Sylvester-Gallai Configurations and Beyond

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Overview

- Introduction
  - Sylvester-Gallai Configurations
  - Algebra-Geometry-Complexity Dictionary
  - Previous Work
- Our Results
  - Radical Sylvester-Gallai Theorem for Cubics
  - Our Tools
  - Complete proof overview
- Conclusion & Open Problems
- Extra: SG generalization for PIT and LCCs
- Proof of Structure Theorem

(Very brief) History

[Sylvester 1893]: given a finite set of points $\mathcal{F} \subset \mathbb{R}^N$ such that:

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[Folklore]: over $\mathbb{C}$, elliptic curves give 2-dimensional configurations.

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[?]: YES - direct corollary of **[Hirzebruch 1983]**, the latter using deep results from AG.

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Underlying theme:

Are Sylvester-Gallai type configurations always low-dimensional?

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Cancellations of SG configurations make them quite complex!

Mayr-Meyer

[Mayr Meyer 1982]: "cancellations in algebraic geometry are EXPSPACE hard"

Where are the cancellations?

- $\mathcal{F} = \{v_1, \ldots, v_m\} \subset \mathbb{R}^2$ is a SG configuration if for all $i, j \in [m]$, there is $k \neq i, j$ such that v_i, v_j, v_k colinear.

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- Duality: $\mathcal{F} = \{\ell_1, \ldots, \ell_m\} \subset \mathbb{R}[x, y]_1$ is a SG configuration if for all $i, j \in [m]$, there is $k \neq i, j$ such that $\ell_k \in (\ell_i, \ell_j)$.

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  1. $\ell_k \in (\ell_i, \ell_j) \Leftrightarrow \exists \alpha_i, \alpha_j, \alpha_k \in \mathbb{R}$ such that
  $$\alpha_i \ell_i + \alpha_j \ell_j + \alpha_k \ell_k = 0$$

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  2. Are these relations enough to show that $\dim\langle\mathcal{F}\rangle = 1$?

- (Non-linear) Generalization **[Gupta 2014]**:
  - $\mathcal{F} = \{F_1, \ldots, F_m\} \subset \mathbb{C}[x_1, \ldots, x_N]$ is a SG configuration if for all $i, j \in [m]$, there is $k \neq i, j$ such that

  $$F_k \in \text{rad}(F_i, F_j)$$

Generalization – geometrically

General conjecture

Definition (Radical Sylvester Gallai – **[Gupta 2014]**)

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Conjecture (**[Gupta 2014]**)

There is $\lambda : \mathbb{N} \to \mathbb{N}$ *such that if* $\mathcal{F}$ *is a* d-radical-SG *configuration, then*

$$\text{tr-deg}(\mathcal{F}) = \lambda(d).$$

Informally: must every SG configuration be in "few variables"?

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$$\dim \mathsf{span}_{\mathbb{C}} \{\mathcal{F}\} = \lambda(d).$$

Previous Work

Theorem (Linear SG – **[Hirzebruch 1983, ?]**)

If $\mathcal{F}$ *is* 1-radical-SG *configuration, then* $\dim \text{span}_{\mathbb{C}} \{\mathcal{F}\} \leq 2$.

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Definition (Robust linear Sylvester Gallai)

$\mathcal{F} = \{\ell_1, \ldots, \ell_m\} \subset \mathbb{C}[x_1, \ldots, x_N]_1$ is a δ-linear-SG configuration if for all $i \in [m]$, there are $\delta(m-1)$ indices j such that:

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Theorem (robust linear SG theorem – **[BDWY 2011]**)

If $\mathcal{F}$ *is* δ-linear-SG *configuration, then* $\dim \mathsf{span}_{\mathbb{C}} \{\mathcal{F}\} = O(1/\delta^2)$.

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If $\mathcal{F}$ *is* 2-radical-SG *configuration, then* $\dim \text{span}_{\mathbb{C}} \{\mathcal{F}\} = O(1)$.

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Upshot: non-linear SG dependencies involve special linear forms.

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- Extract linear Sylvester-Gallai configuration from remaining linear forms (combinatorially involved)

Radical Sylvester-Gallai for Cubics

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Theorem (Cubic radical SG theorem – **[O. Sengupta 2022]**)

If $\mathcal{F}$ *is* 3-radical-SG *configuration, then* $\dim \text{span}_{\mathbb{C}} \{\mathcal{F}\} = O(1)$.

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Challenges in degree 3 similar to challenges in general case

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All of the above (and a little bit more) in **[O. Sengupta 2022]**!

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  - if could prove
    1. there is small $V = V_1 + V_2$ s.t. $\mathcal{F}_3 \subset \mathbb{C}[V]$
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    then done!
- Can we do both? YES!

Need a lot of new tools!

Inductive radical SG problem

Original radical SG configuration:

Definition (Radical Sylvester Gallai)

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4. for all i, j, there is $k \neq i, j$ such that (SG dependency)

$$F_k \in \mathrm{rad}(F_i, F_j) \Leftrightarrow |\mathcal{F} \cap \mathrm{rad}(F_i, F_j)| \geq 3$$

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Inductive radical SG configuration:

Definition (Radical Sylvester Gallai over algebra)

Let $V = V_1 + \cdots + V_d$. $\mathcal{F} = \{F_1, \ldots, F_m\} \subset \mathbb{C}[x_1, \ldots, x_N]$ is a (d, V)-radical-SG configuration if:

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4. for all i, j (SG dependency over algebra)

$$|\mathcal{F} \cap \mathrm{rad}(F_i, F_j)| \geq 3 \quad \text{or} \quad \mathrm{rad}(F_i, F_j) \cap \mathbb{C}[V] \not\subset (F_i) \cup (F_j)$$

Upshot: can have pairs i, j with no dependence in $\mathcal{F}$, but it has to have dependence in algebra $\mathbb{C}[V]$.

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    1. Regular sequence $\Rightarrow$ "free as polynomial ring"

Algebras

- Not all algebras are created equally...
  1. Best algebra: polynomial rings (commutative and free)
  2. Could $\mathcal{F}_3$ be in a small sub-polynomial ring?
  3. May not be possible in our case:

$$F = x(y_1 z_1 + y_2 z_2 + \cdots + y_n z_n) + uw^2 \in \mathcal{F}_3$$

- What is next best thing?
  - Subalgebras that are isomorphic to a polynomial ring AND behave well with $\mathbb{C}[x_1, \ldots, x_N]$
  - Algebras generated by prime sequences!

Key properties: Regular Sequence & Intersection flatness

1. Regular sequence $\Rightarrow$ "free as polynomial ring"
2. Intersection flatness $\Rightarrow$ behaves nicely with $\mathbb{C}[x_1, \ldots, x_N]$

Primes in the small subalgebra are also primes in $\mathbb{C}[x_1, \ldots, x_N]$

Wide Ananyan-Hochster Algebras

- Suppose I have an algebra $\mathbb{C}[F_1, \ldots, F_k]$ of low degree polynomials which is not nice

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- **[Ananyan Hochster 2020]** construct such algebras (and much more!)
  1. Basic idea: if $V = V_1 + V_2$ is such that ANY $Q \in V_2$ has

     $$\text{rank}(Q) \geq \dim V + 3$$

     then $\mathbb{C}[V]$ is a nice algebra (V nice vector space).

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- In **[O. Sengupta 2022]** we build upon this to construct wide Ananyan-Hochster algebras
  1. generated by prime sequences (or better)
  2. robust to "small increases"

Our approach

1. Solve $(2, V)$-radical-SG problem

Proposition (**[O. Sengupta 2022]**)

If V is wide AH vector space and $\mathcal{F}$ is $(2, V)$-radical-SG *configuration, then*

$$\dim \mathsf{span}_{\mathbb{C}} \{\mathcal{F}\} = O(1 + (\dim V)^2)$$

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Generalizes **[Shpilka 2020]** main result.

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2. Now we need to construct V wide such that $\mathcal{F}_3 \subset \mathbb{C}[V]$.

Structure Theorems

Structure theorem **[Shpilka 2020]**: how can $F_k \in \mathrm{rad}(F_i, F_j)$?

1. $F_k \in \mathrm{span}_{\mathbb{C}} \{F_i, F_j\}$
2. $\ell^2 \in \mathrm{span}_{\mathbb{C}} \{F_i, F_j\}$
3. $F_i, F_j, F_k \in (x, y)$ for some linear x, y

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What Amir really wanted to prove: when is (F, G) not radical?

1. $\ell^2 \in \mathrm{span}_{\mathbb{C}} \{F, G\}$
2. $(F, G) \in (x, y)$ for some linear x, y

- Proved this (and more) in **[Garg O. Sengupta 2022]**
- also proved in **[Hodge Pedoe 1994, CT S SD 1987]**.

Structure Theorems

Theorem (Structure theorem for cubics [O. Sengupta 2022])

Let F, G be irreducible homogeneous cubics. One of the following must hold:

1. (F, G) *is radical*
2. $(F, G) \subset (x, y)$ *for* x, y *linear forms*
3. $(F, G) \subset (Q, x)$ *for* Q *irreducible quadratic and* x *linear*
4. $xy^2 \in \text{span}_{\mathbb{C}} \{F, G\}$ *for* x, y *linear forms*
5. $(F, G) \subset I_{md}$ *where* I_{md} *cuts out variety of minimal degree*

Example of variety of minimal degree: (twisted cubic)

$$\begin{pmatrix} x & y & z \\ y & z & w \end{pmatrix} \mapsto (y^2 - xz, z^2 - yw, xw - yz)$$

More Structure Theorems

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- Discriminant lemma (decide radical or not)
  - generalizes fact that discriminant of univariate polynomial $p(x)$ is zero $\Leftrightarrow p(x)$ has multiple roots
  - quantitative bounds when combined with wide AH algebras

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  - quantitative bounds when combined with wide AH algebras

  Key property: Cohen-Macaulayness
- Transfer principle: generalize several properties of polynomial rings to wide AH algebras
  - elimination theorems in wide AH algebras
  - primality and reducedness criteria in AH algebras
  - more...

  Key property: Intersection Flatness

Proof overview

- $\mathcal{F} = \mathcal{F}_1 \cup \mathcal{F}_2 \cup \mathcal{F}_3$ our 3-radical-SG configuration
- Solved $(2, V)$-radical-SG problem over V low dimensional wide AH vector space

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- Need to prove $\mathcal{F}_3 \subset \mathbb{C}[V]$ for some small wide AH vector space V
  1. If $\mathcal{F}_3$ is a δ-linear-SG configuration then $\dim \text{span}_{\mathbb{C}} \{\mathcal{F}_3\} = O(1)$.

     Apply our wide AH process to $\text{span}_{\mathbb{C}} \{\mathcal{F}_3\}$ to get V.

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     - construct V from X by saturated SG configuration

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- Inductive, generalizable SG problem (SG over algebra)

  In previous versions, unclear how to solve SG inductively.
- Introduced several new algebro-geometric techniques:
  1. wide AH algebras
     - subalgebras "like subpolynomial rings"
     - robust to small augmentations
  2. discriminant-based reducedness testing & quantitative bounds
  3. transfer principle:

     polynomial rings $\rightarrow$ algebras generated by prime sequences
  4. Exploration of Cohen-Macaulayness in SG configurations
  5. Structure theorem for intersection of cubics

Open Questions

Open Question (Radical Sylvester-Gallai over an algebra)

There is $\lambda : \mathbb{N}^2 \to \mathbb{N}$ *such that if* $\mathcal{F}$ *is a* (d, V)-radical-SG *configuration, then*

$$\dim \mathsf{span}_{\mathbb{C}} \{\mathcal{F}\} = \lambda(d, \dim V).$$

Several variants – robust, coloured, higher-codimensional… this is just the beginning of the rabbit hole.

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More generally: can we parametrize cancellations in algebra?

Future Directions

A sneak peek into the rabbit hole:

Open Question (Complexity theory for Algebraic Geometry)

Can we pin down the complexity of basic algebro-geometric questions?

- *primary decomposition*
- *radical ideal membership*
- *projective dimension*
- *free resolutions*

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- *radical ideal membership*
- *projective dimension*
- *free resolutions*

[Ananyan Hochster 2020] gives us upper bound (non-explicit) on parametrization of cancellations/relations (and in the above problems).

- can we get explicit (and eventually tight) parametrizations?
- important special cases as complexity classes?

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SG configurations in PIT and Reconstruction

- PIT/Reconstruction break down into two cases:
  1. SG circuits: where a lot of cancellations/relations can happen. In this case the circuit may not be unique/have less structure (hard case)
  2. non-SG circuits: few relations can happen. This case is easier, since we can "isolate" the gates.

SG configurations in LCCs

- LCCs break down into two cases:
  1. SG codes (few repetitions): in this case, no coordinate is repeated - then the code must be a SG configuration
  2. non-SG codes (many repetitions): if coordinate is repeated too much, not necessarily SG configuration

Open Question

Can such repetitions be helpful?

Proving structure theorem

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  9. $d = 3$ and (F, G) non-degenerate $\Rightarrow \mathfrak{p}$ defines variety of minimal degree