 7 Discussion

### 7.1 Learned Lessons

### 7.2 Future Work

## 8 Conclusion

Table 5: Overview of the classification accuracies achieved by the best model of each configuration for each dataset in percent and standard deviation.

Method	Dataset					
	ENZYMEs	IMDB-BINARY	MUTAG	NCI1	PROTEINS	REDDIT-BINARY
1-WL+NN	Max	16.7 $\pm$ 4.2	52.0 $\pm$ 5.3	73.8 $\pm$ 12.4	58.6 $\pm$ 3.3	62.9 $\pm$ 4.9
	Mean	18.2 $\pm$ 4.8	59.4 $\pm$ 5.8	77.1 $\pm$ 11.5	64.0 $\pm$ 3.3	60.9 $\pm$ 4.5
	Sum	18.0 $\pm$ 6.2	57.5 $\pm$ 5.1	66.8 $\pm$ 13.9	56.9 $\pm$ 3.8	65.6 $\pm$ 4.8
Graph Neural Networks	Embedding-Max	40.5 $\pm$ 7.4	69.4 $\pm$ 4.9	81.1 $\pm$ 11.2	82.7 $\pm$ 2.0	<b>75.2</b> $\pm$ 3.9
	Embedding-Mean	42.6 $\pm$ 9.0	<b>72.4</b> $\pm$ 4.1	84.1 $\pm$ 9.1	83.1 $\pm$ 1.9	72.3 $\pm$ 4.2
	Embedding-Sum	<b>48.3</b> $\pm$ 8.1	72.0 $\pm$ 3.8	<b>85.1</b> $\pm$ 8.6	<b>83.6</b> $\pm$ 2.2	75.2 $\pm$ 4.5
GAT	GAT:Max	31.2 $\pm$ 6.0	70.7 $\pm$ 4.8	71.1 $\pm$ 12.2	58.0 $\pm$ 4.2	72.5 $\pm$ 5.1
	GAT:Mean	28.9 $\pm$ 5.9	70.9 $\pm$ 3.7	74.8 $\pm$ 9.1	66.1 $\pm$ 2.8	64.9 $\pm$ 6.4
	GAT:Sum	<b>34.4</b> $\pm$ 7.0	72.2 $\pm$ 4.5	82.1 $\pm$ 11.2	69.8 $\pm$ 2.6	73.4 $\pm$ 3.9
GCN	GCN:Max	33.1 $\pm$ 7.5	73.5 $\pm$ 4.1	74.5 $\pm$ 11.3	61.1 $\pm$ 3.6	69.8 $\pm$ 5.9
	GCN:Mean	29.9 $\pm$ 5.7	<b>74.7</b> $\pm$ 3.8	75.0 $\pm$ 10.4	68.9 $\pm$ 2.4	70.9 $\pm$ 5.2
	GCN:Sum	31.7 $\pm$ 7.2	73.0 $\pm$ 4.4	81.5 $\pm$ 10.3	70.4 $\pm$ 2.1	3.5 $\pm$ 3.9
GIN	GIN:Max	29.2 $\pm$ 6.2	70.8 $\pm$ 4.7	77.3 $\pm$ 10.7	<b>79.9</b> $\pm$ 2.2	<b>74.3</b> $\pm$ 5.1
	GIN:Mean	31.7 $\pm$ 6.7	71.1 $\pm$ 5.4	82.4 $\pm$ 9.8	70.8 $\pm$ 2.2	72.0 $\pm$ 4.0
	GIN:Sum	28.9 $\pm$ 8.7	69.5 $\pm$ 4.8	<b>84.6</b> $\pm$ 8.7	70.8 $\pm$ 2.3	73.2 $\pm$ 4.3

Method	Dataset	
	ALCHEMY (10K)	ZINC?
GINE- $\varepsilon^*$	0.180 $\pm$ 0.006	-1.958 $\pm$ 0.047
(2, 1)-SeqNet*	0.169 $\pm$ 0.005	-2.010 $\pm$ 0.056
(2, 2)-SeqNet*	<b>0.115</b> $\pm$ 0.001	-2.722 $\pm$ 0.054
Embedding-Max	0.409 $\pm$ 0.003	-1.023 $\pm$ 0.009
Embedding-Mean	0.355 $\pm$ 0.004	-1.269 $\pm$ 0.020
Embedding-Sum	<b>0.305</b> $\pm$ 0.001	-1.740 $\pm$ 0.042

Table 6: Mean MAE (mean std. MAE, logMAE) on large-scale (multi-target) molecular regression tasks. The results of the models marked \* are taken from ?

Method	Dataset					
	ENZYMES	IMDB-BINARY	MUTAG	NCI1	PROTEINS	REDDIT-BINARY
1-WL+NN	MLP	48.3 $\pm$ 8.1	<b>72.4</b> $\pm$ 4.1	85.1 $\pm$ 8.6	83.6 $\pm$ 4.1	<b>75.2</b> $\pm$ 3.9
	SVM Linear	34.4 $\pm$ 5.5	71.2 $\pm$ 3.9	86.4 $\pm$ 8.9	83.4 $\pm$ 2.1	73.9 $\pm$ 4.1
	SVM RBF	45.0 $\pm$ 7.0	72.8 $\pm$ 4.3	83.2 $\pm$ 7.5	83.6 $\pm$ 1.9	75.2 $\pm$ 4.0
	k-NN	<b>56.3</b> $\pm$ 5.8 (k=1)	72.3 $\pm$ 4.1 (k=11)	<b>86.7</b> $\pm$ 7.7 (k=10)	<b>83.9</b> $\pm$ 1.8 (k=5)	73.9 $\pm$ 4.1 (k=19)
GNN	MLP	34.4 $\pm$ 7.0	<b>74.7</b> $\pm$ 3.8	84.6 $\pm$ 8.7	<b>79.9</b> $\pm$ 2.2	74.3 $\pm$ 5.1
	SVM Linear	33.2 $\pm$ 5.9	73.9 $\pm$ 4.2	51.9 $\pm$ 34.1	67.4 $\pm$ 2.2	74.7 $\pm$ 4.2
	SVM RBF	35.9 $\pm$ 6.0	74.1 $\pm$ 3.9	<b>86.0</b> $\pm$ 7.4	73.0 $\pm$ 1.9	74.6 $\pm$ 4.6
	k-NN	<b>51.6</b> $\pm$ 7.0 (k=1)	74.3 $\pm$ 4.0 (k=132)	88.3 $\pm$ 6.5 (k=38)	77.5 $\pm$ 1.7 (k=2)	<b>74.9</b> $\pm$ 4.3 (k=27)

Table 7: Overview of the classification accuracies achieved by the best model for each dataset in percent and standard deviation. Additionally, the performance of each model was evaluated under alternative configurations, namely the substitution of the Multilayer Perceptron (MLP) with a Support Vector Machine employing either a linear kernel (SVM Linear) or the Radial Basis Function (SVM RBF), as well as the k-nearest neighbors algorithm (k-NN) with different values for  $k$ .

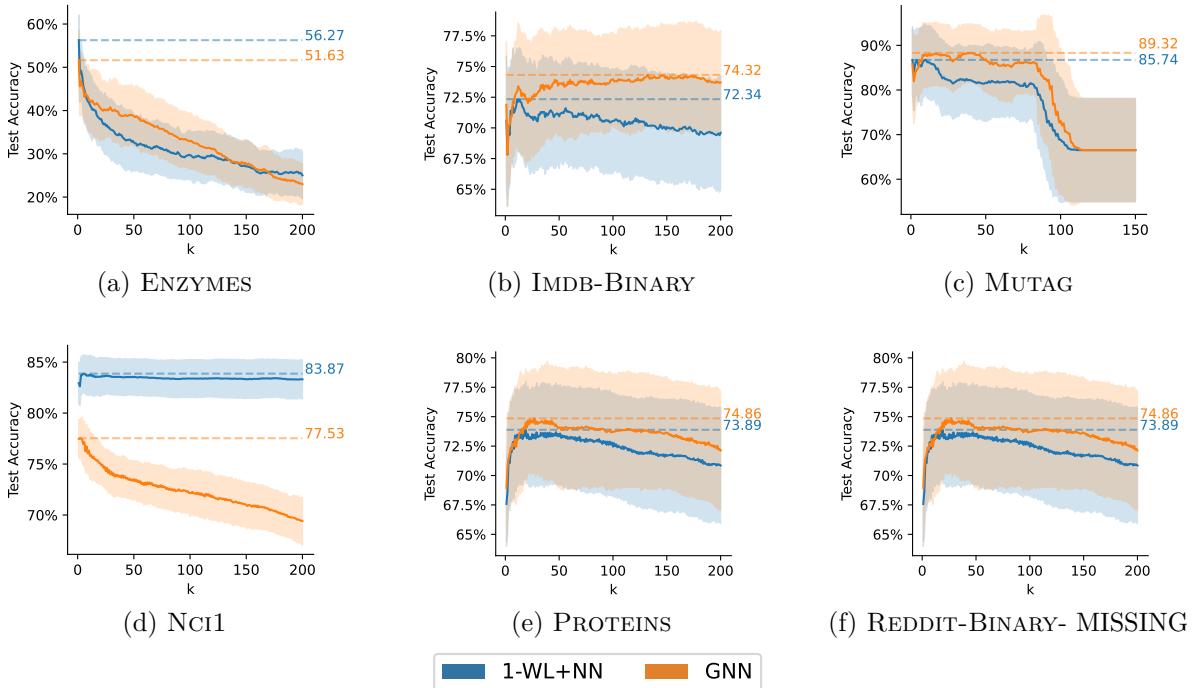


Figure 7: Average classification accuracy achieved on each dataset by replacing the multilayer perceptron of the best-performing 1-WL+NN and GNN model with a classifier based on the  $k$ -nearest neighbors algorithm. We tested for different values of  $k$ .

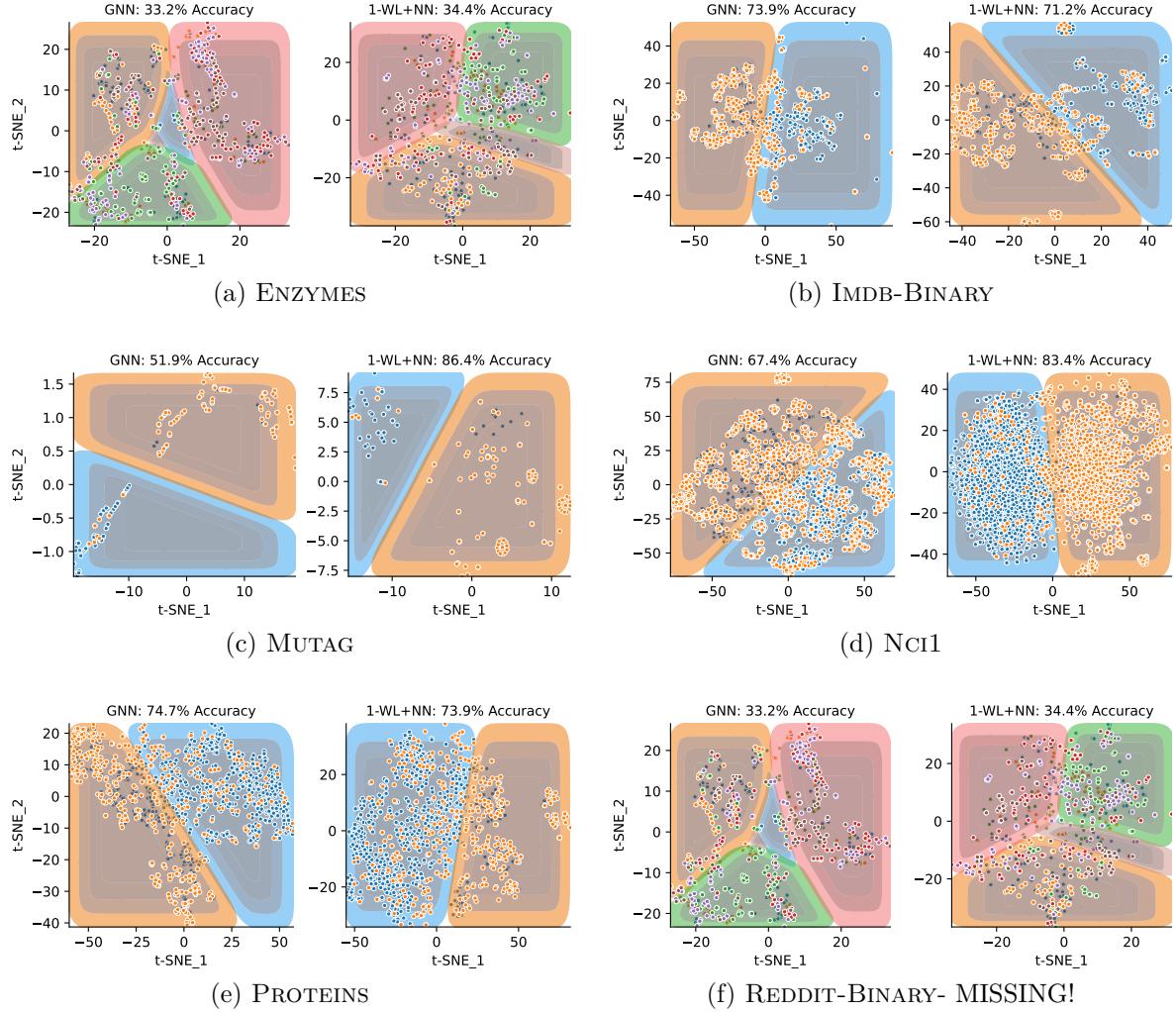


Figure 8: Visualization of the decision boundary of each Support Vector Machine with a linear kernel using t-SNE.

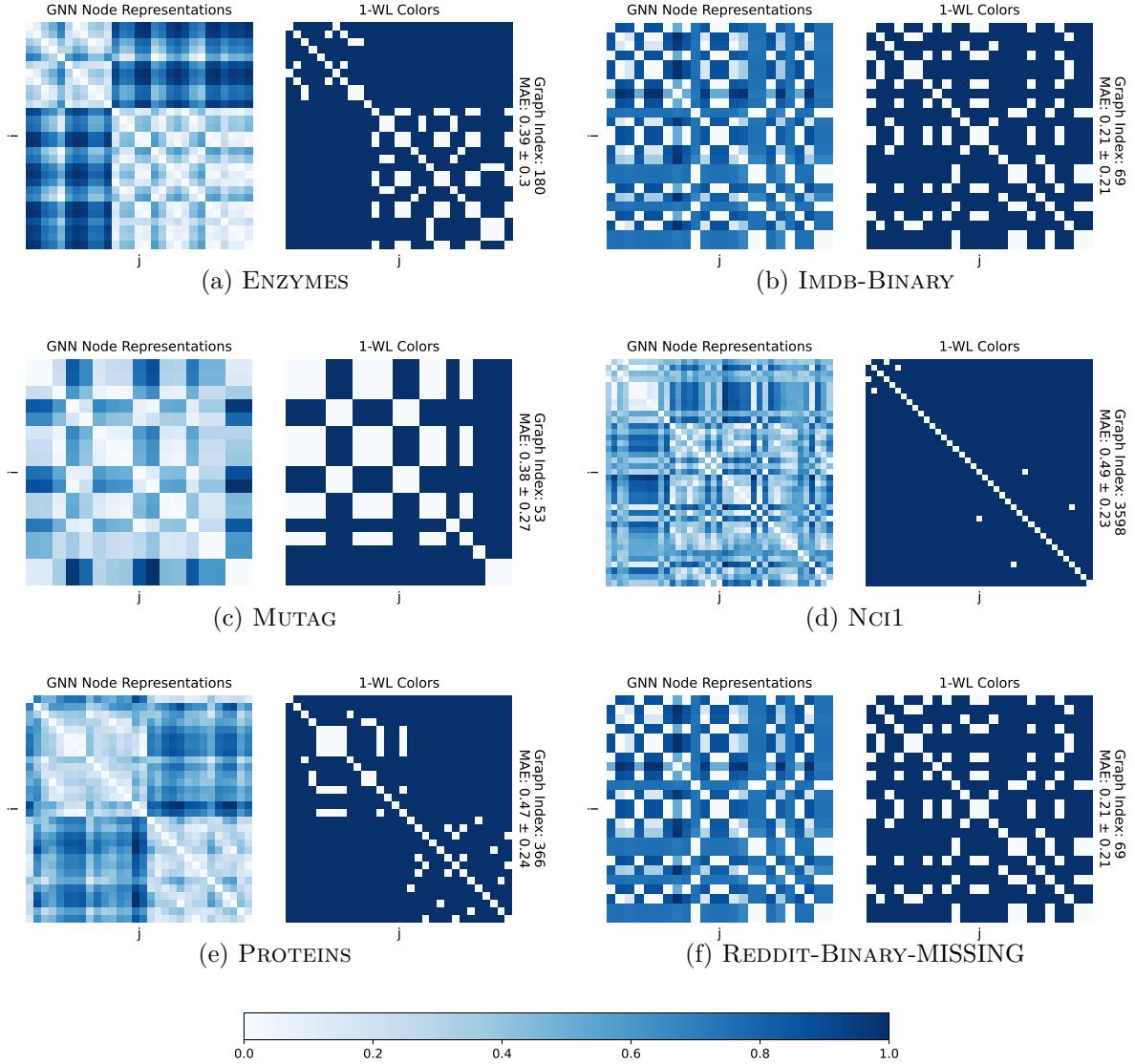


Figure 9: Visualizing the performance of the best-performing GNN models of each dataset in approximating node colors computed by the 1-WL algorithm. Here we randomly sampled a single graph for each dataset and visualized the approximation performance. For each calculation of the 1-WL colors, we utilized the number of iterations of the 1-WL algorithm to be the same as the best-performing 1-WL+NN model of each dataset. Specifically, this was 1 for all datasets except for NCI1, where it was 3.

Property	Dataset					
	ENZYMES	IMDB-BINARY	MUTAG	NCI1	PROTEINS	REDDIT-BINARY
MAE	$0.49 \pm 0.3$	$0.14 \pm 0.15$	$0.42 \pm 0.29$	$0.42 \pm 0.22$	$0.49 \pm 0.26$	
Number of 1-WL colors	230	64	32	27252	296	

Table 8: MAE of the approximation performance of the best-perfoming GNN in relation to the number of unique 1-WL colors for each dataset. In particular, in comparison to the colors computed by the 1-WL algorith with a single iteration.

Epsilon	Dataset					
	ENZYMES	IMDB-BINARY	MUTAG	NCI1	PROTEINS	REDDIT-BINARY
$\epsilon = 0.001$	52.55	60.97	62.01			
$\epsilon = 0.01$	54.63	60.97	62.01			
$\epsilon = 0.05$	62.33	71.68	62.01			
$\epsilon = 0.1$	70.45	78.66	62.01			
Number of 1-WL colors	230	64	32	27252	296	

Table 9: MAE of the approximation performance of the best-perfoming GNN in relation to the number of unique 1-WL colors for each dataset. In particular, in comparison to the colors computed by the 1-WL algorith with a single iteration.

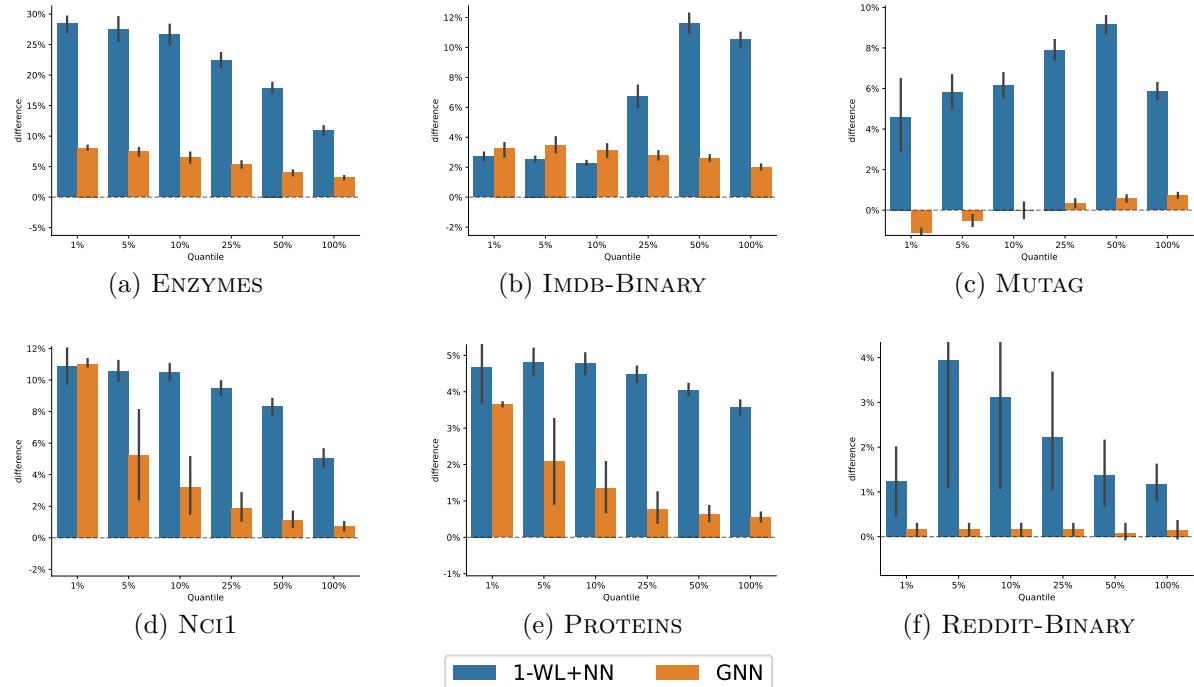


Figure 10: Mean absolute difference of the classification accuracies of the training and testing set of each dataset. In detail, we compared the different quantiles of each performance.

# 1 These / Narrativ

1. 1-WL+NN funktioniert nur sehr gut auf kleinen datasets:
  - Je größer das Dataset desto größer wird die 1-WL-Color "Vielfalt", schwierig für das MLP des 1-WL+NN noch die richtigen Information rauszuziehen. -> These würde ich gerne noch überprüfen: Gibt es ein Classification Dataset das groß und gut ist? OGBG-Molhiv? MalNet Tiny?
  - Dagegenspricht aber das die performance von NCI1 deutlich besser ist von 1-WL+NN.
  - Theorie warum 1-WL+NN aktuell fast immer besser war, ist dass 1-WL+NN viel weniger Parameter optimieren muss bei gleicher im Vergleich zu GNNs -> Optimum ist schneller gefunden!
  - GNN generalisieren besser im Sinne, dass sie unabhängig von der Größe des Datasets sind. Alchemy zeigt das ganz gut!
  - Difference in Training and Test Accuracy zeigt auch das die 1-WL+NN Modelle stark overfitten -> Tendenz dazu dass mit größeren Datasets, generalisieren schwieriger wird.
  - Performance von den 1-WL+NN Modellen ohne Embedding (Look-Up-Table) ist auch nur auf kleinen Datasets gut. Je größer das Dataset desto größer ist die Differenz zwischen beiden Modell Konfigurationen.
2. GNNs approximiert 1-WL Farben:
  - Approximation ist vorhanden und ist nicht so schlecht: Error ist zwar so circa bei 50% dafür ist die std aber auch sehr hoch (circa 25%).
  - Vorallem approximierung von 1-WL mit nur einer Iteration (Node Degree!)
  - Performance von den GNNs mit Node-degree initialisierung sind bis jetzt immer besser gewesen (IMDB-Binary & Reddit-Binary)
3. GNNs und 1-WL+NN erlernen graph representation die gut clustern:
  - a) Sehr gute lineare Separierbarkeit bei allen Datsets (Ausnahme ist Mutag wegen Bug!)
  - b) k-NN clustering hoch für kleine k's bei beiden Modellen. Sehr ähnliche Accuracy Kurven!
  - c) (t-SNE plots zeigen auch, dass clustering vorhanden ist.)

F1 metric oder ROC (watch out unbalanced dataset)

-> intuition: gnn smoothen! (noise reduction)-> GNN optimalere funktionen Setup: de-noising notwendig, CSWM Problem konzipieren -> erst de-noising before gute prediction

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# A Appendix Part I

## 1 Figures and graphs

## 2 Proofs

### 2.1 ??: Composition Lemma for 1-WL+NN

Before we begin with the actual composition proof, we give a formal definition and notation for MLPs.

**Definition 28** (Multilayer Perceptron). Multilayer perceptrons are a class of functions from  $\mathbb{R}^n$  to  $\mathbb{R}^m$ , with  $n, m \in \mathbb{N}$ . In this thesis, we define a multilayer perceptron as a finite sequence, such that a multilayer perceptron  $\text{MLP}$  is defined as  $\text{MLP} := (\text{MLP}_i)_{i \in [k]}$  where  $k$  is the number of layers. For every  $i \in [k]$ , the  $i$ .th layer of the  $\text{MLP}$  is the  $i$ .th item in the finite sequence  $\text{MLP}_i$ . Further, all layers are recursively defined as:

$$\begin{aligned}\text{MLP}_0(v) &:= v \\ \text{MLP}_{i+1}(v) &:= \sigma_i(W_i \cdot \text{MLP}_i(v) + b_i), \quad \forall i \in [k-1]\end{aligned}$$

where  $\sigma_i$  is an element wise activation function,  $W_i$  is the weight matrix and  $b_i$  the bias vector of layer  $i$ . Note, that for each  $W_i$ , the succeeding  $W_{i+1}$  must have the same number of columns as  $W_i$  has rows, in order to be well-defined. Similarly, for every layer  $i$ ,  $W_i$  and  $b_i$  have to have the same number of rows. Following this definition, when applying a  $\text{MLP}$  on input  $v \in \mathbb{R}^n$  it is  $\text{MLP}(v) := (\text{MLP})_k(v)$ .

*Proof of ??.* Let  $\mathcal{C}$  be a collection of functions computed by 1-WL+NN,  $h_1, \dots, h_n \in \mathcal{C}$ , and  $\text{MLP}^\bullet$  a multilayer perceptron. Further, let  $f_1, \dots, f_n$  be the encoding functions, as well as  $\text{MLP}_1, \dots, \text{MLP}_n$  be the multilayer perceptrons used by  $h_1, \dots, h_n$  respectively. As outlined above, we will now construct  $f^*$  and  $\text{MLP}^*$ , such that for all graphs  $G \in \mathcal{X}$ :

$$\text{MLP}^\bullet(h_1(G), \dots, h_n(G)) = \text{MLP}^* \circ f^*(\{\{1\text{-WL}(G)(v) \mid v \in V(G)\}\})$$

with which we can conclude that the composition of multiple functions computable by 1-WL+NN, is in fact also 1-WL+NN computable.

We define the new encoding function  $f^*$  to work as follows on an arbitrary input multiset  $M$ :

$$f^*(M) := \text{concat}\left(\begin{bmatrix} f_1(M) \\ \vdots \\ f_n(M) \end{bmatrix}\right),$$

where `concat` is the concatenation function, concatenating all encoding vectors to one single vector.

Adapt  
the  
notation  
for  
sequences  
 $(\text{MLP}_i)_{i \in [k]}$

Using the decomposition introduced in ??, we can decompose each  $\text{MLP}_i$  for  $i \in [n]$  at layer  $j > 0$  as follows:  $(\text{MLP}_i)_j(v) := \sigma_{i,t}(W_j^i \cdot (\text{MLP}_i)_{j-1}(v) + b_j^i)$ . Using this notation we construct  $\text{MLP}^*$  as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} (\text{MLP}^*)_0(v) &:= v \\ (\text{MLP}^*)_{j+1}(v) &:= \sigma_j^*(W_j^* \cdot (\text{MLP}^*)_j(v) + \text{concat}\left(\begin{bmatrix} b_j^1 \\ \vdots \\ b_j^n \end{bmatrix}\right)) , \forall j \in [k] \\ (\text{MLP}^*)_{j+k+1}(v) &:= (\text{MLP}^\bullet)_{j+1}(v) , \forall j \in [k^\bullet - 1] \end{aligned}$$

where  $k$  is the maximum number of layers of the set of  $\text{MLP}_i$ 's, and  $k^\bullet$  is the number of layers of the given  $\text{MLP}^\bullet$ . Thereby, we define in the first equation line, that the start of the sequence is the input, with the second line, we construct the “simultaneous” execution of the  $\text{MLP}_i$ 's, and in the last equation line, we add the layers of the given  $\text{MLP}^\bullet$  to the end. Further, we define the weight matrix  $W_j^*$  as follows:

$$W_j^* := \begin{bmatrix} W_j^1 & 0 & \dots & 0 \\ 0 & W_j^2 & \ddots & \vdots \\ \vdots & \ddots & \ddots & 0 \\ 0 & \dots & 0 & W_j^n \end{bmatrix},$$

such that we build a new matrix where each individual weight matrix is placed along the diagonal. Here we denote with “0” zero matrices with the correct dimensions, such that  $W_j^*$  is well-defined. Important to note, should for an  $\text{MLP}_i$ ,  $W_j^i$  not exist, because it has less than  $j$  layers, we use for  $W_j^i$  the identity matrix  $I_m$  where  $m$  is the dimension of the output computed by  $\text{MLP}_i$ . And finally, we define the overall activation function  $\sigma_j^*$  as following:

$$\sigma_j^*(v) := \begin{bmatrix} \sigma_{1,j}(v[1]) \\ \vdots \\ \sigma_{1,j}(v[d_1]) \\ \vdots \\ \sigma_{n,j}(v[d_1 + \dots + d_{n-1} + 1]) \\ \vdots \\ \sigma_{n,j}(v[d_1 + \dots + d_n]) \end{bmatrix},$$

where  $d_i$  is the dimension of the output of  $\text{MLP}_i$  at layer  $j$ , and for the ease of readability we denote the  $i$ .th component of vector  $v$  here with  $v[i]$ . Thereby, we construct an activation function that applies each respective activation function of the  $\text{MLP}_i$ 's individually to their respective computation.  $\square$

# B Appendix Part II

## 1 Definitions

### 1.1 Definition of the normalized Shannon Index

We calculate the normalized Shannon index as follows:

$$-\frac{1}{\log_2(|C|)} \cdot \sum_{i \in C} \frac{n_i}{n} \cdot \log_2\left(\frac{n_i}{n}\right) \quad (\text{B.1})$$

where  $n$  is the total number of samples of the dataset,  $C$  is the set of all classes, and  $n_i$  is the number of samples of the class  $i \in C$ . As an example, for the dataset PROTEINS the variables are set to be the following:  $C = \{0, 1\}$  with  $n_0 = 663$  and  $n_1 = 450$ , so that  $n = 1113$ , yielding a rounded value of 0.973.

## 1.2 Theoretical Maximum Accuracy Analysis

Table B.1: An overview of the maximum theoretical classification accuracy achievable for each dataset based on the number of 1-WL iterations in percent. A hyphen “-” indicates that the maximum accuracy has converged with fewer iterations, implying that further iterations do not improve the accuracy. Additionally, datasets marked with a “\*” indicates that these datasets do not have initial node features, such that we initialize their features with a constant for all nodes.

Datasets	1-WL Iterations					
	0	1	2	3	4	5
Bioinformatics	DD	1.00	-	-	-	-
	ENZYMES	0.81	1.00	-	-	-
	KKI	1.00	-	-	-	-
	OHSU	1.00	-	-	-	-
	Peking1	1.00	-	-	-	-
	PROTEINS	0.92	1.00	-	-	-
C COIL-DEL						
Small molecules	AIDS					
	BZR	0.96	0.99	1.00	-	-
	COX2	0.93	0.96	0.99	1.00	-
	DHFR	0.92	0.95	1.00	1.00	-
	FRANKENSTEIN					
	MUTAG	0.93	0.96	0.99	1.00	-
	NCI1	0.91	1.00	1.00	1.00	-
	NCI109	0.92	1.00	1.00	1.00	-
	PTC_MR	0.92	0.98	0.99	-	-
Social networks	COLLAB	0.61	0.98	-	-	-
	IMDB-BINARY	0.61	0.89	-	-	-
	IMDB-MULTI	0.44	0.63	-	-	-
	REDDIT-BINARY	0.84	1.00	-	-	-
	REDDIT-MULTI-5K					
	REDDIT-MULTI-12K					

IDMB-MULTI, REDDIT-MULTI-5K, COLAB, NCI109, DD, PPI -> PIVOT TABLE, add the other datasets as well, do this when you have time, no need to make it super beatiful (maybe subcategories for types like socialz)

## 2 Visualization of the Approximation Performance of GNNs

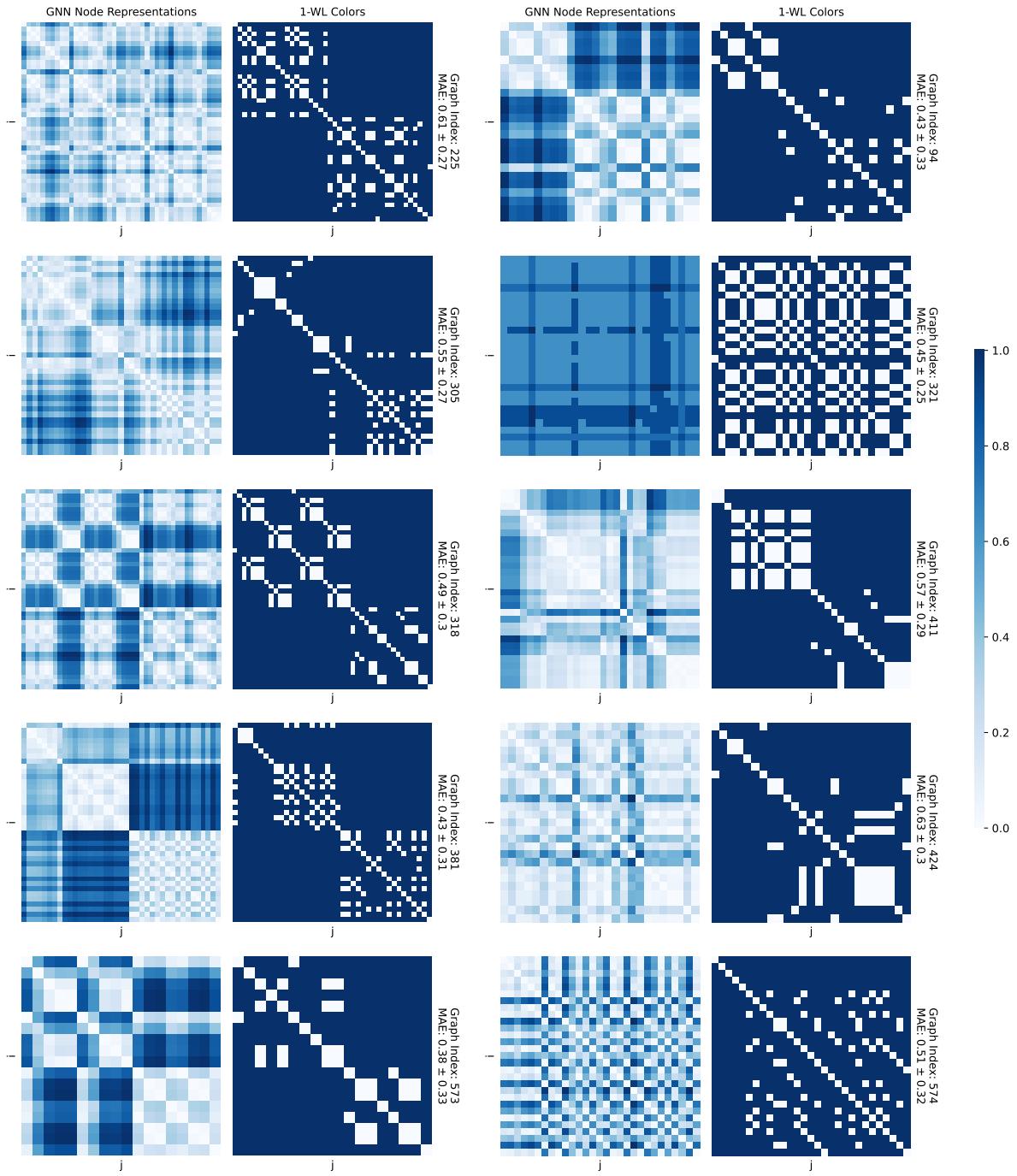


Figure B.1: Visualizing the performance of the best performing GNN on the ENZYMES dataset in approximating node colors computed by the 1-WL algorithm. The ten graphs shown are randomly sampled from the GNN’s test set, and the 1-WL algorithm ran only for one iteration. The average error for the entire test set is  $0.49 \pm 0.3$ .

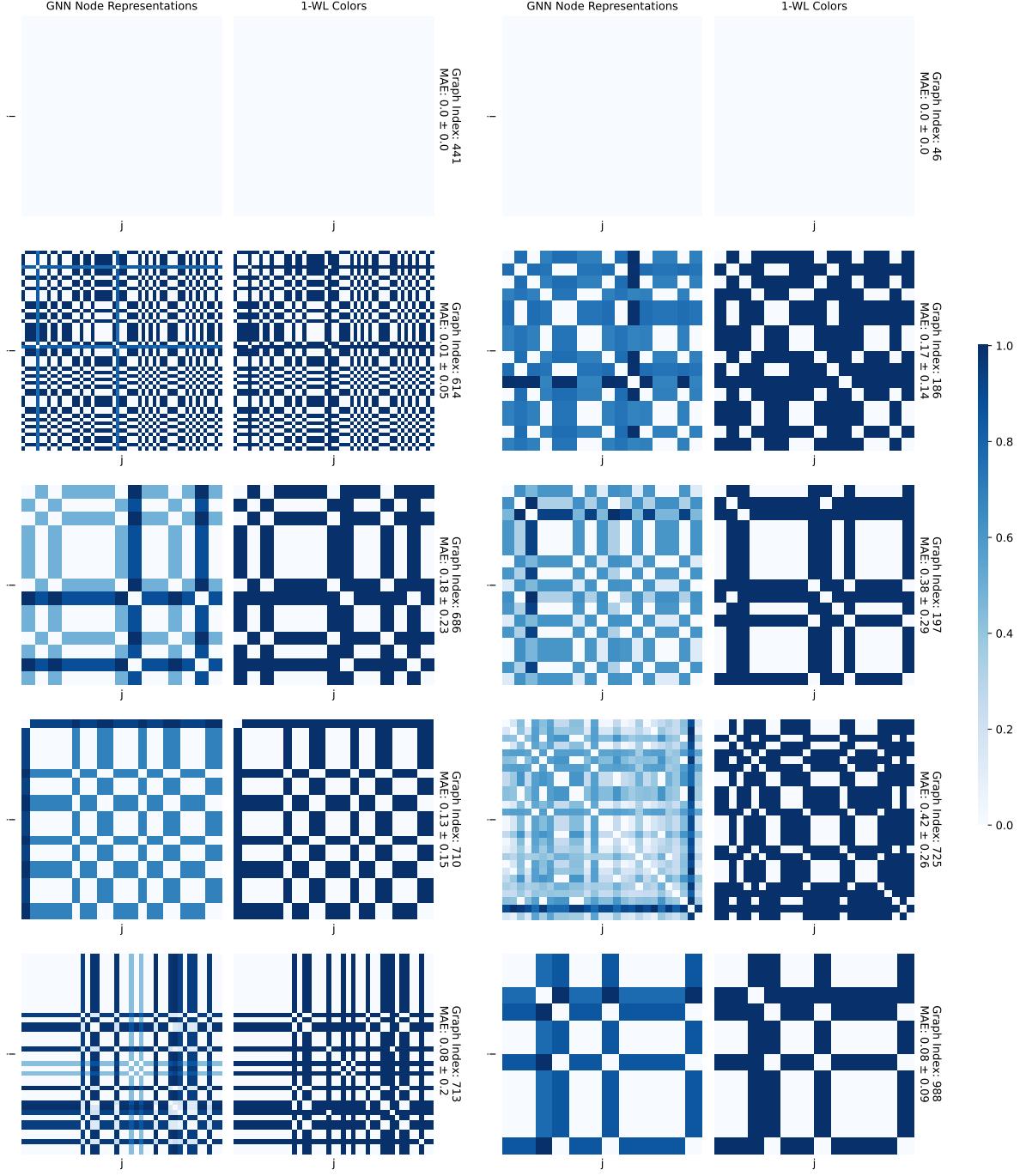


Figure B.2: Visualizing the performance of the best performing GNN on the IMDB-BINARY dataset in approximating node colors computed by the 1-WL algorithm. The ten graphs shown are randomly sampled from the GNN’s test set, and the 1-WL algorithm ran only for one iteration. The average error for the entire test set is  $0.14 \pm 0.15$ . Note that IMDB BINARY does not contain any node features, so we artificially initialize each node feature with a one-hot encoding of its degree.

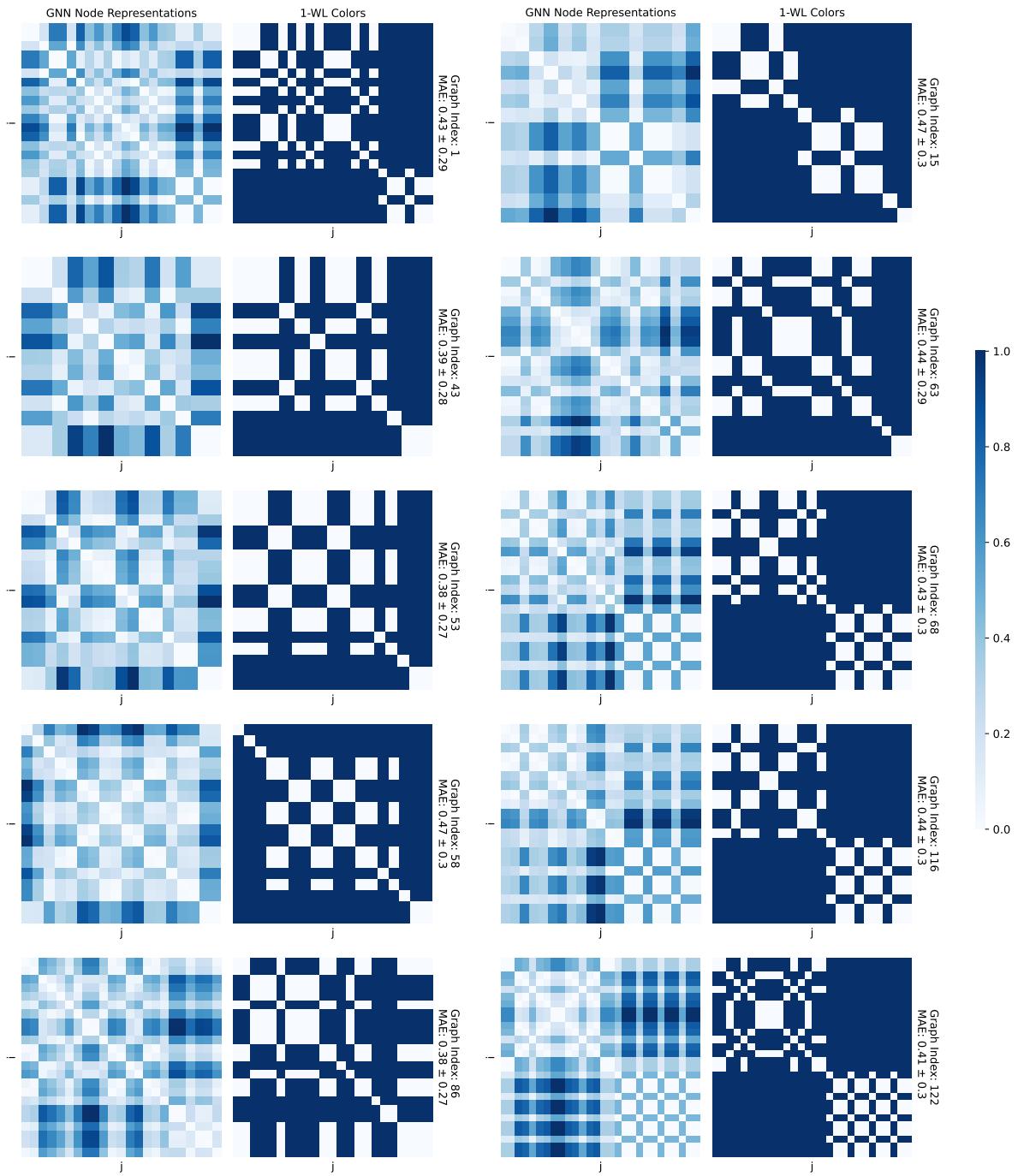


Figure B.3: Visualizing the performance of the best performing GNN on the MUTAG dataset in approximating node colors computed by the 1-WL algorithm. The ten graphs shown are randomly sampled from the GNN’s test set, and the 1-WL algorithm ran only for three iteration. The average error for the entire test set is  $0.42 \pm 0.29$ .

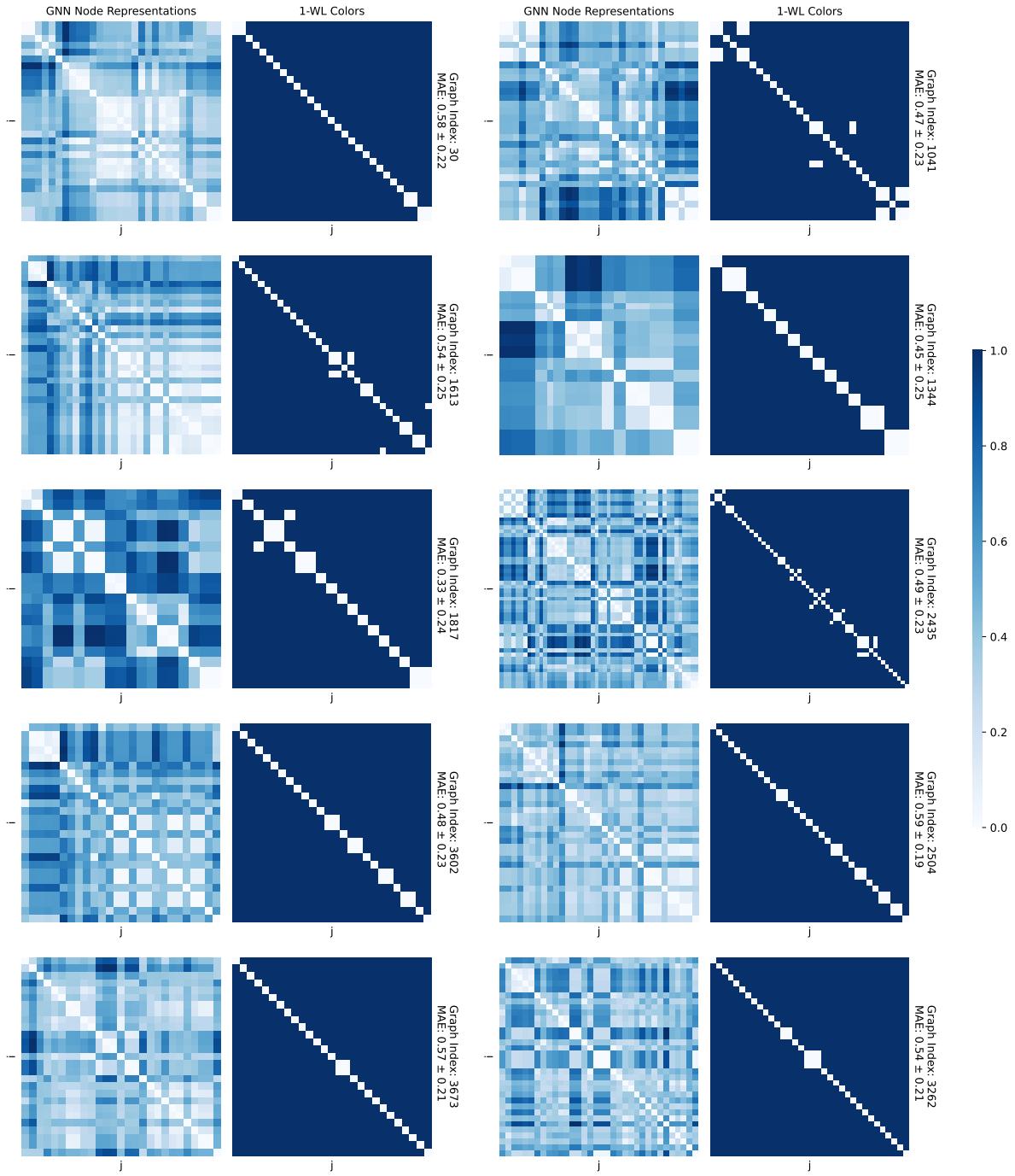


Figure B.4: Visualizing the performance of the best performing GNN on the Nci1 dataset in approximating node colors computed by the 1-WL algorithm. The ten graphs shown are randomly sampled from the GNN’s test set, and the 1-WL algorithm ran only for three iteration. The average error for the entire test set is  $0.50 \pm 0.24$ .

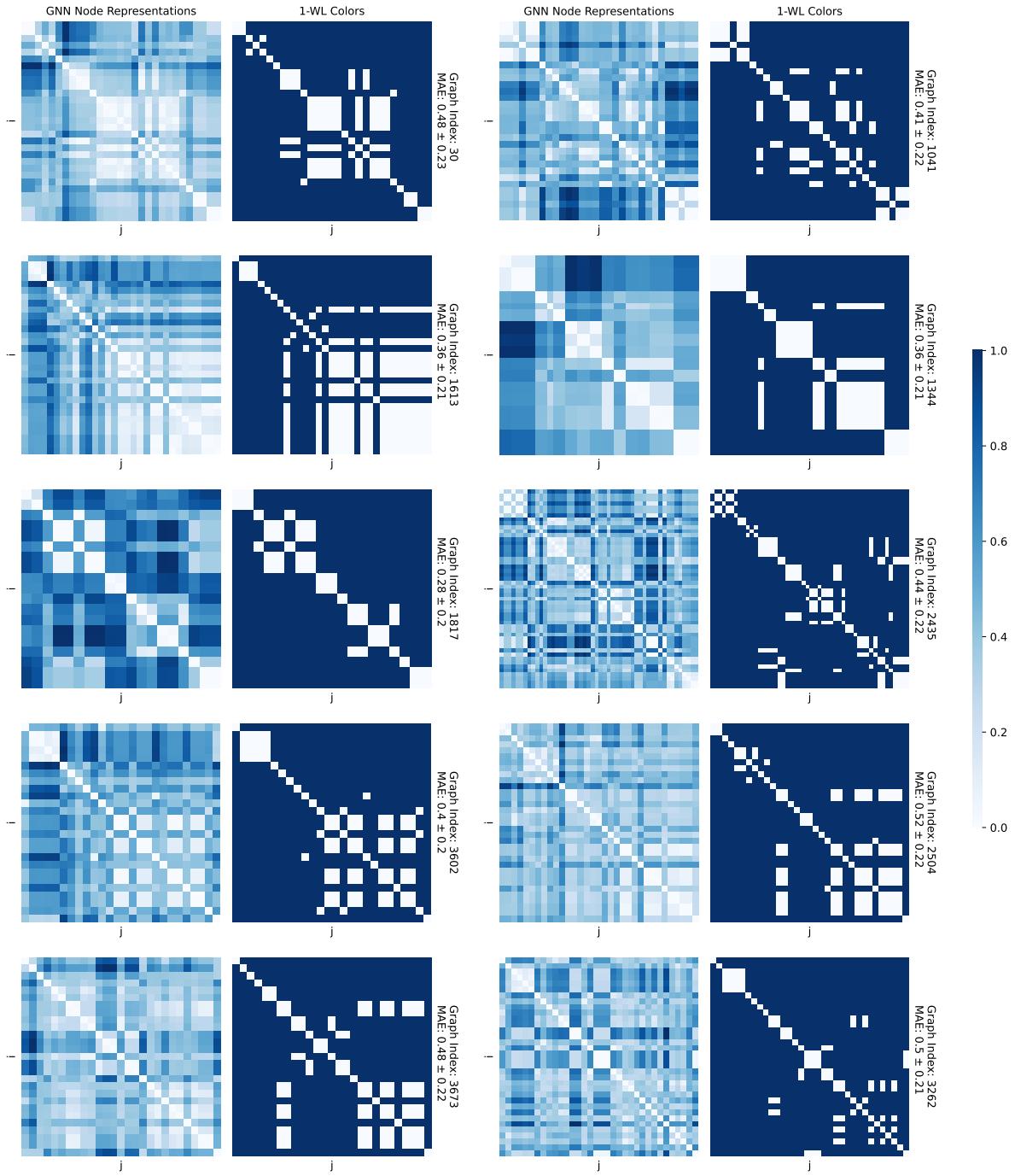


Figure B.5: Visualizing the performance of the best performing GNN on the Nci1 dataset in approximating node colors computed by the 1-WL algorithm. The ten graphs shown are randomly sampled from the GNN’s test set, and the 1-WL algorithm ran only for one iteration. The average error for the entire test set is  $0.42 \pm 0.22$ .

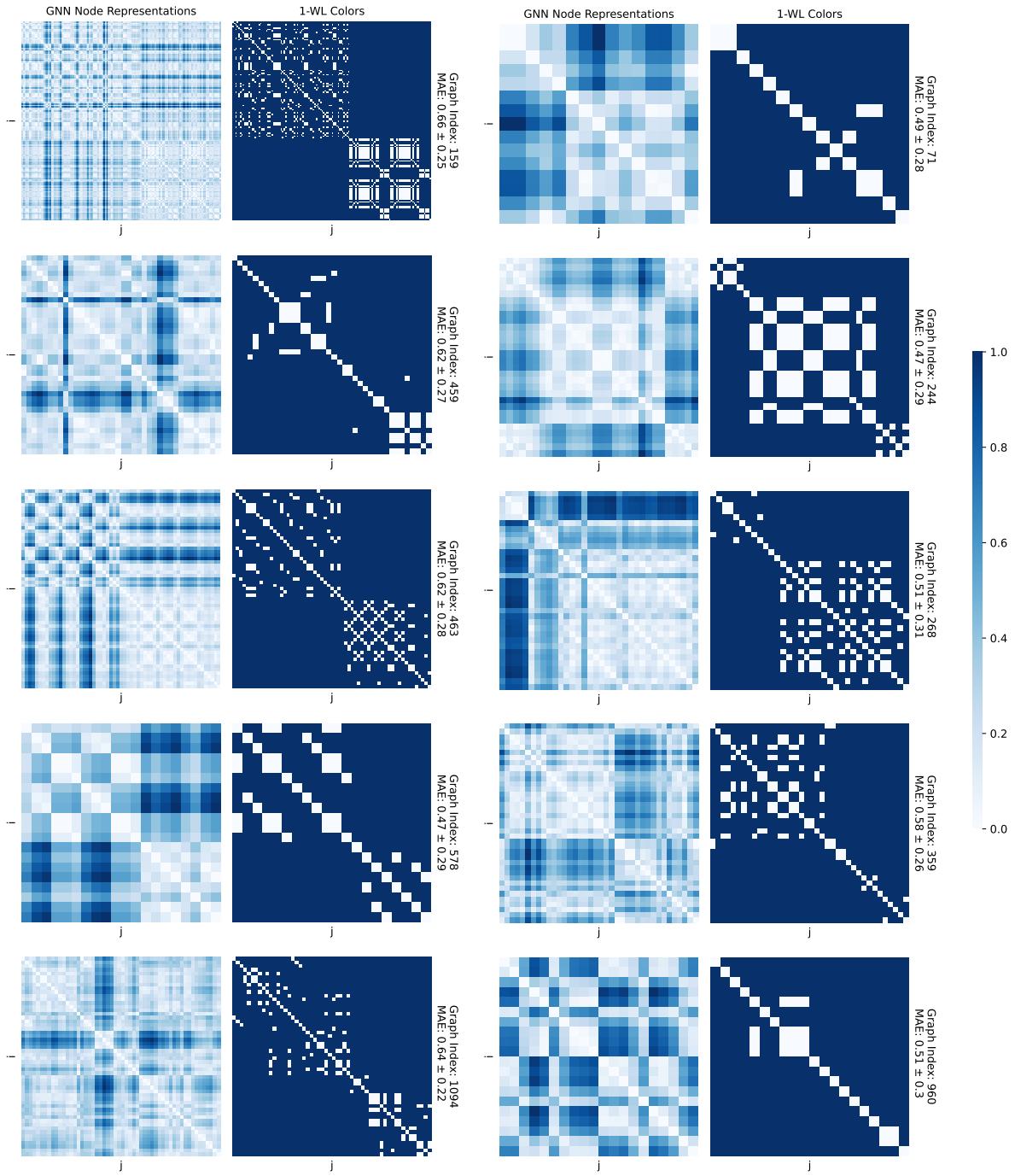


Figure B.6: Visualizing the performance of the best performing GNN on the PROTEINS dataset in approximating node colors computed by the 1-WL algorithm. The ten graphs shown are randomly sampled from the GNN’s test set, and the 1-WL algorithm ran only for one iteration. The average error for the entire test set is  $0.49 \pm 0.26$ .