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CHVÁTAL'S CONDITION CANNOT HOLD FOR BOTH A GRAPH AND ITS COMPLEMENT

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Abstract

Chvátal's Condition is a sufficient condition for a spanning cycle in an *n*-vertex graph. The condition is that when the vertex degrees are d_1, \ldots, d_n in nondecreasing order, i < n/2 implies that $d_i > i$ or $d_{n-i} \ge n-i$. We prove that this condition cannot hold in both a graph and its complement, and we raise the problem of finding its asymptotic probability in the random graph with edge probability 1/2.

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This note is motivated by a discussion in the book of Palmer [7, p. 81–85]. A theorem is strong if the conclusion is satisfied only when the hypothesis is satisfied, because then the hypotheses cannot be weakened. Palmer defines the *strength* of a theorem to be the probability that its hypotheses hold divided by the probability that its conclusion holds.

We use the standard random graph model for generating *n*-vertex simple graphs: the vertex set is $\{1, \ldots, n\}$, and edge *ij* occurs with probability *p*, independently of other edges. Let $\mathbb{G}_{n,p}$ denote the random variable for the resulting graph. In general, " $\mathbb{G}_{n,p}$ almost always satisfies *Q*" means that the probability of $\mathbb{G}_{n,p}$ satisfying *Q* tends to 1 as $n \to \infty$. We restrict our attention to constant *p*.

A graph is Hamiltonian if it has a spanning cycle. When p is constant, $\mathbb{G}_{n,p}$ is almost always Hamiltonian. Dirac [3] proved that an *n*-vertex graph is Hamiltonian when every vertex degree is at least n/2. When p > 1/2, this condition holds almost always; when $p \leq 1/2$, it fails almost always. Hence the asymptotic strength of Dirac's Theorem is 0 when $p \leq 1/2$. Ore [6] proved the stronger theorem that an *n*-vertex graph is Hamiltonian when the degrees of any two nonadjacent vertices sum to at least *n*. The asymptotic strength of Ore's Theorem also is 0 when $p \leq 1/2$.

The strongest possible result using the degree list alone is that of Chvátal [2]. Chvátal proved that if the vertex degrees of an *n*-vertex graph are d_1, \ldots, d_n in nondecreasing order, and for i < n/2 it holds that $d_i > i$ or $d_{n-i} \ge n-i$, then the graph is Hamiltonian. (If the condition just barely fails anywhere, then the graph can fail to be Hamiltonian.)

Palmer [7, p. 85] states that Chvátal's Condition almost always fails when p < 1/2. It is implied by Dirac's Condition and hence almost always holds when p > 1/2.

Question. What is the asymptotic probability of Chvátal's Condition for the random graph with edge probability 1/2?

There are other sufficient conditions for Hamiltonian cycles that almost always hold when p = 1/2 and hence yield stronger theorems. Given a graph G with n vertices, let C(G) be the graph obtained by adding to G all edges joining two nonadjacent vertices in G whose degrees sum to at least n. Ore's Condition is that $C(G) = K_n$. Let $C^*(G)$ be the result of repeatedly applying the operator C until no further change occurs; Chvátal's Condition implies that $C^*(G) = K_n$. Bondy and Chvátal [1] observed that G is Hamiltonian if and only if $C^*(G)$ is Hamiltonian. The value p = 1/2 is critical here, as shown by Gimbel, Kurtz, Lesniak, Scheinerman, and Wierman [4]. If p < 1/2, then almost always $C(\mathbb{G}_{n,p}) = \mathbb{G}_{n,p}$. If p > 1/2, then almost always $C(\mathbb{G}_{n,p}) = K_n$. If p = 1/2, then almost always $C(C(C(\mathbb{G}_{n,p})))$ is complete but $C(C(\mathbb{G}_{n,p}))$ is not. Hence the theorem that $C^*(G) = K_n$ suffices for Hamiltonicity of *n*-vertex graphs has asymptotic strength 1 when $p \ge 1/2$.

By proving that Chvátal's Condition cannot hold for both a graph and its complement, we prove that the condition always has probability less than 1/2 (strict inequality, because it fails for both G and \overline{G} when each has a vertex of degree at most 1). Since the degree list is almost always constant for a while near the middle, the asymptotic probability may rest on the probability that Chvátal's Condition fails at the middle values. When n is even, by complementation $d_{n/2-1} \ge n/2$ with probability nearly 1/2. When n is odd, however, Brendan McKay observes that the asymptotic probability of $d_{(n-1)/2} = d_{(n+1)/2} = d_{(n+3)/2} = (n-1)/2$ (for both G and \overline{G}) is a nontrivial constant (bounded away from 1) that can be determined by the method in [5]; this bounds the asymptotic probability of Chvátal's Condition below 1/2 when n is odd.

Theorem 1. If a graph G with at least three vertices satisfies Chvátal's Condition, then \overline{G} does not.

Proof. Let n be the order of G. Let d_1, \ldots, d_n be the vertex degrees, indexed so that $d_1 \leq \cdots \leq d_n$. Let d'_1, \ldots, d'_n be the vertex degrees of \overline{G} , also indexed in nondecreasing order, so that $d'_{n+1-i} = n - 1 - d_i$. Chvátal's Condition for G states that if i < n/2, then $d_i > i$ or $d_{n-i} \geq n - i$.

The claim is easy to show for odd n, so we show this first in order to simplify notation for the other case. Consider i = (n-1)/2, so n-i = (n+1)/2. If $d_{(n-1)/2} > (n-1)/2$, then $d_{(n+1)/2} \ge (n+1)/2$, so we may assume the latter condition. This in turn implies $d'_{(n+1)/2} \le (n-3)/2$, which also implies $d'_{(n-1)/2} \le (n-3)/2$. Hence \overline{G} fails Chvátal's Condition at i = (n-1)/2.

Now consider n even. Let $j = \max\{i: d_i > i \text{ and } i < n/2\}$. Such an index exists, since $d_1 \leq 1$ implies $d_n \geq d_{n-1} \geq n-1$ by Chvátal's Condition for G, but this contradicts $d_1 \leq 1$.

If j = n/2 - 1, then $d_{n/2-1} \ge n/2$, so complementation yields $d'_{n/2+2} \le n/2 - 1$. Hence also $d'_{n/2+1} \le n/2 - 1$ and $d'_{n/2-1} \le n/2 - 1$, so Chvátal's Condition fails.

If j < n/2-1, then $d_{j+1} \le j+1$. By Chvátal's Condition, $d_{n-1-j} \ge n-1-j$. Now complementation yields $d'_{j+2} \le j$, and hence also $d'_j \le j$. If Chvátal's Condition holds for \overline{G} , then $d'_{n-j} \ge n-j$. Now complementation yields $d_{j+1} \le j-1$. This implies $d_j < j$, which contradicts the choice of j.

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