

Math Review

Summer 2017

Topic 4

4. Real valued functions and correspondences

4.1. Functions and correspondences

We have so far extensively used multiple definitions of a function. As we recall, functions are single-valued. For a function $f: X \rightarrow Y$, every $x \in X$ is mapped to one and only one point $y \in Y$, the point $y = f(x)$. Imagine a consumer with a *strictly quasiconcave* utility function (we define this later but for now take it to mean a nicely behaving function that gives us a unique answer when optimized) who behaves according to the *Utility Maximization expectation*. His/her market behavior is characterized by a demand function which we derived from the utility maximization process. This chosen bundle of consumption is a single-valued function.

Often, however, we need to analyze behavior that is not uniquely determined. Consumers may have a place where they are indifferent between bundles at a given price for example. In this case, behavior is not single-valued.

A correspondence $f: X \rightarrow Y$ is thus a set-valued function from X to Y — for every $x \in X$, $f(x)$ is a subset of Y .

In this class, we will not spend a whole lot of time on correspondences, but know that they exist and will come up often. Think of the choice structure we learned about earlier. Remember that it could assign multiple elements from one set to the other? That is a correspondence (or function in the case of one element assigned)!

Let's start this session by practicing an example which will use some of the math skills we have down this far.

I have not worked through it, but it should be manageable, so I will work on it at the same as you all.

Q: Find the Hessian of the equation $f(x, y) = (e^{x^2} + \ln y)y^2$

A:

4.2. Homogeneous functions and Euler's Theorem

Homogeneity in functions: The function $f : \mathbb{R}^n \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ is homogenous of degree k if:

$$f(\alpha x_1, \alpha x_2 + \cdots + \alpha x_n) = \alpha^k f(x_1 + x_2 + \cdots + x_n)$$

Example. The function $y = bx^k$ is homogeneous of degree k , can you tell why?

Denote: $y = y(x) = bx^k$

Q: Can you try with $y = ax_1^{k_1}x_2^{k_2}x_3^{k_3}$? What is the degree of homogeneity for this function?

A:

You will learn that cost functions, denoted by $C(r, q)$, that is input prices r and output q , are homogeneous of **degree 1 in r** . Without you thinking too much into the details, how would you adapt the above definition to write this out mathematically?

Let's double check with a given cost function. This cost function is from the June 2015 Micro prelim:

$$C(r, q) = (r_1^\alpha + r_2^\alpha)^{1/\alpha} (q_1^{\frac{3}{4}} + q_2^{\frac{1}{4}})$$

But let's practice understanding what we are looking at. We have the cost function expressed in terms of input prices r and output q . As per the functional form, we have two prices, r_1 and r_2 , and two outputs q_1 and q_2 .

Example. Show that this cost function $C(r, q)$ is homogeneous of degree 1 in r .

Thus, we want to show that $C(\theta r, q) = \theta C(r, q)$.

One more practice. Demand is often expressed as $x(p, w)$, that is as a function of both prices, p and wealth, w .

Q: What degree of homogeneity holds for the following demand curve (in both prices and wealth)? This is a one-line answer!

$$x_2 = \frac{w}{p_2} - \left(\frac{p_1}{p_2}\right)x_1$$

A:

Demand functions are said to be homogeneous of degree $__$ in prices and wealth. What that gets at is that there is no “money illusion.” The same percentage increase in prices and wealth will lead to no change in consumption.

You should be able to check for the homogeneity of any given function, easy or hard. They often look harder than what they are. This is a prelim question. Try it out:

Q: You are the proud owner of a very expensive Mercedes-Benz. It cost you a lot of money to buy that car, so now you spend all your money on only two things that give you utility: driving your car around, at a cost of p_m per mile driven, and buying rice to eat, which has a price of p_r . Your total wealth for these two activities is denoted by w . Your indirect utility function (which is like a utility function but measured in a different way – you will learn more about this later), denoted by v , is:

$$v(p, w) = -\left(\frac{1}{\lambda}\right) e^{\lambda\left(\frac{w}{p_r}\right)} - 1/\beta e^{\alpha + \beta \frac{p_m}{p_r}}$$

The indirect utility function should be homogeneous of some degree k in prices and wealth. What is k ?

A:

Euler's Theorem. Let $f : \mathbb{R}^n \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ be a continuously differentiable function. The function f is homogenous of degree k if and only if:

Can we check whether the above cost function $\mathcal{C}(r, q)$ satisfies Euler's Theorem?

Q: Let's practice and check Euler's theorem for the case of:

$$x_2 = \frac{w}{p_2} - \left(\frac{p_1}{p_2}\right)x_1$$

A:

Another result that you may want to know is the following: if $f(x)$ is a continuously differentiable function that is homogenous of degree k , then f_i is homogenous of degree $k - 1$ for all $i = \{1, \dots, n\}$.

What does that imply for our results?

Q: Can we check whether this is true for this given case above?

$$y = y(x) = ax^k$$

A:

You should be able to check Euler's for all the different functions we tried today. Practicing now is always good, although you have plenty of time to get accustomed to this.

4.3. Concavity and quasi-concavity in functions

A summary of useful properties for multivariable functions are (*some are reminders of things we already touched on before*):

- Monotone:
- Strictly monotone:
- Concave:

- Convex:
- Quasiconcave:
- Quasiconvex:

As you see, a concave function by definition is quasiconcave (not the other way though). You will learn more about this, but we often require utility functions to be quasiconcave rather than the stronger assumption of concavity. This is more micro than math, but when dealing with preferences and utility, ordering matters more than actual numbers. We care whether x is ranked higher than y , not by how much insomuch. Quasiconcavity is a good enough assumption to represent this ordering between alternatives.

4.3.1 Hessian Matrix in the mix

Now that we have functions of several variables, the second derivative check for convexity/concavity is the Hessian Matrix. In this part, we determine how to check for concavity and convexity.

Theorem.

What is a principal minor? Start with a few definitions first.

What are the *principal submatrices*?

Q: What is \mathbf{A}_3 ? Write it out.

A:

Evidently, $\mathbf{A}_n = \mathbf{A}$

In each case the *principal minor* is the determinant of the matrix. It is given by:

Determinant of \mathbf{A}_1 , denoted as $\det [a_{11}]$ or $|A_1|$ is just the number a_{11} .

To find the determinant of \mathbf{A}_2 , we need to take the following difference:

$$|A_2| = a_{11}a_{22} - a_{12}a_{21}$$

For visual thinkers:

$$|A_2| = \begin{bmatrix} a_{11} & a_{12} \\ a_{21} & a_{22} \end{bmatrix}$$

Solid: $+a_{11}a_{22}$

Dashed: $-a_{12}a_{21}$

For a 3×3 matrix, we have to do a little more:

Q: You have all the information you need. Can we write out the final expression to obtain the determinant?

A:

Given an $n \times n$ matrix \mathbf{A} , we have the following:

- The $n \times n$ matrix \mathbf{A} is positive definite if and only if its n principal minors are all greater than 0: $\det A_1 > 0, \det A_2 > 0, \dots, \det A_n > 0$.
- The $n \times n$ matrix \mathbf{A} is negative definite if and only if its n principal minors alternate in sign with the odd order ones being negative and the even order ones being positive: $\det A_1 < 0, \det A_2 > 0, \det A_3 < 0, \det A_4 > 0, \dots$
- The $n \times n$ matrix \mathbf{A} is positive semidefinite if and only if its principal minors are all greater than or equal to 0: $\det A_1 \geq 0$ and $\det A_2 \geq 0, \dots, A_n \geq 0$.
- The $n \times n$ matrix \mathbf{A} is negative semidefinite if and only if its n principal minors alternate in sign with the odd order ones being less than or equal to zero and the even order ones being greater than or equal to 0: $\det A_1 \leq 0$ and $\det A_2 \geq 0, \dots$

Consider the following example: $f(x, y) = 2x - y - x^2 + 2xy - y^2$. Is this a concave function?

Recall two definitions:

- (i) f is concave if and only if the Hessian $D^2f(x)$ is **negative semidefinite** for all $x \in \mathbb{R}^n$.
- (ii) An $n \times n$ matrix A is negative semidefinite if and only if its n principal minors alternate in sign with the odd order ones being less than or equal to zero and the even order ones being greater than or equal to 0: $\det A_1 \leq 0$ and $\det A_2 \geq 0, \dots$

The test for quasiconcavity and quasiconvexity relies on a *bordered Hessian matrix*. I will refer you to Mas-Colell's Mathematical Appendix p. 938-939 for more information. I will cover these notes on the last day probably.

Q: You have a utility function given by $u(x) = x_1^{\frac{1}{4}}x_2^{\frac{3}{4}}$. This is called a Cobb Douglas utility function with commodities x_1 and x_2 . Is this utility concave?
(*Just a note, we define commodities to be nonnegative.*)

A:

3.8. Implicit functions

Implicit Functions: Thus far, we have focused on functions whereby we have an endogenous variable y , and exogenous variables, x , on the right hand side: $y = f(x)$. These would be explicit functions.

In some cases, we have $f(x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n, y) = 0$. The endogenous variable y is an implicit function of the exogenous variables x .

Example. $y^2 - 5xy + 4x^2 = 0$

If we were to rearrange and express it as an explicit function, we have:

$$y = \frac{5x \pm \sqrt{25x^2 - 16x^2}}{2}$$

However, if we have $y^2 - 5xy + 4x^2 = 0$, we do not have a corresponding explicit function. Implicit functions are very popular in economics. For instance, think of a profit function for a firm given by $pf(x) - cx$, where $f(x)$ is the production function, p is price, and c is cost per unit. In order to find a local maximum, we need to take the first derivative and set it equal to 0. $pf'(x) - c = 0$ is an implicit function with solution $x = x(p, c)$.

The Implicit Function Theorem

Example. Consider the equation $x^3 + 3y^2 + 4xz^2 - 3z^2y = 1$ in the neighborhood of $x = 0.5$ and $y = 0$. Let's apply this equation to what we know about implicit functions.

Condition (i):

Condition (ii):

Example. You have a utility function given by: $u^1 = u^1(x_1, x_2, x_3)$. You will be exposed to the concept of marginal rate of substitution (MRS) of good l for good k given by: $\frac{dx_k}{dx_l}$. Intuitively, the MRS is the rate at which a consumer is ready to give up one good in exchange for another good while maintaining the same level of utility. (*I will not further elaborate on this concept as you will cover this carefully in Consumer Theory*).

Applying the implicit function theorem above, we have what?

Q: Given a utility function, denoted by $u^1 = u^1(x_1, x_2, x_3) = x_1^{\frac{1}{4}} x_2^{\frac{1}{3}} x_3^{\frac{1}{6}}$. Find $\frac{dx_2}{dx_3}$ and $\frac{dx_2}{dx_1}$

A: