COUNTING 4-VERTEX CONFIGURATIONS IN P-AND Q-POLYNOMIAL ASSOCIATION SCHEMES

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Abstract

An open problem is whether certain symmetric association schemes arising from the finite projective, orthogonal, unitary, and symplectic geometries, all with the so-called P- and Q-polynomial property, are the unique ones with their own intersection numbers. The following result, which applies to all P- and Q-polynomial schemes, may shed light on this problem. If we say 4-tuples \((x_1, x_2, x_3, x_4)\) and \((y_1, y_2, y_3, y_4)\) of elements taken from the scheme \(Y = (X, [R_i]_{0 \leq i \leq d})\) have the same type if \((x_i, x_j) \in R_t\) implies \((y_i, y_j) \in R_t\) \((0 \leq i, j \leq 4)\), then we show the total number \(n^t\) of 4-tuples from \(Y\) of type \(t\) can be computed from the intersection numbers of \(Y\) and the numbers \(n_S\) for at most \([d/2]\) types \(S\).

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For any positive integer \( d \) set \( \{d\} = \{0, 1, \ldots, d\} \). A symmetric \textit{d-class}

association scheme (or simply, scheme) is a configuration \( Y = (X, \{R_i\}_{i \in \{d\}}) \)

consisting of a finite set \( X \) and symmetric relations \( R_0, R_1, \ldots, R_d \) on \( X \)

where

1) \( R_0 = \{(x,x) \mid x \in X\} \) is the identity relation,

2) for every \( x, y \in X, (x,y) \in R_i \) for exactly one \( i \in \{d\} \), and

3) for any \( h, i, j \in \{d\} \) and any \( x, y \in X \) with \( (x,y) \in R_h \), the number of \( z \in X \) where \( (x,z) \in R_i \) and \( (z,y) \in R_j \)

depends only on \( h, i, j \). We denote this number by the intersection number \( p^h_{ij} \).

The set \( X \) of all \( d \)-dimensional (maximal isotropic) subspaces in a projective (orthogonal, unitary, or symplectic) geometry forms such a scheme, if we set \( (x,y) \in R_i \) for any \( x, y \in X \) where \( \dim(x \cap y) = d - i \), and in fact these examples are among the few known schemes with the so called \( P \)- and \( Q \)-polynomial property (defined below). Here we give new information on \( P \)- and \( Q \)- polynomial schemes that may help in their classification. See Bannai and Ito[1], Cohen[2], Egawa[3], Huang[4], Leonard[5], Neumaier[6], Sprague[7], and Terwilliger[8–12].

We fix a scheme \( Y = (X, \{R_i\}_{i \in \{d\}}) \) with \( n = |X| \), set \( k_i = p^0_{ij} \) (\( i \in \{d\} \)),

and set \( k = k_1 \). Let \( EK_4 \) be the set of all 2-element subsets of a 4-element set \( K_4 \). The \textit{level} \( \lambda(T) \) of a function \( T: EK_4 \to \{d\} \) (henceforth called a \textit{type} function) is the minimal integer in its range, and any 4-tuple \((x_1, x_2, x_3, x_4)\) of elements in \( X \) is said to have \textit{type} \( T \) if \((x_i, x_j) \in R_{\lambda(T(i,j))}\) for all \((i,j) \in \)
Denote by $n_T$ the total number of 4-tuples from $X$ of type $T$, and for any $i \in [d]$ set $n_i^n = n_C$, where $C = C(i)$ is the constant function of level $i$. We prove the following.

**Theorem 1.** Let $Y$ be a $d$-class $P$- and $Q$- polynomial scheme and let $T$ be any type function. Then $n_T$ can be computed from the intersection numbers of $Y$ and $n_1^n, n_2^n, \ldots, n_d^n$, where $p$ is the minimum of $k(T)$ and the integer part of $d/2$.

We review some preliminaries found in Bannai and Ito[1] before proving the intermediate results Theorem 6 and Corollary 7, which may be of independent interest, and then prove Theorem 1.

Let $A(Y)$ be the Rose-Mesner Algebra of $Y$ (over $\mathbb{R}$), acting on a Euclidean space $V$, $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle$, that possesses an orthonormal basis which we identify with $X$. Let $V = \oplus V_i (i \in [d])$ be the orthogonal decomposition of $V$ into maximal $A(Y)$-invariant subspaces, let $\pi_i$ denote the projection $V \rightarrow V_i$, and let the matrix $E_i$ represent $\pi_i$ relative to $X (i \in [d])$. The *Krein parameters* $q_{ij}^h (h,i,j \in [d])$ are defined by

$$E_i \circ E_j = n^{-1} \sum_{h \in [d]} q_{ij}^h E_h$$

where $\circ$ is Hadamard multiplication. $Y$ is called $P$- and $Q$- *polynomial* (with
respect to the given ordering of the relations and projections) if the intersection matrix, \( \text{B} \) and its dual \( \text{B}^* \), with \( i,j \)th entries \( p_{i,j}^i \) and \( q_{i,j}^i \), respectively \( (i,j \in \{d\}) \), are tri-diagonal, with non-zero entries directly above and below the main diagonal. In this paper we always assume \( Y \) is \( P \)- and \( Q \)- polynomial. For convenience set \( F_i = \{ \pi_0, \pi_1, ..., \pi_i \} \) \((i \in \{d\}) \).

REMARK 2. Set \( m_j = \dim V_j \ (j \in \{d\}) \). By [8], for \( i,j \in \{d\} \) the cosine \( c_{i,j}^{(1)} \) of the angle between \( \pi_j(x) \) and \( \pi_j(y) \) \((x,y) \in R_1 \) is

\[
c_{i,j}^{(1)} = nm_j^{-1} \langle \pi_j(x), \pi_j(y) \rangle
\]

and can be computed from the intersection numbers of \( Y \). We also have

\[
m_r m_s c_{r,s}^{(1)} = \sum_{h \in \{d\}} q_{r,s}^{(1)} m_h c_{h}^{(1)} \quad (i,j \in \{d\}).
\]

We write \( c_i = c_{i}^{(1)} \), \( c_{j}^{(1)} = c_{j}^{(1)} \) \((i,j \in \{d\}) \), and by Bannai and Ito[1, p.355] have

\[
c_i \neq c_j \text{ and } c_{i}^{(1)} \neq c_{j}^{(1)} \text{ if } i \neq j \quad (i,j \in \{d\}).
\]

Let the matrix \( Q \) have \( i,j \)th entry \( m_j c_{i,j}^{(1)} \), \((i,j \in \{d\}) \). By Bannai and Ito[1] \( Q \) is essentially Vandermonde and hence nonsingular.

DEFINITION 3. Let \( G \) be the Cartesian product \( \{d\} \times \{d\} \), and write \( u = (u_x, u_y) \) for \( u \in G \). Let \( \delta(u,v) = |u_x - v_x| + |u_y - v_y| \) be the distance between \( u,v \in G \).
and for \( u \in G, r \in [d] \), let \( D(u, r) = \{ v \in G, d(u, v) \leq r \} \) be the diamond of radius \( r \) centered at \( u \). For \( i \in \mathbb{Z} \) let \( G_i = \{ u \mid u \in G, u_x > u_y + i \} \). We will use the following constants in Theorem 6.

**Definition 4.** A path \( P \) of length \( t \) in \( G_j \) is a sequence \( (u_0, u_1, \ldots, u_t) \) with \( u_i \in G_j (i \in [t]) \) and \( \delta(u_i, u_{i+1}) \leq 1 \) (i.e., \( |t-1| \)). We say \( P \) goes from \( u_0 \) to \( u_t \) and write \( |P| = t \). Abusing notation we write \( P \in G_j \). If \( |P| \geq 1 \) set \( P^* = (u_0, u_1, \ldots, u_{t-1}) \) and \( P^{**} = (u_1, u_2, \ldots, u_{t-1}) \), with \( P^{**} = \emptyset \) if \( t = 1 \), and assign to \( P \) a sequence \( \{ f_u \mid u \in P^{**} \} \) of integers as follows. For each \( i \in [t-1] \), let \( u = u_i, \ u = (r, s) \) and set \( f_u \) equal to \( p^r_{1, r+1}, p^r_{r-1, -1}, -p^s_{1, s+1}, -p^s_{1, s-1}, \) or \( p^r_{r-1, -s}p^s_{1, s} \), depending on whether \( u_{i+1} = (r+1, s), (r-1, s), (r, s+1), (r, s-1) \), or \( (r, s) \), respectively. For all paths \( P \) in \( G \) with \( |P| \geq 1 \) and \( P^{**} \in G_0 \) define the **positive weight**

\[
 w^+(P) = \prod_{u \in P^{**}} f_u (c_{u_x} - c_{u_y})^{-1}.
\]

Define the **negative weight** of any path \( P \) in \( G \) for which \( P^{**} \in G_0 \) by

\[
 w^-(P) = \prod_{u \in P^{**}} f_u (c_{u_x} - c_{u_y})^{-1},
\]

and set \( w(P) = 1 \) if \( |P| = 0 \). Finally for all \( t \in [d] \), all \( u \in G_{<t} \) and all \( v \in G_{\geq t} \), let \( a^2_{v,t}(u, t) = \Sigma w^+(P) \), the sum being over all paths \( P \) from \( v \) to \( u \) having
length \( t \) in case (−) and length \( t+1 \) in case (+).

**Definition 5.** For all \( x,y \in X \) and all \( i,j \in [d] \), set \( P_{ij}(x,y) = \Sigma z \), the sum (in \( v \)) being over all \( z \in X \) where \( (x,z) \in R_i \) and \( (z,y) \in R_j \).

**Theorem 6.** For \( t \in [d] \), \( u \in G_t \), and \( x,y \in X \), we have

\[
\text{equation (}u,t\text{)}: \quad \Sigma a_v(u,t) \pi(P_v(x,y) - P_v(y,x)) = 0 \quad (v \in F_t) \quad \forall \in D(u,t)
\]

and

\[
\text{equation (}u,t+1\text{)}: \quad \Sigma a_v(u,t) \pi(P_v(x,y) + P_v(y,x)) = 0 \quad (v \in F_t) \quad \forall \in D(u,t+1)
\]

The constants \( a_v(u,t) \) are from Definition 4.

**Proof.** Fix \( x,y \in X \). By Bannai and Ito [1, p126] we have

\[
\Sigma \langle \pi(x), \pi(y) \rangle \langle \pi(u), \pi(v) \rangle \pi(z) = 0
\]

\( \forall z \in X \)

for all \( r,s,t \in [d] \) with \( q^r_{st} = 0 \). Summing over the possible inner products first, the \( Q \)-polynomial property implies

\[
\Sigma c_i^{(r)} c_j^{(s)} \pi P_{ij}(x,y) = 0 \quad r,s \in [d], \quad v \in F_t, \quad t < r-s.
\]
Let $N = \{ e_i \mid i \in [d] \}$ be the standard basis for $\mathbb{R}^{d+1}$, let $N^* = \{ e_i^* \mid i \in [d] \}$ the $i$th column of $G$, $i \in [d]$ be another basis, and set $W = \mathbb{R}^{d+1} \oplus \mathbb{R}^{d+1}$.

We abbreviate $e_{ij} = e_i \otimes e_j$, $e_{ij}^* = e_i^* \otimes e_j^*$. For $t \in [d]$ define $H_t, W_t \in W$ by

$$H_t = \text{span} \{ e_{ij} \mid ||i - j|| > t, \; i, j \in [d] \}, \; W_t = \text{span} \{ e_{ij}^* \mid ||i - j|| > t, \; i, j \in [d] \},$$

and decompose $H_t = H_t^- \oplus H_t^+$, setting $H_t^- = \text{span} \{ e_{ij} - e_{ji} \mid (i,j) \in G_t \}$, and $H_t^+ = \text{span} \{ e_{ij} + e_{ji} \mid (i,j) \in G_t \}$. We decompose $W_t = W_t^- \oplus W_t^+$

similarly, and note $\dim(W_t^\pm) = (d-t+1)(d-t)/2$ $(t \in [d])$. Setting

$$e_u^-(t) = \sum_{(i,j) \in D(u,t)} a_{ij}^-(u,t) (e_{ij} - e_{ji}) \quad t \in [d] \; u \in G_t$$
and

$$e_u^+(t) = \sum_{(i,j) \in D(u,t+1)} a_{ij}^+(u,t) (e_{ij} + e_{ji}) \quad t \in [d] \; u \in G_t,$$

by (4) it suffices to prove $\{ e_u^-(t) \mid u \in G_t \}$ and $\{ e_u^+(t) \mid u \in G_t \}$ form bases for $W_t^-$ and $W_t^+$, respectively. Define the linear transformations

$$M, M^*: \mathbb{R}^{d+1} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^{d+1} \text{ by}$$

$$M(e_i) = c_i(e_i) \quad M^*(e_i^*) = c^{(1)}(e_i^*) \quad (i \in [d]). \quad (5)$$

Let $M_1 H_0 \to H_0$ be the restriction of $M^1 : I \otimes M$ to its invariant subspace $H_0$, and let $M^*: W_0 \to W_0$ be the restriction of $M^1 : I \otimes M^*$ to $W_0$. By (3),
$M_1$ and $M_1 \Sigma$ are invertible, and in fact $M_1(H_1^{-}) = H_1^*$, $M_1 \Sigma(W_i^{-}) = W_i^*$ for all $i \in [d]$. Since by (2) and (1, p. 72) the matrices representing $M$ and $M_\Sigma$ relative to $N_\Sigma$ and $N$ are the tri-diagonal matrices $M_1^{-1}B_\Sigma$ and $k^{-1}B$, respectively, we have $M_1(W_i^{-}) \subseteq W_i^{-1}$ and $M_1 \Sigma(H_i^{-}) \subseteq H_i^{-1}$ for all $i$ $(1 \leq i \leq d)$. Since Definition 4 and a routine induction on $t$ shows $e_{rs}^{-}(t) = k^{-1}(M_1^{-1}M_1 \Sigma)^t(e_{rs} - e_{sr})$ and $e_{rs}^{-}(t) = kM_1 \Sigma e_{rs}^{-}(t)$ $(t \in [d], (r,s) \in G_t)$, it suffices to show

$$W_t^{-} = (M_1^{-1}M_1 \Sigma)^t H_t^{-} \quad (t \in [d]).$$

This equation follows from $H_0^{-} \cap W_t^{-} = W_t^{-}$ and $H_t^{-} \cap W_0^{-} = H_t^{-}$. If we can show

$$M_1(W_r^{-} \cap H_S^{-}) = W_r^{-} \cap H_S^{-} \quad (r \in [d-1], \; s \in [d])$$

(7)

and

$$M_1 \Sigma(W_r^{-} \cap H_{S+1}^{-}) = W_r^{-} \cap H_S^{-} \quad (r \in [d], \; s \in [d-1]).$$

(8)

To prove (7), it suffices to prove

$$M_1(W_{r+1}^{-}) = W_r^{-} \cap H_0^{-} \quad (r \in [d-1])$$

(9)

for we would then have $M_1(W_{r+1}^{-} \cap H_S^{-}) = M_1(W_r^{-}) \cap M_1(H_S^{-})$.
\[ W_r^+ \cap H_0^+ \cap H_0^+ = W_r^+ \cap H_0^+ \cap H_0^+ \]  
Since \( M_1(W_{r+1}^-) = M_1(W_{r+1}^- \cap H_0^-) \leq M_1(W_r^+ \cap H_0^-) \), to prove (9) we need only check

\[ \dim(W_r^+ \cap H_0^+) = \frac{(d-r)(d-r-1)}{2} \]  
\[ = \dim(W_{r+1}^-). \]  

For this, we produce a dimension \( d-r \) subspace \( S \subseteq W_r^+ \) that intersects \( W_r^+ \cap H_0^+ \) trivially, where

\[ W_r^+ = W_r^+ \cap H_0^+ \cap S \]  
\[ r \in \{d\}. \]  

We take \( S = \text{span}\{ e_{10}^n + e_{01}^n \mid r+1 \leq i \leq d \} \). Upon writing these vectors in terms of \( \{ e_{ij} \mid i,j \in \{d\} \} \) we find a linear combination

\[ \sum_{i=r+1}^{d} \alpha_j(e_{10}^n + e_{01}^n) \in H_0^+ \]

is equivalent to \( q(0,0,0,0,\alpha_{r+1},\alpha_{r+2},\ldots,\alpha_d) = 0 \), so \( S \cap H_0^+ \) is trivial.

By writing the vectors

\[ e_{xy}^n + e_{yx}^n - \sum_{i=r+1}^{d} h_{xy}(e_{10}^n + e_{01}^n) \quad ((x,y) \in G_r) \]

in terms of \( \{ e_{ij} \mid i,j \in \{d\} \} \) and applying (2), we find they are all in \( W_r^+ \cap H_0^+ \), yielding (11) and proving (10). Line (8) is proved by interchanging the roles of \( W_r, H_0, \) and \( M_1, M_1^* \) in the proof of (7). \( \square \)
COROLLARY 7. Let \( t \in \{d\} \) set \( L(t) = \{(i,j) | 0 \leq i \leq t \text{ or } 0 \leq j \leq t \} \), and pick \( u \in G \).
From \( t, u \), and the intersection numbers of \( y \) we can compute
\[
\{ g_v | g_v \in \mathbb{R}, \text{vel}(t) \}
\]
where
\[
\Pi_{\Pi}(x,y) = \sum_{\text{vel}(t)} g_v \Pi_{\Pi}(x,y) \tag{12}
\]
for all \( \pi \in F_1 \) and all \( x,y \in X \).

Proof. Set \( u = (r,s)(r,s \in \{d\}) \). The Corollary is true if it is true under the assumption \( u \in L(t+1) \setminus L(t) \ (t \in \{d-1\}) \), so we make this assumption and consider two cases.

Case 1. \( t = r < s \). Here (12) follows from equation \((s,0,t)^{-} \) of Theorem 6.

Case 2. \( t + 1 = s < r \). We first apply the equation
\[
a_y^{-}(r,0,t)(r,0,t+1)^{-} = a_y^{-}(r,0,t+1)(r,0,t)^{-}
\]
to obtain the vector \( \Pi_{\Pi}(x,y) \) in (12) as a linear combination of those \( \Pi_{\Pi}(x,y) \) for which either i) \( u \in L(t) \) or ii) both \( u \in L(t+1) \setminus L(t) \) and \( r' < s' \ (u' = (r',s')) \), and then apply case 1 to those \( \Pi_{\Pi}(x,y) \) of the second type. \( \square \)

Proof of Theorem 1. Let \( \lambda = \lambda(T) \). For each type function \( S \) let \( e(S) \) be the number of \( u \in EK_d \) for which \( S(u) = \lambda(S) \), except that \( e(S) = 1 \) if there are exactly two \( u,v \in EK \) with \( S(u), S(v) = \lambda(S) \), and these \( u,v \) are disjoint. Define a partial order \( \prec \) on the set of all type functions, letting \( R,S \) satisfy \( R \prec S \) if either i) \( \lambda(R) \prec \lambda(S) \), ii) \( \lambda(R) = \lambda(S) \) and \( e(R) > e(S) \), or iii) \( \lambda(R) = \lambda(S) \), \( e(R) = e(S) \), and \( R(u) \leq S(u) \) for all \( u \in \)
$E_{K_4}$, with strict inequality for some $u$. It now suffices to assume $T$ is
either not constant or $\lambda > [d/2]$, and show $n_T$ is computable from those $n_T$ for
which $T \prec T$. There are 3 cases, the first being

1) $\lambda > [d/2]$.

If $\lambda < [d/2]$ then $T$ is not constant, so we can label $K_4 = \{x, y, z, w\}$ so that

$T(x, z) > T(x, y) = \lambda$, and either

2) $T(y, z) = \lambda$

3a) $T(x, z) > T(u) > \lambda$ for all $u \in E_{K_4}$ containing $x$ or $y$, or

3b) $T(y, w)$ and $T(x, w)$ equal $\lambda$, and $T(x, z) > T(u) > \lambda$ for all $u \in E_{K_4}$
containing $z$.

Let $e$, $f$, $g$, $r$, and $s$ denote the integers $T(z, w)$, $T(x, w)$, $T(y, w)$, $T(y, z)$,
and $T(x, z)$, respectively. In case 1 we label $K_4$ so $T(x, y) = \lambda$. For
convenience set $(d, e) = ([d-2]/2, [d/2]+1)$, $(\lambda-1, \lambda+1)$, or $(\min(d, d-r),
\lambda)$, in case 1, 2, and 3, respectively, and let $J = [g+1] \setminus [-1]$. For each $i \in [d]$, let $S^{(i)}$ be the type function with $S^{(i)}(x, z) = i$ that agrees with $T$ on
all $p \in E_{K_4}$ with $p = (x, z)$. Set $n_i = n_{S^{(i)}}(I \in [d])$ and note $n_s = n_T$. By (1),
for all $h \in [d]$ and in particular for all $h \in [d]$, we have

$$\sum_{i \in [d]} n_i c_i^{(n)} = \sum_{i \in [d]} n_h^{-1} \sum_{\pi_h P_{er}(u, v), \pi_h P_{fa}(u, v)}.$$  \hfill (13)
the second sum being over all \( u, v \in X \) with \((u, v) \in R_i\). By Corollary 7 we replace each vector \( \pi_h P_{en}(u, v) \) in (13) by a known linear combination of those \( \pi_{h'} P_{en}(u, v) \) for which \( e' \leq h \) or \( r' \leq h \). In each case 1, 2, 3a, 3b and for each \( h \in [d] \), evaluation of the inner product in (13) shows the right side of that equation is computable from the intersection numbers of \( Y \) and those \( n_T \) for which \( T \preceq T \). Now the constants \( n_j \) (\( J = \{e-1\} \)) each represent some \( n_T \) for which \( T \preceq T \), and the \( P \)-polynomial property implies \( n_j = 0 \) for \( j > e + a \), so using (13) we can compute \( \{ q_h | q_h \in \mathbb{R}, h \in [d] \} \) from the intersection numbers and those \( n_T \) for which \( T \preceq T \), such that

\[
\sum_{h \in [d]} n_j c_i(h) = q_h \quad (h \in [d]).
\]

By Remark 2 the coefficient matrix for the above system is essentially Vandermonde and hence nonsingular, allowing us to solve for each \( n_j \) (\( J \)).

**Remark.** For each \( i, j \in [d] \) let \( D = D(i, j) \) be the square matrix of degree \((d+1)^2\), with rows and columns indexed by \( G = [d] \times [d] \), where

\[
D_{i,j} = \sum_{x \in G} \langle \pi_j P_i(x, y), \pi_i P_j(x, y) \rangle \quad \forall x \in G, \ \forall y \in G,
\]

the sum being over all \( x, y \in X \) with \((x, y) \in R_i\). Equations like (13) show \( D \)
is determined by the free parameters $n_1^*, ..., n_i^*$, and the intersection numbers of $Y$. The positive semi-definiteness of each $D$ yields bounds on the free parameters and hence estimates for the $n_I$'s.
REFERENCES


