

# Stability theory for concrete categories

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May 14, 2020

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Several ways to think about it:

- ▶ The study of universes with “good Ramsey theory”.
- ▶ A generalized theory of field extensions.
- ▶ Existence of an axiomatic notion of “being independent”, generalizing linear and algebraic independence.

## A puzzle

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The notation is due to Erdős and Rado. It means: for any set  $X$  with at least  $n$  elements and any coloring  $F$  of the unordered pairs from  $X$  in two colors, there exists  $H \subseteq X$  with  $|H| = k$  so that  $F$  is constant on the pairs from  $H$  (we call  $H$  a *homogeneous set* for  $F$ ).

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If  $k = 3$ ,  $n = 6$  suffices. If  $k = 5$ , the optimal value of  $n$  is not known.



# An infinite variation on the puzzle

In an infinite party, infinitely-many people all know each other or infinitely-many all do not know each other.

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**Warning:** The theorem does *not* say that  $|X| = |H|$ : it does *not* rule out an uncountable party with where all friends/strangers groups (= homogeneous sets) are countable.

## Ramsey's dream

For any infinite cardinal  $\lambda$ , in a party of  $\lambda$  people, there is a group of  $\lambda$ -many that all know each other or a group of  $\lambda$ -many that all do not know each other. That is:

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This is wrong for most cardinals  $\lambda$ .

# Counterexamples to Ramsey's dream

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In the reals, a countable set allows one to distinguish uncountably-many points. There are however many structures where this is not the case.

# Ramsey's dream in the complex field

## Proposition

If  $F$  is a coloring of the unordered pairs of complex numbers in two colors *such that*  $F(\{f(x), f(y)\}) = F(\{x, y\})$  *for any field automorphism*  $f$  *of*  $\mathbb{C}$ , then  $F$  has a homogeneous set of cardinality  $|\mathbb{C}|$ .

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**Problem:** Study this phenomenon.

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*A much more general (and harder) framework:* work in any category  $\mathbf{K}$  such that:

- ▶  $\mathbf{K}$  is concrete (there is a faithful  $U : \mathbf{K} \rightarrow \mathbf{Set}$ ).
- ▶ All morphisms are concrete monomorphisms (injections).
- ▶  $\mathbf{K}$  has concrete directed colimits (also known as direct limits – basically closure under unions of increasing chains).
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- ▶ (Smallness condition) Every object is a directed colimit of a fixed set of “small” subobjects.

This is essentially the definition of an *abstract elementary class* (AEC) (due to Shelah, late 1970s).

There are more general frameworks, including accessible categories (not in this talk).



## Types

A category  $\mathbf{K}$  has *amalgamation* if any diagram of the form  $B \leftarrow A \rightarrow C$  can be completed to a commuting square (no universal property required – this is much weaker than pushouts).

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## Definition

Given a concrete category  $\mathbf{K}$  with amalgamation and an object  $A$  of  $\mathbf{K}$ , a *type over  $A$*  is just a pair  $(x, A \xrightarrow{f} B)$ , with  $x \in B$ . Two types  $(x, A \xrightarrow{f} B)$ ,  $(y, A \xrightarrow{g} C)$  are considered *the same* if there exists maps  $h_1, h_2$  so that  $h_1(x) = h_2(y)$  and the following diagram commutes:

$$\begin{array}{ccc} B & \xrightarrow{\quad h_1 \quad} & D \\ f \uparrow & & \uparrow h_2 \\ A & \xrightarrow{\quad g \quad} & C \end{array}$$

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In the category of graphs with induced subgraph embeddings, there are at least  $2^{|V(G)|}$  types over any graph  $G$ .

## Definition (Stability)

A concrete category **K** is *stable in*  $\lambda$  if there are at most  $\lambda$ -many types over any object of cardinality  $\lambda$ . *Stable* means stable in an unbounded class of cardinals.



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## Examples

- ▶ The category of graphs with induced subgraph embeddings and the category of linear orders are unstable. The category of fields is stable (in all cardinals).
- ▶ (Eklof 1971, Mazari-Armida) The category of  $R$ -modules with embeddings is always stable, and stable in all cardinals if and only if  $R$  is Noetherian.

## More examples of (un)stability

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*[Why? Consider  $c_0$  (bounded complex-valued sequences with sup norm). Let  $f_n := \sum_{i \leq n} e_i$ . Then  $\|e_m + f_n\| = 2$  if and only if  $m \leq n$ . Now make up a similar example where things are indexed by rationals.]*

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Note the last two are technically not AECs (under any choice of concrete functor! Lieberman-Rosický-V, preprint).

# Stability and order

## Theorem (V. 2016, Boney)

A tame AEC  $\mathbf{K}$  with amalgamation is stable if and only if it does not “code an order”: any faithful functor  $\mathbf{Lin} \xrightarrow{F} \mathbf{K}$  factors through the forgetful functor.

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \mathbf{Lin} & \xrightarrow{F} & \mathbf{K} \\ \downarrow U & \nearrow \text{dotted} & \\ \mathbf{Set} & & \end{array}$$



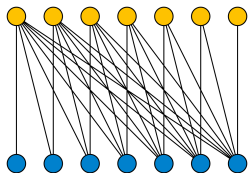
## Order in graphs: an intermission

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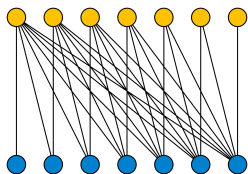
It is given by a half graph: for any linear ordering  $L$ , consider the bipartite graph on  $L \sqcup L$  where we put an edge from  $i$  to  $j$  if only if  $i \leq j$  (the picture below is for  $L = \{1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7\}$ ):



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Graphs omitting half graphs are studied in finite combinatorics too (Malliaris-Shelah, *Regularity lemmas for stable graphs*. TAMS 2014).

# Ramsey's dream in stable AECs

## Theorem (V.)

If  $\mathbf{K}$  is an abstract elementary class with amalgamation and  $\mathbf{K}$  is stable in  $\lambda$ , then:

$$\lambda^+ \xrightarrow{\mathbf{K}} (\lambda^+)_{\lambda}$$

Here  $\lambda^+$  is the cardinal right after  $\lambda$ .

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The partition notation means that given objects  $A \rightarrow B$  in  $\mathbf{K}$  with  $|A| = \lambda$ ,  $|B| = \lambda^+$ , if  $F$  is a coloring of pairs from  $B$  in  $\lambda$ -many colors so that any two pairs with the same type over  $A$  have the same color, then we can find a homogeneous set for  $F$  of cardinality  $\lambda^+$ .

## Shelah's eventual categoricity conjecture

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### Conjecture (Shelah, late seventies)

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The only known way to prove such statements is via stability theory.

# Toward Shelah's eventual categoricity conjecture

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## Theorem (V. 2019)

Assuming the GCH, Shelah's eventual categoricity conjecture is true for AECs with amalgamation. In this case one can list all possibilities for the class of cardinals in which the category has a unique object.

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Fix distinct elements  $(a_i)_{i < \lambda^+}$ . We will find a subset  $I \subseteq \lambda^+$ ,  $|I| = \lambda^+$  such that for any  $i_0 < \dots < i_{n-1}$ ,  $j_0 < \dots < j_{n-1}$ ,  $a_{i_0} \dots a_{i_{n-1}}$  and  $a_{j_0} \dots a_{j_{n-1}}$  have the same type.

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- ▶  $a_i \in M_{i+1}$ .
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- ▶ If  $i$  is a limit ordinal,  $M_i = \bigcup_{j < i} M_j$ .

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## Definition

We say **tp**( $a_i/M_i$ ) *splits over*  $M_{i_0}$ ,  $i_0 < i$ , if there is an automorphism  $f$  of  $\mathfrak{C}$  such that:

- ▶  $f$  fixes  $M_{i_0}$  pointwise.
- ▶  $f$  fixes  $M_i$  setwise.
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Intuitively, a type does *not* split over a base if it is “determined” by the restriction to that base. **Near-examples:** **tp**( $\sqrt{3}/\mathbb{Q}(\sqrt{2})$ ) does not split over  $\mathbb{Q}$ , but **tp**( $1 - \sqrt{2}/\mathbb{Q}(\sqrt{2})$ ) splits over  $\mathbb{Q}$ .

## Lemma

If  $(\delta_k)_{k < \lambda}$  is a chain of ordinals below  $\lambda^+$  and  $p$  is a type over  $M_{\sup_{k < \lambda} \delta_k}$ , then there is  $k < \lambda$  such that  $p \upharpoonright M_{\delta_{k+1}}$  does not split over  $M_{\delta_k}$ .

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## Proof idea.

If not,  $p \upharpoonright M_{\delta_{k+1}}$  splits over  $M_{\delta_k}$  for all  $k$ . Let  $\mu \leq \lambda$  be least such that  $2^\mu > \lambda$ . Copy these failures of splitting into a binary tree of height  $\mu$ . We get  $2^\mu$  distinct types over a base of size  $2^{<\mu} = \lambda$ , contradicting stability. □

## Lemma

There exists  $\alpha < \beta$  and a type  $p$  over  $M_\beta$  such that:

- ▶  $p$  does not split over  $M_\alpha$ .
- ▶ For any  $\beta' \geq \beta$ , there is  $\gamma = \gamma_{\beta'} > \beta'$  such that  $\mathbf{tp}(a_\gamma/M_{\beta'})$  extends  $p$  and does not split over  $M_\alpha$ .

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- ▶ For any  $\beta' \geq \beta$ , there is  $\gamma = \gamma_{\beta'} > \beta'$  such that  $\mathbf{tp}(a_\gamma/M_{\beta'})$  extends  $p$  and does not split over  $M_\alpha$ .

After proving this lemma, we can define inductively  $\beta_0 := \beta$ , and  $\beta_i := \gamma_{(\sup_{j < i} \beta_j)}$ , and one can show  $(a_{\beta_i})_{i < \lambda^+}$  is the desired homogeneous set.

## Lemma

There exists  $\alpha < \beta$  and a type  $p$  over  $M_\beta$  such that:

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How do we prove the lemma?



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How do we prove the lemma? By contradiction! Suppose it fails.

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After proving this lemma, we can define inductively  $\beta_0 := \beta$ , and  $\beta_i := \gamma_{(\sup_{j < i} \beta_j)}$ , and one can show  $(a_{\beta_i})_{i < \lambda^+}$  is the desired homogeneous set.

How do we prove the lemma? By contradiction! Suppose it fails.

Then for each  $\beta$ , for all types  $p$  over  $M_\beta$ , for all  $\alpha < \beta$ , there exists  $\beta' = \beta'_{\alpha, \beta, p} > \beta$  such that for all  $\gamma > \beta'$ , either  $\mathbf{tp}(a_\gamma/M_{\beta'})$  does not extend  $p$  or splits over  $M_\alpha$ .

## Lemma

There exists  $\alpha < \beta$  and a type  $p$  over  $M_\beta$  such that:

- ▶  $p$  does not split over  $M_\alpha$ .
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After proving this lemma, we can define inductively  $\beta_0 := \beta$ , and  $\beta_i := \gamma_{(\sup_{j < i} \beta_j)}$ , and one can show  $(a_{\beta_i})_{i < \lambda^+}$  is the desired homogeneous set.

How do we prove the lemma? By contradiction! Suppose it fails.

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Define inductively  $\delta_0 := 0$ ,  $\delta_i := \sup_{j < i} \sup_{\alpha < \delta_j, p \text{ type over } M_{\delta_j}} \beta'_{\alpha, \delta_j, p}$ .

Apply the previous lemma to  $(\delta_i)_{i < \lambda}$  and get a contradiction.

# Thank you!

Some references:

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