Incidences between points and generalized spheres over finite fields and related problems

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Abstract

Let \( \mathbb{F}_q \) be a finite field of \( q \) elements where \( q \) is a large odd prime power and

\[
Q = a_1 x_1^{c_1} + \cdots + a_d x_d^{c_d} \in \mathbb{F}_q[x_1, \ldots, x_d],
\]

where \( 2 \leq c_i \leq N, \gcd(c_i, q) = 1 \), and \( a_i \in \mathbb{F}_q \) for all \( 1 \leq i \leq d \). A \( Q \)-sphere is a set of the form \( \{ x \in \mathbb{F}_q^d \mid Q(x - b) = r \} \), where \( b \in \mathbb{F}_q^d, r \in \mathbb{F}_q \). We prove bounds on the number of incidences between a point set \( P \) and a \( Q \)-sphere set \( S \), denoted by \( I(P, S) \), as the following.

\[
\left| I(P, S) - \frac{|P||S|}{q} \right| \leq \sqrt{q} \sqrt{|P||S|}.
\]

We prove this estimate by studying the spectra of directed graphs. We also give a version of this estimate over finite rings \( \mathbb{Z}_q \) where \( q \) is an odd integer. As a consequence of the above bounds, we give an estimate for the pinned distance problem. In Sections 4 and 5, we prove a bound on the number of incidences between a random point set and a random \( Q \)-sphere set in \( \mathbb{F}_q^d \). We also study the finite field analogues of some combinatorial geometry problems, namely, the number of generalized isosceles triangles, and the existence of a large subset without repeated generalized distances.

1 Introduction

Let \( \mathbb{F}_q \) be a finite field of \( q \) elements where \( q \) is a large odd prime power. Let \( P \) be a set of points, \( L \) a set of lines over \( \mathbb{F}_q^d \), and \( I(P, L) \) the number of incidences between \( P \) and \( L \). Bourgain, Katz, and Tao [5] proved that for any \( 0 < \alpha < 2 \) and \( |P|, |L| \leq N = q^\alpha \),

\( I(P, L) \lesssim N^{3/2-\epsilon} \), where \( \epsilon = \epsilon(\alpha) \). By employing the Erdős-Rényi graph (see 2.1 for the definition), the third author [20] improved this bound in the case \( 1 \leq \alpha \leq 2 \), and gave the following estimate.

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Theorem 1.1. Let $\mathcal{P}$ be a set of points and $\mathcal{L}$ a set of lines in $\mathbb{F}_q^2$. Then we have

$$I(\mathcal{P}, \mathcal{L}) \leq \frac{|\mathcal{P}||\mathcal{L}|}{q} + q^{1/2}\sqrt{|\mathcal{P}||\mathcal{L}|}$$

The above result was also proved for points and hyperplanes, and for points and $k$-subspaces (see [4, 20] for more details).

Let $Q = a_1 x_1^{c_1} + \cdots + a_d x_d^{c_d} \in \mathbb{F}_q[x_1, \ldots, x_d]$, where $2 \leq c_i \leq N$, for some constant $N > 0$, $\gcd(c_i, q) = 1$, and $a_i \in \mathbb{F}_q$ for all $1 \leq i \leq d$. We define the generalized sphere, or $Q$-sphere, centered at $b = (b_1, \ldots, b_d)$ of radius $r \in \mathbb{F}_q$ to be the set $\{ x \in \mathbb{F}_d \mid Q(x-b) = r \}$.

The main purpose of this paper is to give a similar bound on the number of incidences between points and generalized spheres by employing the spectral graph method. With the same method, we also consider some related problems in Sections 4 and 5. Our main result is the following.

Theorem 1.2. Let $\mathcal{P}$ be a set of points and $\mathcal{S}$ a set of $Q$-spheres with arbitrary radii in $\mathbb{F}_q^d$. Then the number of incidences between points and spheres satisfies

$$\left| I(\mathcal{P}, \mathcal{S}) - \frac{|\mathcal{P}||\mathcal{S}|}{q} \right| \leq q^{d/2}\sqrt{|\mathcal{P}||\mathcal{S}|}. \quad (1.1)$$

In the case $Q(x) = \sum_{i=1}^{d} x_i^2$, Cilleruelo et al. [7] have independently proved (1.1). In this case, we also obtain a similar estimate over finite rings (see [19] for the Szemerédi-Trotter theorem over finite rings).

Theorem 1.3. Let $\mathcal{P}$ be a set of points and $\mathcal{S}$ a set of spheres with arbitrary radii in $\mathbb{Z}_q^d$, $q$ is an odd integer. Then the number of incidences between points and spheres satisfies

$$\left| I(\mathcal{P}, \mathcal{S}) - \frac{|\mathcal{P}||\mathcal{S}|}{q} \right| \leq \sqrt{2\tau(q)} \frac{q^d}{\gamma(q)^{d/2}} \sqrt{|\mathcal{P}||\mathcal{S}|},$$

where $\gamma(q)$ is the smallest prime divisor of $q$, and $\tau(q)$ the number of divisors of $q$.

Generalized pinned distances: Let $P(x) \in \mathbb{F}_q[x_1, \ldots, x_d]$ be a polynomial and $\mathcal{E} \subset \mathbb{F}_q^d$. Given $x \in \mathbb{F}_q^d$, we denote the pinned $P$-distance set determined by $\mathcal{E}$ and $x$ by

$$\Delta_P(\mathcal{E}, x) = \{ P(y-x) \in \mathbb{F}_q \mid y \in \mathcal{E} \}.$$
form $\sum_{j=1}^{d} a_j x_j^s$, the conditions of Koh and Shen are satisfied. However, if we consider the polynomial $Q(x) = \sum_{j=1}^{d} a_j x_j^s$, where the exponents $c_j$ are distinct, then we have not found any reference which shows that those conditions are satisfied.

As a consequence of Theorem 1.2, the following result can be derived in a similar way to how [7] derived their result from their bound on the number of incidences between points and spheres. It generalizes the pinned distance results of [10].

**Theorem 1.4.** Let $E \subset F_q^d$ with $|E| > \sqrt{(1 - c^2)/c^4} \cdot q^{(d+1)/2}$ for some $0 < c < 1$. Then the number of points $p \in E$ satisfying $|\Delta_Q(E, p)| > (1 - c)q$ is at least $(1 - c)|E|$. 

**Incidences between a random point set and a random $Q$-sphere set:** It follows from Theorem 1.2 that if $P$ is a set of points and $S$ is a set of $Q$-spheres such that $|P||S| > q^{d+2}$, then there exists at least one incidence pair $(p, s) \in P \times S$ with $p \in s$. We improve the bound $q^{d+2}$ in the sense that for any $t \in (0, 1)$ it suffices to take $t \geq C_\alpha q$ randomly chosen points and spheres over $F_q^d$ to guarantee that the probability of no incidences is exponentially small, namely $\alpha^t$, when $q$ is large enough. We remark that the ideas in this part are similar to the case between points and lines in [23]. More precisely, our result is the following.

**Theorem 1.5.** For any $\alpha > 0$, there exists an integer $q_0 = q_0(\alpha)$ and a number $C_\alpha > 0$ with the following property. When a point set $P$ and a $Q$-sphere set $S$ where $|P| = |S| = t \geq C_\alpha q$ are chosen randomly in $F_q^d$, the probability of $\{(p, s) \in P \times S : p \in s\} = \emptyset$ is at most $\alpha^t$, provided that $q \geq q_0$.

**Generalized isosceles triangles:** Given a set $E$ of $n$ points in $\mathbb{R}^2$, let $h(E)$ be the number of isosceles triangles determined by $E$. Define $h(n) = \min_{|E| = n} h(E)$. Pach and Tardos [18] proved that $h(n) = O(n^{2.136})$. In the present paper, we consider the finite field version of this problem. Let us give some notation: A $Q$-isosceles triangle at a vertex $x$ is a triple of distinct elements $(x, y, z) \in F_q^d \times F_q^d \times F_q^d$ such that $Q(x - y) = Q(x - z)$. We will show that for any subset $E$ in $F_q^d$ such that its cardinality is large enough, the number of isosceles triangles determined by $E$ is $(1 + o(1))|E|^3/q$.

**Theorem 1.6.** Given a set of $n$ points $E$ in $F_q^d$, $d \geq 2$. If $|E| \gg q^{\frac{2(d+1)}{3}}$, then the number of isosceles triangles determined by $E$ is $(1 + o(1))|E|^3/q$.

Here and throughout, $X \gtrsim Y$ means that $X \geq CY$ for some constant $C$ and $X \gg Y$ means that $Y = o(X)$, where $X, Y$ are viewed as functions of the parameter $q$.

**Distinct distance subset:** Given a set $E$ of $n$ points in $\mathbb{R}^2$, let $g(E)$ be the maximal cardinality of a subset $U$ in $E$ such that no distance determined by $U$ occurs twice. Define $g(n) = \min_{|E| = n} g(E)$. Charalambides [9] proved that $n^{1/3}/(\log n) \lesssim g(n) \lesssim n^{1/2}/(\log n)^{1/4}$, where the upper bound is obtained from the Erdős distinct distances problem (see [8, 13] for more details, earlier results, and results in higher dimensions). In this paper, we study the finite field analogue of this problem.
Given a set of \( n \) points \( \mathcal{E} \subset \mathbb{F}_q^d \), a subset \( U \subset \mathcal{E} \) is called a *distinct Q-distance subset* if there are no four distinct points \( x, y, z, t \in U \) such that \( Q(x - y) = Q(z - t) \). Using the same method that Thiele used in \( \mathbb{R}^2 \) (see [1, p.191] for more details), we show that for any large enough set \( \mathcal{E} \) in \( \mathbb{F}_q^d \), there exists a distinct Q-distance subset of cardinality at least \( Cq^{1/3} \), for some constant \( C \). More precisely, we have the following estimate.

**Theorem 1.7.** Let \( \mathcal{E} \subset \mathbb{F}_q^d \), \( d \geq 2 \), \( |\mathcal{E}| \gg q^{2(d+1)/3} \). If \( U_Q \subset \mathcal{E} \) is a maximal distinct Q-distance subset of \( \mathcal{E} \), then \( q^{1/3} \lesssim \left|U_Q\right| \lesssim q^{1/2} \).

About the work of Cilleruelo, Iosevich, Lund, Roche-Newton, and Rudnev: After we finished a draft of this paper, we learned that Cilleruelo et al. [7] had independently obtained the same bound for the number of incidences between points and spheres in the case \( Q(x - y) = \sum_{i=1}^d (x_i - y_i)^2 \), using the elementary method introduced in [6].

## 2 Spectra of graphs and digraphs

### 2.1 Pseudo-random graphs

Let us recall some notions about \((n,d,\lambda)\)-graphs from Alon and Spencer in [3]. Given an undirected graph \( G \), let \( \lambda_1(G) \geq \lambda_2(G) \geq \ldots \geq \lambda_n(G) \) be the eigenvalues of its adjacency matrix. The quantity \( \lambda(G) = \max\{\lambda_2(G), -\lambda_n(G)\} \) is called the second eigenvalue of \( G \). A graph \( G = (V,E) \) is called an \((n,d,\lambda)\)-graph if it is \( d \)-regular, has \( n \) vertices, and the second eigenvalue of \( G \) is at most \( \lambda \). It is well known (see [3, Chapter 9] for more details) that if \( \lambda \) is much smaller than the degree \( d \), then \( G \) has certain random-like properties.

For two (not necessarily disjoint) subsets of vertices \( U, W \subset V \), let \( e(U,W) \) be the number of ordered pairs \((u,w)\) such that \( u \in U \), \( w \in W \), and \((u,w)\) is an edge of \( G \). For a vertex \( v \) of \( G \), let \( N(v) \) denote the set of vertices of \( G \) adjacent to \( v \) and let \( d(v) \) denote its degree. Similarly, for a subset \( U \) of the vertex set, let \( N_U(v) = N(v) \cap U \) and \( d_U(v) = |N_U(v)| \).

We first recall the following well-known lemma (see, for example, [3, Corollary 9.2.5]).

**Lemma 2.1.** Let \( G = (V,E) \) be an \((n,d,\lambda)\)-graph. For any two sets \( B,C \subset V \), we have

\[
\left| e(B,C) - \frac{|B||C|}{n} \right| \leq \lambda \sqrt{|B||C|}.
\]

Let \( PG(q,d) \) denote the projective space of dimension \( d-1 \) over the finite field \( \mathbb{F}_q \). Let \( \mathcal{E}R(\mathbb{F}_q^d) \) denote the graph with vertex set \( PG(q,d) \), and two vertices \( \mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y} \) are connected by an edge if \( \mathbf{x} \cdot \mathbf{y} = 0 \). In the case \( d = 2 \), this graph is called *Erdös-Rényi graph*. The third author used the spectrum of \( \mathcal{E}R(\mathbb{F}_q^d) \) and Lemma 2.1 to prove Theorem 1.1 (see [20] for more details).

In order to prove Theorem 1.3, we use the *sum-product graph* defined as the following. The vertex set of the sum-product graph \( \mathcal{SP}(\mathbb{Z}_q^{d+1}) \) is the set \( V(\mathcal{SP}(\mathbb{Z}_q^{d+1})) = \mathbb{Z}_q \times \mathbb{Z}_q \). Two vertices \( U = (a,b) \) and \( V = (c,d) \in V(\mathcal{SP}(\mathbb{Z}_q^{d+1})) \) are connected by an edge, \((U,V) \in E(\mathcal{SP}(\mathbb{Z}_q^{d+1}))\), if and only if \( a + c = b \cdot d \). Our construction is similar to that of
Solymosi in [16]. We have the following lemma about the spectrum of the sum-product graph $\mathcal{SP}(\mathbb{Z}_q^{d+1})$ (see [21, Lemma 4.1] for the proof).

**Lemma 2.2.** For any $d \geq 1$, the sum-product graph $\mathcal{SP}(\mathbb{Z}_q^{d+1})$ is a

$$
\left(q^{d+1}, q^d, \sqrt{2\tau(q) \frac{q^d}{\gamma(q)d/2}}\right) - \text{graph}.
$$

However, it seems difficult to use the spectrum of an undirected graph to analyze the number of incidences between points and $Q$-spheres, where $Q(x) \in \mathbb{F}_q[x_1, \ldots, x_d]$ is an arbitrary diagonal polynomial. In the next subsection, we will introduce the Cayley graph and some notions from Vu [25] to deal with this problem.

### 2.2 Pseudo-random digraphs

Let $G$ be a directed graph (digraph) on $n$ vertices where the in-degree and out-degree of each vertex are both $d$. The adjacency matrix $A_G$ is defined as follows: $a_{ij} = 1$ if there is a directed edge from $i$ to $j$, and zero otherwise. Let $\lambda_1(G), \ldots, \lambda_n(G)$ be the eigenvalues of $A_G$. These numbers are complex numbers, so we can not order them, but we have $|\lambda_i| \leq d$ for any $1 \leq i \leq n$. Define $\lambda_1(G) = d$, $\lambda(G) := \max_i |\lambda_i(G)| \neq d |\lambda_i(G)|$.

A digraph $G$ is called a $(n,d,\lambda)$-digraph if it has $n$ vertices, the in-degree and out-degree of each vertex is $d$, and $\lambda(G) \leq \lambda$.

Let $G$ be a $(n,d,\lambda)$-digraph. For any two (not necessarily disjoint) subsets $U, W \subset V$, let $e(U, W)$ be the number of ordered pairs $(u, w) \in U \times W$ such that $\overrightarrow{uw}$ is an edge of $G$.

Vu [25, Lemma 3.1] developed a directed version of the Lemma 2.1.

**Lemma 2.3.** Let $G = (V, E)$ be a $(n,d,\lambda)$-digraph. For any two sets $B, C \subset V$, we have

$$
|e(B, C) - \frac{d|B||C|}{n}| \leq \lambda \sqrt{|B||C|}.
$$

Let $H$ be a finite abelian group and $S$ a subset of $H$. The **Cayley graph** is the digraph $C_S(H) = (H, E)$, where the vertex set is $H$, and there is a directed edge from vertex $x$ to vertex $y$ if and only if $y - x \in S$. It is clear that every vertex of $C_S(H)$ has out-degree $|S|$. We define the graph $C_Q(\mathbb{F}_q^{d+1})$ to be the Cayley graph with $H = \mathbb{F}_q \times \mathbb{F}_q^d$ and $S = \{(x_0, x) \in \mathbb{F}_q \times \mathbb{F}_q^d \mid x_0 + Q(x) = 0\}$, i.e.

$$
E(C_Q(\mathbb{F}_q^{d+1})) = \{(x_0, x), (y_0, y) \in H \times H \mid x_0 - y_0 + Q(x - y) = 0\}.
$$

We have the following result on the spectrum of $C_Q(\mathbb{F}_q^{d+1})$. We reproduce the proof because this lemma is crucial to our main results.

**Lemma 2.4.** (See [24, Lemma 3.2].) For any odd prime power $q$, $d \geq 1$, then $C_Q(\mathbb{F}_q^{d+1})$ is a

$$
(q^{d+1}, q^d, q^{d/2}) - \text{digraph}.
$$
With the same arguments, we obtain the following lemma for the graph we use in the proof of Theorem 1.6.

**Lemma 2.5.** For any odd prime power \( q \), \( d \geq 1 \), let \( Q'(x_1, \ldots, x_{2d}) \) be a polynomial in \( \mathbb{F}_q[x_1, \ldots, x_{2d}] \) defined by \( Q' = Q(x_1, \ldots, x_d) - Q(x_{d+1}, \ldots, x_{2d}) \). Then \( C_{Q'}(\mathbb{F}_q^{d+1}) \) is a
\[
(q^{2d+1}, q^2, q^d) - \text{digraph.}
\]

**3 Proofs of Theorems 1.2 and 1.3**

**Proof of Theorem 1.2** We use the Cayley graph \( C_Q(\mathbb{F}_q^{d+1}) \) to prove Theorem 1.2. Let \( \mathcal{P} = \{(x_{i1}, \ldots, x_{id})\}_i \) be a set of \( n \) points in \( \mathbb{F}_q^d \), and \( S = \{(r_i, (y_{i1}, \ldots, y_{id}))\}_i \) a set of pairs of radii and centers representing \( Q \)-spheres in \( S \). Let \( U = \{(0, x_{i1}, \ldots, x_{id})\}_i \subset \mathbb{F}_q^{d+1} \) and \( W = \{(r_i, y_{i1}, \ldots, y_{id})\}_i \subset \mathbb{F}_q^{d+1} \). Then the number of incidences between points and \( Q \)-spheres is the number of edges between \( U \) and \( W \) in \( C_Q(\mathbb{F}_q^{d+1}) \). Using Lemma 2.3 and 2.4, Theorem 1.2 follows.

**Proof of Theorem 1.3** We use the sum-product graph \( \mathcal{S} \mathcal{P}(\mathbb{Z}_q^{d+1}) \) to prove Theorem 1.3. We identify each point \((b_1, \ldots, b_d)\) in \( \mathcal{P} \) with a vertex \((-b_1^2 - \cdots - b_d^2, b_1, \ldots, b_d) \in \mathbb{Z}_q^{d+1} \) of \( \mathcal{S} \mathcal{P}(\mathbb{Z}_q^{d+1}) \), and each sphere \((x_1 - a_1)^2 + \cdots + (x_d - a_d)^2 = r \) in \( S \) with a vertex \((r - a_1^2 - \cdots - a_d^2, -2a_1, \ldots, -2a_d) \in \mathbb{Z}_q^{d+1} \) of \( \mathcal{S} \mathcal{P}(\mathbb{Z}_q^{d+1}) \). Let \( U \subset \mathbb{Z}_q^{d+1} \) be the set of points corresponding to \( \mathcal{P} \), and \( W \subset \mathbb{Z}_q^{d+1} \) the set of points corresponding to \( S \). Then the number of incidences between points and spheres is the number of edges between \( U \) and \( W \) in the sum-product graph \( \mathcal{S} \mathcal{P}(\mathbb{Z}_q^{d+1}) \). By Lemma 2.1 and Lemma 2.2, Theorem 1.3 follows.

**Remark:** The authors have not found any reference for a version of Weil’s theorem over finite rings \( \mathbb{Z}_m \). Therefore, it seems hard to prove Theorem 1.2 for a more general polynomial \( Q(x) \) over finite rings using directed graphs. We note that Lemmas 2.4 and 2.5 also hold for the general case \( Q(x_1, \ldots, x_d) = \sum_{i=1}^d f_i(x_i) \), where \( \deg(f_i) \geq 2 \), \( \gcd(\deg(f_i), q) = 1 \) for all \( i \). Therefore, all of the results in this paper over finite fields also hold for these more.

**4 Generalized pinned distance problem**

**Proof of Theorem 1.4:** First we prove that
\[
\frac{1}{|\mathcal{E}|} \sum_{p \in \mathcal{E}} |\Delta_Q(\mathcal{E}, p)| > (1 - c^2)q.
\]

We identify each point \( p = (b_1, \ldots, b_d) \in \mathcal{E} \) with a point \((0, b_1, \ldots, b_d) \in \mathbb{F}_q^{d+1} \), and each pair \((p = (b_1, \ldots, b_d), t) \) where \( t \in \Delta_Q(\mathcal{E}, p) \) with a point \((t, b_1, \ldots, b_d) \in \mathbb{F}_q^{d+1} \). Let \( U \subset \mathbb{F}_q^{d+1} \) be the set of points corresponding to \( \mathcal{E} \), and \( W \subset \mathbb{F}_q^{d+1} \) the set of points
corresponding to point-distance pairs. Then $|U| = |\mathcal{E}|$, $|W| = \sum_{p \in \mathcal{E}} |\Delta Q(\mathcal{E}, p)|$. Moreover, one can easily see that $U, W$ are vertex subsets of the Cayley digraph $C_Q(F_{q^{d+1}})$. The number of edges between $U$ and $W$ is $|\mathcal{E}|^2$, since each point in $\mathcal{E}$ contributes $|\mathcal{E}|$ edges between $U$ and $W$.

It follows from Lemmas 2.3 and 2.4 that

$$|\mathcal{E}|^2 \leq e(U, W) \leq \frac{|U||W|}{q} + q^{d/2}\sqrt{|U||W|}.$$  

(4.1)

If $\frac{1}{q} \sum_{p \in \mathcal{E}} |\Delta Q(\mathcal{E}, p)| \leq (1 - c^2)q$, it follows from (4.1) that

$$|\mathcal{E}|^2 \leq |\mathcal{E}|^2(1 - c^2) + q^{(d+1)/2}|\mathcal{E}|\sqrt{(1 - c^2)},$$

and

$$|\mathcal{E}| \leq \sqrt{\frac{(1 - c^2)}{c^4}q^{(d+1)/2}}.$$ 

This would be a contradiction. Therefore,

$$\sum_{p \in \mathcal{E}} |\Delta Q(\mathcal{E}, p)| > (1 - c^2)q|\mathcal{E}|.$$  

(4.2)

Let us define $\mathcal{E}' := \{p \in \mathcal{E} : |\Delta Q(\mathcal{E}, p)| > (1 - c)q\}$. Suppose that $|\mathcal{E}'| < (1 - c)|\mathcal{E}|$, so

$$\sum_{p \in \mathcal{E} \setminus \mathcal{E}'} |\Delta Q(\mathcal{E}, p)| \leq (|\mathcal{E}| - |\mathcal{E}'|)(1 - c)q,$$  

(4.3)

and

$$\sum_{p \in \mathcal{E}'} |\Delta Q(\mathcal{E}, p)| \leq q|\mathcal{E}'|.$$  

(4.4)

Putting (4.3) and (4.4) together, we obtain

$$\sum_{p \in \mathcal{E}} |\Delta Q(\mathcal{E}, p)| \leq (1 - c)q|\mathcal{E}| + cq|\mathcal{E}'| < (1 - c)q|\mathcal{E}| + cq(1 - c)|\mathcal{E}| = (1 - c^2)q|\mathcal{E}|.$$ 

The theorem follows because this contradicts (4.2).

5 Related Problems

5.1 Incidences between random points and $Q$-spheres

To prove Theorem 1.5, we need the following lemma (see [15, Lemma 8], and [23, Lemma 2.3] for more details).
Lemma 5.1. Let \( \{ G_n = G(U_n, V_n) \}_{n=1}^{\infty} \) be a sequence of bipartite graphs with \(|V_n| = |U_n| \to \infty \) as \( n \to \infty \), and let \( d(G_n) \) be the average degree of \( G_n \). Assume that for any \( \epsilon > 0 \), there exists an integer \( v(\epsilon) \) and a number \( c(\epsilon) > 0 \) such that

\[
e(A, B) \geq c(\epsilon)|A||B|\frac{d(G_n)}{|V_n|},
\]

for all \(|V_n| = |U_n| \geq v(\epsilon)\) and all \( A \subset V_n, B \subset U_n \) satisfying \(|A||B| \geq \epsilon|V_n|^2\). Then for any \( \alpha > 0 \), there exist an integer \( v(\alpha) \) and a number \( C(\alpha) \) with the following property: if one chooses a random subset \( S \) of \( V_n \) of cardinality \( t \) and a random subset \( T \) of \( U_n \) of the same cardinality \( t \), then the probability of \( G(S, T) \) being empty is at most \( \alpha^t \) provided that \( t \geq C(\alpha)|V_n|/d(G_n) \) and \(|V_n| \geq v(\alpha)\).

We notice that the Lemma 5.1 also holds when \( \{ G_n \}_n \) is a sequence of digraphs.

Proof of Theorem 1.5: Let \( B_{q,d} \) be a bipartite digraph with vertex set \( V(C_q(F_q^{d+1})) \times V(C_q(F_q^{d+1})) \), where \( C_q(F_q^{d+1}) \) is the Cayley graph defined as in Lemma 2.4 and the edge set

\[
\{(x_0, x), (y_0, y) \} \in F_q^{d+1} \times F_q^{d+1} \mid (x_0 - y_0) + Q(x - y) = 0\}.
\]

With the same identification of the point set and the \( Q \)-sphere set as in proof of Theorem 1.2, we obtain two corresponding sets \( U \) and \( W \), where \(|U| = |F|, |W| = |S|\). Thus, the number of incidences between points and spheres is the number of edges between \( U \) and \( W \). By Lemma 2.3 and 2.4, we obtain

\[
\left| e(U, W) - \frac{|U||W|}{q} \right| \leq q^{d/2} \sqrt{|U||W|}.
\]  

For any \( \epsilon > 0 \) such that \(|U||W| \geq \epsilon q^{2d+2} \) and \( q^d \geq \frac{4}{\epsilon} \), we have from (5.1) that

\[
e(U, W) \geq \frac{q^d}{2q^{d+1}}|U||W| = \frac{d(B_{q,d})}{|V(B_{q,d})||U||W|}.
\]

Let \( c(\epsilon) = 1, v(\epsilon) \geq (\frac{4}{\epsilon})^{(d+1)/d} \), then the theorem follows from Lemma 5.1.

5.2 Generalized isosceles triangles

Proof of Theorem 1.6: Let

\[
U = \{(1, x, x) \in 1 \times \mathcal{E} \times \mathcal{E} \}, \quad W = \{(1, y, z) \in 1 \times \mathcal{E} \times \mathcal{E} \}.
\]

One can easily see that \(|U| = |\mathcal{E}|, |W| = |\mathcal{E}|^2\). Let

\[
T_1 = \{(1, x, x, 1, y, z) \in 1 \times \mathcal{E} \times \mathcal{E} \times 1 \times \mathcal{E} \times \mathcal{E} : Q(x - y) = Q(x - z)\}.
\]
Then the cardinality of $T_1$ is the number of edges between the sets $U$ and $W$ in the graph $C_{Q'}(\mathbb{F}_q^{2d+1})$ (defined as in Lemma 2.5). It follows from Lemma 2.3 and 2.5 that

$$|T_1| - \frac{|U||W|}{q} \leq q^d \sqrt{|U||W|}.$$ 

Thus, if $|\mathcal{E}| \gg q^{2(d+1)/3}$ then $|T_1| = (1 + o(1))|\mathcal{E}|^3/q$. We notice that $T_1$ also contains the tuples $(1, x, 1, x, y)$ with $Q(x-y) = 0$ which correspond to the edges between the vertices $(1, x, x) \in U$ and $(1, x, y) \in W$. Let us denote the set of such tuples by $T_{err}$, then one can easily see that $\frac{1}{3}|T_{err}|$ is the number of pairs $(x, y) \in \mathcal{E} \times \mathcal{E}$ such that $Q(x-y) = 0$, since each pair $(x, y)$ with $Q(x-y) = 0$ contributes two edges $((1, x, x), (1, x, y))$ and $((1, x, x), (1, y, x))$. It follows from Lemma 2.3 and 2.4 that

$$|T_{err}| - \frac{|\mathcal{E}|^2}{q} \leq q^{d/2} \sqrt{|\mathcal{E}|^2}.$$ 

Thus, if $|\mathcal{E}| \gg q^{2(d+1)/3}$ with $d \geq 2$, then $|T_{err}| = |\mathcal{E}|^2/q = o(1)|\mathcal{E}|^3/q$. Therefore, the number of $Q$-isosceles triangles determined by $\mathcal{E}$ is $(1 + o(1))|\mathcal{E}|^3/q$.

### 5.3 Distinct distance subset

In order to prove Theorem 1.7, we need the following theorem on the cardinality of a maximal independent set of a hypergraph due to Spencer [17].

**Theorem 5.2.** Let $H$ be a $k$-uniform hypergraph with $n$ vertices and $m \geq n/k$ edges, and let $\alpha(H)$ denote the independence number of $H$. Then

$$\alpha(H) \geq \left(1 - \frac{1}{k}\right) \left[\left(1 - \frac{n^k}{k^m}\right)^{\frac{1}{k}}\right].$$

**Proof of Theorem 1.7:** Let

$$T_2 = \{(1, p_1, q_1, 1, p_2, q_2) \in 1 \times \mathcal{E} \times \mathcal{E} \times 1 \times \mathcal{E} \times \mathcal{E} : Q(p_1 - q_1) = Q(p_2 - q_2)\}.$$

With the same arguments in the proof of Theorem 1.6, we obtain $|T_2| \leq \frac{|\mathcal{E}|^4}{q} + q^d|\mathcal{E}|^2$. Thus, if $|\mathcal{E}| \gg q^{(d+1)/2}$, then

$$|T_2| = (1 + o(1))\frac{|\mathcal{E}|^4}{q}.$$

A 4-tuple of distinct elements in $\mathcal{E}^4$ is called *regular* if all six generalized distances determined are distinct. Otherwise, it is called *singular*. Let $H$ be the 4-uniform hypergraph on the vertex set $V(H) = \mathcal{E}$, whose edges are the singular 4-tuples of $\mathcal{E}$.

It follows from Theorem 1.6 that the number of 4-tuples containing a triple induced an isosceles triangle is at most $(1 + o(1))|\mathcal{E}|^3/q \cdot |\mathcal{E}| = (1 + o(1))|\mathcal{E}|^4/q$ when $|\mathcal{E}| \gg q^{2(d+1)/3}$. Thus the number of edges of $H$ containing a triple induced an isosceles triangle is at most
(1 + o(1))|E|^4/q. On the other hand, since $T_2 = (1 + o(1))|E|^4/q$ when $|E| \gg q^{(d+1)/2}$, the number of 4-tuples $(p_1, q_1, p_2, q_2)$ in $E^4$ satisfying $Q(p_1 - q_1) = Q(p_2 - q_2)$ equals $(1 + o(1))|E|^4/q$ when $|E| \gg q^{(d+1)/2}$. Thus, if $|E| \gg q^{2(d+1)/3}$ with $d \geq 2$, then

$$|E(H)| \leq \frac{2|E|^4}{q}. $$

It follows from Theorem 5.2 that

$$\alpha(H) \geq C \left( \frac{|E|^4}{|E(H)|} \right)^{1/3} \geq Cq^{1/3},$$

for some positive constant $C$. Since there is no repeated generalized distance determined by the independent set of $H$, we have $|U_Q| \geq \alpha(H) \geq Cq^{1/3}$.

Moreover, it is easy to see that there is at least one repeated generalized distance determined by any set of $\sqrt{2}q^{1/2} + 1$ elements since there are only $q = |F_q|$ distances over $F_q^d$. Thus, the theorem follows.

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References


