

RAMSEY THEORY AND BANDWIDTH OF GRAPHS

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Abstract. The bandwidth of a graph is the minimum, over vertex labelings with distinct integers, of the maximum difference between labels on adjacent vertices. Kuang and McDiarmid proved that almost all n -vertex graphs have bandwidth $n - (2 + \sqrt{2} + o(1)) \lg n$. Thus the sum of the bandwidths of a graph and its complement is almost always at least $2n - (4 + 2\sqrt{2} + o(1)) \lg n$; we prove that it is always at most $2n - 4 \log_2 n + o(\log n)$. The proofs involve improving the bounds on the Ramsey and Turán numbers of the “halfgraph”.

1. THE PROBLEM

When the vertices of a graph are labeled injectively with integers, the *dilation* of an edge is the difference between the labels on its endpoints. The *bandwidth* $B(G)$ of the graph G is the minimum, over all such labelings, of the maximum edge dilation.

Chinn, Chung, Erdős, and Graham [3] investigated the sum $B(G) + B(\overline{G})$, where \overline{G} denotes the complement of G . They proved that $B(G) + B(\overline{G}) \geq n - 2$ whenever G has n vertices (for $n \geq 4$). Equality holds when G is a 4-vertex path. They also established the existence of constants c_1, c_2 such that $B(G) + B(\overline{G}) < 2n - c_1 \log n$ for every n -vertex G and $B(G) + B(\overline{G}) > 2n - c_2 \log n$ for almost every n -vertex G .

Kuang and McDiarmid [17] improved the constant c_2 . They proved that for the random graph generated with fixed edge probability p , almost all graphs have bandwidth $n - (2 + \sqrt{2} + o(1)) \log_{1/(1-p)} n$, where n denotes the number of vertices. With $p = 1/2$, the complement of a random graph is also a random graph, and we obtain $c_2 < 4 + 2\sqrt{2} + \epsilon$ for any $\epsilon > 0$ and sufficiently large n .

In this paper we increase the constant c_1 in the upper bound, proving that

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THEOREM 1. If $f(n)$ is the maximum of $B(G) + B(\overline{G})$ over n -vertex graphs, then

$$2n - \left\lceil (4 + 2\sqrt{2})\log_2 n \right\rceil \leq f(n) \leq 2n - 4\log_2 n + o(\log n).$$

2. RELATED EXTREMAL GRAPH PROBLEMS

The bandwidth problem can be expressed in terms of other classical extremal graph problems involving the occurrence of fixed subgraphs. We use $V(G)$ and $E(G)$ for the vertex set and edge set of a graph G . We use $[n]$ to denote the set of the first n positive integers and P_n to denote the graph that is an n -vertex path.

The *halfgraph* H_r is the graph with $2r$ vertices defined by $V(H_r) = [2r]$ and $E(H_r) = \{ij: j - i \geq r\}$. When we let $a_i = i$ for $1 \leq i \leq r$ and $b_j = r + j$ for $1 \leq j \leq r$, we obtain the more common representation $E(H_r) = \{a_i b_j: i \leq j\}$, which shows that H_r is bipartite.

The first definition of H_r leads to bandwidth via the observation that $\overline{H}_r = P_{2r}^{r-1}$, where P_{2r}^k has vertex set $[2r]$ and edge set $\{ij: 1 \leq j - i \leq k\}$ (this is the k th power of P_{2r}). The bandwidth of P_n^k is k . In general, the bandwidth of an n -vertex graph is at most k if and only if the graph is contained in P_n^k , since the set of edges permitted in an optimal labeling forms P_n^k . For $n \geq 2r \geq 2$, this observation becomes

$$B(G) \leq n - r - 1 \text{ if and only if } H_r \subset \overline{G}. \quad (2.1)$$

Since the appearance of H_r requires $n \geq 2r$, one direction needs no restriction on n .

Thus $B(G)$ is large if and only if \overline{G} contains no large halfgraph, and $B(\overline{G})$ is large if and only if G contains no large halfgraph. Studying the maximum of $B(G) + B(\overline{G})$ amounts to studying what combinations of halfgraphs must appear in G and \overline{G} ; this is a problem of Ramsey graph theory.

Given graphs A, B , the *Ramsey number* $R(A, B)$ is the smallest integer n such that every red/blue-coloring of the edges of K_n yields a copy of A in red or a copy of B in blue. When $n < R(A, B)$, the clique K_n can be decomposed into a subgraph avoiding A and a subgraph avoiding B . When A and B are cliques, the numbers $R(k, l) = R(K_k, K_l)$ are the classical Ramsey numbers. The general definitions and results we use from Ramsey Theory appear in [14].

PROPOSITION 2. If $R(H_a, H_b) > n$ with $n \geq \max\{2a, 2b\}$, then $f(n) \geq 2n - a - b$.

If $f(n) \geq 2n - k$, then there exist a, b with sum k such that $R(H_a, H_b) > n$.

Proof: If $R(H_a, H_b) > n$, then there is an n -vertex graph G such that $H_a \not\subseteq \overline{G}$ and $H_b \not\subseteq G$. When $n \geq \max\{2a, 2b\}$, (2.1) and the latter statement yield both $B(G) \geq n - a$ and $B(\overline{G}) \geq n - b$. Thus $f(n) \geq 2n - a - b$.

If $f(n) \geq 2n - k$, then there exists an n -vertex graph G such that $B(G) + B(\overline{G}) \geq 2n - k$. This requires the existence of a, b with sum k such that $B(G) \geq n - a$ and $B(\overline{G}) \geq n - b$. By (2.1), this requires both $H_a \not\subseteq \overline{G}$ and $H_b \not\subseteq G$, which yields $R(H_a, H_b) > n$. ■

For completeness, we sketch the proof of the lower bound on $f(n)$. We have noted that if $B(G) \geq n - r$ almost always, then $f(n) \geq 2n - 2r$. We have $B(G) \geq n - r$ if

and only if $H_r \not\subseteq \overline{G}$. Since H_r has $2r$ vertices and $r(r+1)/2$ edges, the standard Erdős-Rényi [4] random graph model with edge probability $1/2$ yields $P(H_r \subseteq \overline{G}) \leq n^{2r} 2^{-r^2/2}$ (see [3, 18]). When $r = \lceil 4\log_2 n \rceil$, the probability is less than $1/2$, and the bound $f(n) \geq 2n - \lceil 4\log_2 n \rceil$ follows.

Considering the densest subgraph of H_r yields a better bound. Let $H_{r,m}$ be the subgraph obtained by discarding the $2m$ vertices of least degree (m from each partite set). Presence of H_r requires presence of $H_{r,m}$. Since $H_{r,m}$ has $2r - 2m$ vertices and $r(r+1)/2 - m(m+1)$ edges, in the random n -vertex graph G we have

$$P(H_r \subseteq \overline{G}) \leq P(H_{r,m} \subseteq \overline{G}) \leq n^{2r-2m} 2^{-(r^2-2m^2)/2}.$$

The densest subgraph and best bound are obtained by setting $m = (1 - \sqrt{2}/2)r$. When $r = \lceil (2 + \sqrt{2})\log_2 n \rceil$, the resulting bound on $P(H_r \subseteq \overline{G})$ is less than $1/2$, which yields the lower bound in Theorem 1. Using the second moment method, Kuang and McDiarmid [17] obtained the precise threshold for the appearance of H_r , thus showing that $B(G) = (2 + \sqrt{2} + o(1))\log_2 n$ almost always.

In terms of Ramsey numbers, the bound on $P(H_r \subseteq \overline{G})$ yields the following:

THEOREM 3. $R(H_r, H_r) > 2^{(r+1)/(2+\sqrt{2})}$. ■

Proposition 2 implies that $f(n) = 2n - \min\{a + b: R(H_a, H_b) > n\}$ if $n \geq \max\{2a, 2b\}$ for a pair (a, b) where the minimum occurs. When we set $r = \lceil (2 + \sqrt{2})\log_2 n \rceil - 1$, Theorem 3 yields $R(H_r, H_r) > n$. When $n \geq 34$, we have $n \geq 2 \lceil (2 + \sqrt{2})\log_2 n \rceil - 2$, and then Proposition 2 implies that $f(n) \geq 2n - 2 \lceil (2 + \sqrt{2})\log_2 n \rceil + 2$ when $n \geq 34$. With Theorem 3, we also have

COROLLARY 4. For $n \geq 34$, $f(n) = 2n - \min\{a + b: R(H_a, H_b) > n\}$. ■

We henceforth assume that $n \geq 34$ (this threshold can be reduced by improving the lower bounds on Ramsey numbers for small halfgraphs).

Upper bounds on $R(H_a, H_b)$ that depend only on $a + b$ yield upper bounds on $f(n)$. An easy bound comes from the classical Erdős-Szekeres (see [14]) upper bound on Ramsey numbers: $R(p, q) \leq \binom{p+q-2}{p-1} < 2^{p+q}$. This yields

$$R(H_a, H_b) \leq R(2a, 2b) < 4^{a+b}. \quad (2.2)$$

By Proposition 2 and (2.2), we have $f(n) \leq 2n - \frac{1}{2}\log_2 n$. We want to increase the coefficient on $\log_2 n$ to 4. To this end, we define the function g by

$$g(k) = \max_{a+b \leq k} R(H_a, H_b). \quad (2.3)$$

Corollary 4 tells us that $g(k) \leq n$ yields $f(n) < 2n - k$.

Let $\text{ex}(n, F)$ denote the maximum number of edges in an F -free graph with n vertices. This is often called the *Turán number* of F . Kővári, T. Sós and Turán [16] showed that

$$\text{ex}(n, K_{k,k}) \leq \frac{1}{2}(k-1)^{1/k} n^{2-1/k} + \frac{1}{2}(k-1)n. \quad (2.4)$$

Let G be an n -vertex graph. If $\text{ex}(n, K_{a,a}) + \text{ex}(n, K_{b,b}) < \binom{n}{2}$, then G contains $K_{a,a}$ or \overline{G} contains $K_{b,b}$. Since $H_r \subset K_{r,r}$, this yields $R(H_a, H_b) \leq n$. A careful examination of (2.4) shows that $k = 2\log_2 n - O(\log_2 \log_2 n)$ is small enough to yield $g(k) \leq n$, and thus $f(n) < 2n - (2 - o(1))\log_2 n$. This technique of using the Turán number of a bipartite graph to prove an upper bound on its Ramsey number is now standard in extremal graph theory (see [10], for example).

To further improve this upper bound, we need a tighter bound on the Turán number of H_r . Observe that H_r is contained not only in $K_{r,r}$ but even in the subgraph obtained by removing $K_{\lfloor r/2 \rfloor, \lfloor r/2 \rfloor}$ from $K_{r,r}$. Due to its similarity to the halfgraph, we use the notation $H'(r, l)$ to denote the subgraph of the biclique $K_{r,r}$ obtained by deleting the edges of the biclique $K_{l,l}$. In the next section, we obtain an upper bound on $\text{ex}(n, H'(r, l))$ implying that $g(k) \leq n$ for k as large as about $4\log_2 n$. This yields the desired upper bound $f(n) < 2n - 4\log_2 n + o(\log_2 n)$.

3. TURÁN NUMBERS AND THE HALFGRAPH

Before proving our upper bound on $\text{ex}(n, H'(r, l))$ in Theorem 6, we compare it with earlier results.

For every bipartite graph F that is not a forest, there is a positive constant $c(F)$ such that $\Omega(n^{1+c}) \leq \text{ex}(n, F) \leq O(n^{2-c})$; this was observed by Erdős [unpublished] and appears in [16]. For a given F , the first problem in studying $\text{ex}(n, F)$ is thus to find the right exponent (if such exists). It is conjectured ([7,9]) that $\text{ex}(n, K_{k,k}) = \Theta(n^{2-1/k})$. This was proved for $K_{2,2}$ in Erdős-Rényi-Sós [5] and (simultaneously and independently) in Brown [2]. For $K_{3,3}$ it appears in Brown [2]. For $K_{k,l}$ with $k > l!$, results appear in Kollár-Rónyai-Szabó [15], later improved for $k > (l-1)!$ in Alon-Rónyai-Szabó [1].

Erdős [6] also proved that when $r > l \geq 1$, there exists a constant $c_{r,l}$ such that $\text{ex}(n, H'(r, l)) < c_{r,l} n^{2-1/(r-l)}$. His proof is somewhat complicated and does not give a sufficiently good constant in the range where we need (when both r and l are about $\log_2 n$).

Another upper bound for $\text{ex}(n, H'(r, l))$ follows from the method of Erdős and Simonovits [9]. They proved that $\text{ex}(n, Q) \leq O(n^{8/5})$, where Q is the 8-vertex 3-dimensional cube. Similarly, the correct order of growth for $\text{ex}(n, H'(r, l))$ follows from the main result in Füredi [13]. However, in all of these articles the authors concentrated on large values of n compared to k . In the range we need, these results seem not to imply our bound.

In the proof, we extend $\binom{x}{t}$ to nonnegative real x for each nonnegative integer t . When $t = 0$, we take $\binom{x}{t} = 1$ for all real $x \geq 0$. When $t \geq 1$, we take $\binom{x}{t} = 0$ for $0 \leq x < t - 1$, and for $x \geq t - 1$ we view $\binom{x}{t}$ as a real polynomial $x(x-1)\dots(x-t+1)/t!$ of degree t in x . The resulting functions are convex. Thus the mean of values of this function at several points is at least the value at the mean argument. In particular,

$$\sum_{i=1}^m \binom{x_i}{t} \geq m \binom{\sum x_i / m}{t}. \quad (3.1)$$

We will also use the following simple lemma, which was proved and applied in [12] to a related problem.

LEMMA 5 ([12]). If $v, t \geq 1$ are integers and $c, x_0, x_1, \dots, x_t \geq 0$ are real numbers, then

$$\sum_{1 \leq i \leq v} \binom{x_i}{t} \leq c \binom{x_0}{t} \quad \text{implies} \quad \sum_{1 \leq i \leq v} x_i \leq x_0 c^{1/t} v^{1-1/t} + (t-1)v. \quad \blacksquare$$

THEOREM 6. $\text{ex}(n, H'(r, l)) \leq \frac{1}{2}(r+l-1)^{1/(r-l)} n^{2-1/(r-l)} + \frac{1}{2}(r-l-1)n$.

Proof: Let G be an n -vertex graph not containing $H'(r, l)$; we bound $e = |E(G)|$. Let $d(x)$ denote the degree of a vertex x , and for $A \subset V(G)$ let $d(A)$ denote the number of common neighbors of A .

Let $t = r - l$, and let X be the number of copies of $K(t, t)$ in G . We form such a subgraph by choosing a t -set A and choosing t of its common neighbors. Each copy arises twice. Thus $X = \frac{1}{2} \sum_{|A|=t} \binom{d(A)}{t}$.

We first find a lower bound on X . By (3.1),

$$\frac{1}{2} \sum_{|A|=t} \binom{d(A)}{t} \geq \frac{1}{2} \binom{n}{t} \left(\sum \frac{d(A)}{t} \binom{n}{t} \right).$$

Since $d(A)$ counts the stars with leaf set A , the total $\sum d(A)$ is the number of stars with t edges in G . These can alternatively be counted by choosing t neighbors for each choice of the central vertex. Applying (3.1) to the resulting sum yields

$$\sum d(A) = \sum_{x \in V(G)} \binom{d(x)}{t} \geq n \binom{\sum d(x)/n}{t}.$$

Together, these computations yield

$$X \geq \frac{1}{2} \binom{n}{t} \left(n \binom{\sum d(x)/n}{t} \right). \quad (3.2)$$

We next find an upper bound on X . Let $\mathcal{A} = \{A \in \binom{V(G)}{t} : d(A) < r\}$. Consider copies of $K_{t,t}$ in which at least one of the partite sets belongs to \mathcal{A} . The number of these is at most $|\mathcal{A}| \binom{r-1}{t}$.

Now consider a copy of $K_{t,t}$ with partite sets A, B such that $A, B \notin \mathcal{A}$. Our main observation is that the prohibition of $H'(r, l)$ yields $d(A) \leq 2r - t - 1$. If $d(A) \geq r + r - t = 2l + t$, then A has at least $2l$ common neighbors outside B , and after avoiding (at most) l of the r common neighbors of B there remain at least l common neighbors of A to complete a copy of $H'(r, l)$. The same argument applies to $d(B)$. Thus each such copy of $K_{t,t}$ is generated twice when we arbitrarily choose t common neighbors of a t -set outside \mathcal{A} . Thus the number of copies of $K_{t,t}$ with neither partite set in \mathcal{A} is bounded by $\frac{1}{2} \left(\binom{n}{t} - |\mathcal{A}| \right) \binom{2r-t-1}{t}$.

Together, the two upper bounds yield

$$X \leq \binom{n}{t} \max \left\{ \binom{r-1}{t}, \frac{1}{2} \binom{2r-t-1}{t} \right\}. \quad (3.3)$$

Since the ratio of $\frac{1}{2} \binom{2r-t-1}{t}$ to $\binom{r-1}{t}$ is exactly $\binom{r-1+(r-t)}{t-1} / \binom{r-1}{t-1}$, always the second term in the maximization is larger.

Comparing (3.2) and (3.3) yields

$$n \binom{2e/n}{t} / \binom{n}{t} \leq 2r - t - 1.$$

Let $v = x_0 = n$, let $x_1 = \dots = x_v = 2e/n$, and let $c = 2r - t - 1$. Lemma 5 now yields

$$2e \leq (2r - t - 1)^{1/t} n^{2-1/t} + (t-1)n. \quad \blacksquare$$

4. PROOF OF THE UPPER BOUND

The pair (r, r) is one instance of (a, b) such that $a + b = 2r$, and thus $R(H_r, H_r) \leq g(2r)$, where g is as defined in (2.3). Theorem 6 enables us to prove an upper bound on $g(2r)$ and thus an upper bound on $R(H_r, H_r)$ that differs from the lower bound in Theorem 3 by a factor of 2 in the exponent.

COROLLARY 7. If r is sufficiently large, then $R(H_r, H_r) \leq g(2r) \leq (3r + 1)2^{r/2}$.

Proof: By the definition of $g(2r)$, there exist a, b with $a + b = 2r$ such that $g(2r) = R(H_a, H_b)$. Let G be an n -vertex graph such that $H_a \not\subseteq G$ and $H_b \not\subseteq \overline{G}$. It suffices to show that $n < (3r + 1)2^{r/2}$, when r is sufficiently large.

Because $H_a \not\subseteq G$ and $H_a \subset H'(a, \lfloor a/2 \rfloor)$, Theorem 6 yields

$$e(G) \leq \text{ex}(n, H_a) \leq \text{ex}(n, H'(a, \lfloor a/2 \rfloor)) \leq \frac{n^2}{2} \left(\frac{a + \lfloor \frac{a}{2} \rfloor - 1}{n} \right)^{1/\lceil \frac{a}{2} \rceil} + \frac{n}{2} (\lceil \frac{a}{2} \rceil - 1).$$

The right side yields the bound

$$e(G) < \frac{n^2}{2} \left(\frac{3r}{n} \right)^{2/a} + \frac{na}{4}. \quad (4.1)$$

Summing (4.1) and its analogue for \overline{G} yields

$$\binom{n}{2} = e(G) + e(\overline{G}) \leq \frac{n^2}{2} \left(\frac{3r}{n} \right)^{2/a} + \frac{na}{4} + \frac{n^2}{2} \left(\frac{3r}{n} \right)^{2/b} + \frac{nb}{4}.$$

This simplifies to

$$1 - \frac{r+1}{n} < c^{2/a} + c^{2/b}, \quad (4.2)$$

where $c = 3r/n$.

We may assume that $r \leq 2 \log_2(n/3r)$, since otherwise the desired inequality holds. Since $c < 1$, differentiating the function f defined by $f(x) = c^{2/x}$ shows that f is concave for $x > -\ln c$. If $\min\{a, b\} > \ln(n/3r)$, then concavity implies that the upper bound

in (4.2) is at most $2c^{4/(a+b)}$. We obtain $1 - \frac{r+1}{n} < 2\left(\frac{3r}{n}\right)^{2/r}$, which rearranges to yield $n < 3r2^{r/2}\left(\frac{n}{n-r-1}\right)^{r/2} < (3r+1)2^{r/2}$.

It remains only to eliminate the case $a = \min\{a, b\} < \ln(n/3r)$. We obtain a contradiction to (4.2) by showing that the right side is too small. Since $c^{2/x}$ is a monotone increasing function, we obtain an upper bound by using $a \leq \ln(n/3r)$ and $b < 2r$. We also use our restriction to $r \leq 2\log_2(n/3r)$. These yield

$$c^{2/b} < c^{2/2r} = e^{-(1/r)\ln(n/3r)} = e^{-(1/r)\log_2(n/3r)\ln 2} \leq e^{-(1/2)\ln 2} = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}} < .7072$$

$$c^{2/a} < c^{2/\ln(n/3r)} = e^{-2\ln(n/3r)/\ln(n/3r)} = e^{-2} < .1354$$

When $n \geq (3r+1)2^{r/2}$, this contradicts (4.2) for $r \geq 3$, which eliminates this case and completes the proof. \blacksquare

As observed in Section 2, $g(k) \leq n$ yields $f(n) < 2n - k$. Thus Corollary 7 yields the desired upper bound $f(n) < 2n - 4\log_2 n + O(\log_2 \log_2 n)$.

5. CONCLUSION AND OPEN PROBLEMS

Our upper and lower bounds for $R(H_r, H_r)$ are much closer together than the best known upper and lower bounds for $R(K_r, K_r)$. One might expect that tighter bounds on $R(H_r, H_r)$ are hopeless without improving the bounds for $R(K_r, K_r)$. It would be interesting to find a direct relationship between these two functions.

Our method can be generalized for decompositions of K_n into k edge-disjoint n -vertex graphs, with k fixed. Over such decompositions, $\max(B(G_1) + B(G_2) + \dots + B(G_k)) = kn - \Theta(\log n)$. It would be interesting to narrow the gap in the coefficient of $\log n$.

If we can allow the number of pieces in the decomposition to grow arbitrarily with n , then the maximum sum is $\binom{n}{2}$, achieved by decomposition into $\binom{n}{2}$ individual edges. The maximum can reach $O(n^2)$ when the number of pieces is linear, which is not surprising given the result for fixed k . For example, when we decompose K_n into stars of sizes 1 through $n-1$, the sum of the bandwidths is $\lceil \frac{n}{2} \rceil \lceil \frac{n+1}{2} \rceil$. How small can k be in terms of n to achieve various growth rates for the bandwidth sum?

When $l = r-1$, the graph $H'(r, l)$ is a double star with two adjacent vertices of degree r . It is easy to see that $\text{ex}(n, H'(r, r-1)) = (r-1)(n-r+1)$ (for $r > r_0$), so in this case the bound in Theorem 6 is asymptotically optimal within a factor of 2. For $r-l=2$, Theorem 6 gives

$$\text{ex}(n, H'(r, r-2)) \leq \frac{1}{2}(2r-3)^{1/2}n^{3/2} + O(n).$$

The best lower bound from [13] gives

$$\text{ex}(n, H'(r, r-2)) \geq \text{ex}(n, K_{2,r}) = (1+o(1))\frac{1}{2}(r-1)^{1/2}n^{3/2},$$

so in this case Theorem 6 is asymptotically optimal within a factor of $\sqrt{2}$. It would be interesting to find the correct asymptotic behavior for each $r-l$.

It is easy to see that $\text{ex}(n, H_3) = \text{ex}(n, K_{2,2}) + O(1)$; we expect that equality holds for sufficiently large n . For larger fixed r , we conjecture that $\text{ex}(n, H_r) \sim \text{ex}(n, K_{\lceil r/2 \rceil, \lceil r/2 \rceil})$. In other words, is the Turán number of H_r about the same as the Turán number of its largest complete bipartite subgraph?

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