

Turán's theorem in the hypercube

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Abstract

We are motivated by the analogue of Turán's theorem in the hypercube Q_n : how many edges can a Q_d -free subgraph of Q_n have? We study this question through its Ramsey-type variant and obtain asymptotic results. We show that for every odd d it is possible to color the edges of Q_n with $\frac{(d+1)^2}{4}$ colors, such that each subcube Q_d is polychromatic, that is, contains an edge of each color. The number of colors is tight up to a constant factor, as it turns out that a similar coloring with $\binom{d+1}{2} + 1$ colors is not possible. The corresponding question for vertices is also considered. It is not possible to color the vertices of Q_n with $d + 2$ colors, such that any Q_d is polychromatic, but there is a simple $d + 1$ coloring with this property. A relationship to anti-Ramsey colorings is also discussed.

We discover much less about the Turán-type question which motivated our investigations. Numerous problems and conjectures are raised.

1 Introduction

For graphs G and H , let $ex(G, H)$ denote the maximum number of edges in a subgraph of G which does not contain a copy of H . The quantity $ex(G, H)$ was first investigated in case G is a clique. Turán's Theorem resolves the problem precisely, when H is a clique as well.

In this paper, we study these Turán-type problems, when the base graph G is the n -dimensional hypercube Q_n . This setting was initiated by Erdős [8] who asked how many edges can a C_4 -free subgraph of the hypercube contain. He conjectured the answer is

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$(\frac{1}{2} + o(1))e(Q_n)$ and offered \$100 for a solution. The current best upper bound, due to Chung [6], stands at $\approx .623e(Q_n)$. The best known lower bound is $\frac{1}{2}(n + \sqrt{n})2^{n-1}$ (for $n = 4^r$) due to Brass, Harborth and Nienborg [5].

Erdős [8] also raised the extremal question for even cycles. Chung [6] obtained that $\frac{ex(Q_n, C_{4k})}{e(Q_n)} \rightarrow 0$ for every $k \geq 2$, i.e. cycles with length divisible by 4, starting from 8 are harder to avoid than the four-cycle. She also showed that

$$\frac{1}{4}e(Q_n) \leq ex(Q_n, C_6) \leq (\sqrt{2} - 1 + o(1))e(Q_n).$$

Later Conder [7] improved the lower bound to $\frac{1}{3}e(Q_n)$ by defining a 3-coloring of the edges of the n -cube such that every color class is C_6 -free. On the other hand it is shown in [1] that for any fixed k , in any k -coloring of the edges of a sufficiently large cube there are monochromatic cycles of every even length greater than 6. Note, however, that the Turán problem for cycles of length $4k + 2$ is still wide open. For $k \geq 2$, it is not even known whether $ex(Q_n, C_{4k+2}) = o(e(Q_n))$.

In the present paper we consider a generalization of the C_4 -free subgraph problem in a different direction, which we feel is the true analogue of Turán's Theorem in the hypercube. For arbitrary d we give bounds on $ex(Q_n, Q_d)$. For convenience we will talk about the complementary problem: i.e., let $f(n, d)$ denote the minimum number of edges one must delete from the n -cube to make it d -cube-free. Obviously $f(n, d) = e(Q_n) - ex(Q_n, Q_d)$. By a simple averaging argument one can see that for any fixed d the function $f(n, d)/e(Q_n)$ is non-decreasing in n , so a limit c_d exists. (In fact this limit exists for an arbitrary forbidden subgraph H , instead of Q_d). Erdős' conjecture then could be stated as $c_2 = \frac{1}{2}$.

Trivially $f(d, d) = 1$, so by the above $c_d \geq \frac{1}{d2^{d-1}}$. On the other hand, if one deletes edges of the hypercube on every d^{th} level, one obtains a Q_d -free subgraph. For this, observe that every d -dimensional subcube must span $d + 1$ levels. Thus $c_d \leq \frac{1}{d}$.

In the present paper we improve on these trivial bounds.

Theorem 1.

$$\Omega\left(\frac{\log d}{d2^d}\right) = c_d \leq \begin{cases} \frac{4}{(d+1)^2} & \text{if } d \text{ is odd} \\ \frac{4}{d(d+2)} & \text{if } d \text{ is even.} \end{cases}$$

We conjecture that our construction is essentially optimal for $d = 3$.

Conjecture 2.

$$c_3 = \frac{1}{4}.$$

The best known lower bound on c_3 is $1 - (\frac{5}{8})^{1/4} \approx 0.11$ and follows from some property of the 4-dimensional cube. (A Q_3 -free subgraph of Q_4 cannot contain more than 10 vertices of degree 4; see the paper of Graham, Harary, Livingston and Stout [10]).

For arbitrary d we are less confident; it would certainly be very interesting to determine how fast c_d tends to 0, when d tends to infinity.

Problem 3. Determine the order of magnitude of c_d .

We tend to think that c_d is larger than inverse exponential, but feel that we are very far from understanding the truth. In fact all our arguments are set in the related Ramsey-type framework, rather than the original Turán-type. A coloring of the edges of Q_n is called d -polychromatic if every subcube of dimension d is polychromatic (i.e. it has all the colors represented on its edges). Let $pc(n, d)$ be the largest integer p such that there exists a d -polychromatic coloring of the edges of Q_n in p colors. Clearly, $pc(n, d) \leq d2^{d-1}$ and $f(n, d) \leq e(Q_n)/pc(n, d)$. Since $pc(n, d)$ is a non-increasing function in n , it stabilizes for large n . Let p_d be this limit, then we have $c_d \leq 1/p_d$. We can determine p_d up to a factor of 2.

Theorem 4.

$$\binom{d+1}{2} \geq p_d \geq \begin{cases} \frac{(d+1)^2}{4} & \text{if } d \text{ is odd} \\ \frac{d(d+2)}{4} & \text{if } d \text{ is even.} \end{cases}$$

The lower bound implies the upper bound in Theorem 1. It would be interesting to resolve the following problem.

Problem 5. Determine the asymptotic behaviour of p_d .

The lower bound in Theorem 1 is a consequence of some known results on the analogous problem for vertices of the cube. Let $g(n, d)$ be the minimum number of vertices one must delete from the n -cube to make it d -cube-free. Clearly $g(n, d) \leq f(n, d)$. Again, simple averaging shows that for any fixed d the function $g(n, d)/2^n$ is non-decreasing in n , so a limit c_d^0 exists.

The problem of determining $g(n, d)$ was investigated early and widely by several research communities mostly in a dual formulation under the different names of t -independent sets [12], qualitatively t -independent 2-partitions [14] and (n, t) -universal vector sets [16], where $t = n - d$. These investigations mostly deal with the case when d is large, i.e. very close to n . The lone result we are aware of about $g(n, d)$ for d small compared to n is due to E. A. Kostochka [13], who prove that $c_2^0 = 1/3$, (the same result has been obtained later and independently by Johnson and Entringer [11]). In both papers it is also shown that the unique smallest set breaking all copies of Q_2 is in the form of every third level of the cube. In general we know very little.

Proposition 6.

$$\frac{1}{d+1} \geq c_d^0 \geq \frac{\log d}{2^{d+2}}.$$

Again, the Ramsey analogue of the problem is more clear. In fact we have here a precise result. A coloring of the vertices of Q_n is called d -polychromatic if every subcube of dimension d has all the colors represented on its vertices. Let $pc^0(n, d)$ be the largest integer p such that there exists a d -polychromatic coloring of the vertices of Q_n in p colors. Clearly, $pc^0(n, d) \leq 2^d$ and $g(n, d) \leq 2^n/pc^0(n, d)$. Since $pc^0(n, d)$ is a non-increasing function of n , it stabilizes for large n . Let p_d^0 be this limit, then we have $c_d^0 \leq 1/p_d^0$. We can determine p_d^0 for every d .

Theorem 7.

$$p_d^0 = d + 1.$$

1.1 Relation to rainbow colorings

In this subsection we point out a relation between the established notion of anti-Ramsey coloring and the one of polychromatic coloring introduced in this paper. We also note how Theorem 4 could be applied to improve a result of [2].

An edge-coloring $r : E(H) \rightarrow \{1, 2, \dots\}$ of a graph H is called *rainbow* if no two edges of H receive the same color. A coloring c of the edges of graph G is called *H -anti-Ramsey* if the restriction of c to any subgraph $H_0 \subseteq G$, $H_0 \cong H$, is *not* rainbow. Let $ar(G, H)$ be the largest number of colors used in an H -anti-Ramsey coloring of G . The function $ar(G, H)$ was introduced by Erdős, Simonovits and T. Sós [9]. It is well-known that $ar(G, H) \leq ex(G, H)$ since taking one arbitrary edge from each color class of an H -anti-Ramsey coloring one must obtain an H -free subgraph of G .

For any graph G and H , we call a p -coloring $c : E(G) \rightarrow \{1, \dots, p\}$ of the edges of G *H -polychromatic* if every subgraph $H_0 \subseteq G$, $H_0 \cong H$, has *all* the p colors represented on its edges. Let $pc(G, H)$ be the largest number p such that there is an H -polychromatic coloring of the edges of G . The following proposition establishes a relationship between H -anti-Ramsey and H -polychromatic colorings.

Proposition 8.

$$ar(G, H) \geq \left(1 - \frac{2}{pc(G, H)}\right) e(G).$$

Proof. Given an H -polychromatic coloring c of G with $p = pc(G, H)$ -colors, we define an H -anti-Ramsey coloring r of G with at least $(1 - 2/p)e(G)$ colors. Let F be the set of edges formed by the union of the two smallest color classes of c . The coloring r will be chosen constant on F , say all edges in F receive color 1. All other edges of G will receive distinct colors. Then we used at least $\left(1 - \frac{2}{p}\right)e(G) + 1$ colors. Also, the coloring r defined this way is H -anti-Ramsey since each copy of H in G contains at least two edges of F , and thus at least two edges receive the color 1 in every copy of H . \square

In a recent paper [2], Axenovich, Harborth, Kemnitz, Möller, and Schiermeyer investigated Q_d -anti-Ramsey colorings of Q_n . Lower and upper bounds for $ar(Q_n, Q_d)$ are found. In particular for fixed d , the leading terms of their bounds amount to

$$\left(1 - \frac{4}{d2^d}\right) e(Q_n) \geq ar(Q_n, Q_d) \geq \left(1 - \frac{1}{d}\right) e(Q_n).$$

One can improve the upper bound applying Theorem 1, and the lower bound using the polychromatic coloring of Theorem 4 .

Corollary 9.

$$\left(1 - \Omega\left(\frac{\log d}{d2^d}\right)\right) e(Q_n) \geq ar(Q_n, Q_d) \geq \left(1 - \frac{8}{d^2} - O\left(\frac{1}{d^3}\right)\right) e(Q_n).$$

Notation. We consider the cube as a set of n -dimensional 0 – 1-vectors, where the coordinates are labeled by the first n positive integers, $[n] = \{1, \dots, n\}$. A d -dimensional subcube of the n -dimensional cube is denoted by a vector from $\{0, 1, \star\}^n$ which contains d \star -entries; the stars represent the non-constant coordinates of the subcube. For a subcube D of the n -dimensional cube we denote by $ONE(D)$, $ZERO(D)$, and $STAR(D)$ the set of labels of those coordinates which are 1, 0, and \star , respectively.

2 Q_d -free subgraphs of Q_n

In this section we give a proof of the lower bound in Theorem 4.

Proof. First assume that d is odd. We define a $\frac{(d+1)^2}{4}$ -coloring of the edges of Q_n , which is d -polychromatic.

We color the edges of Q_n with elements of $\mathbb{Z}_{\frac{d+1}{2}} \times \mathbb{Z}_{\frac{d+1}{2}}$ in the following way. The edge e with a star at coordinate a is colored with the vector whose first coordinate is $|\{x \in ONE(e) : x < a\}| \pmod{\frac{d+1}{2}}$ and whose second coordinate is $|\{x \in ONE(e) : x > a\}| \pmod{\frac{d+1}{2}}$.

Now consider a d -dimensional subcube C of Q_n with $STAR(C) = \{a_1, \dots, a_d\}$, where $a_1 < a_2 < \dots < a_d$. Let s be the vertex of C with the least number of ones. So for each vertex x of C we have that $ONE(s) \subseteq ONE(x) \subseteq ONE(s) \cup \{a_1, \dots, a_d\}$.

We will show that all $\frac{(d+1)^2}{4}$ colors appear on edges of C whose star is at position $a_{\frac{d+1}{2}}$. Let (u, v) be an arbitrary element of $\mathbb{Z}_{\frac{d+1}{2}} \times \mathbb{Z}_{\frac{d+1}{2}}$.

Let $l := |\{x \in ONE(s) : x < a_{\frac{d+1}{2}}\}| \pmod{\frac{d+1}{2}}$ and

$r := |\{x \in ONE(s) : x > a_{\frac{d+1}{2}}\}| \pmod{\frac{d+1}{2}}$. Choose any $k \equiv u - l \pmod{\frac{d+1}{2}}$ elements

K from $\{a_1, \dots, a_{\frac{d+1}{2}-1}\}$ and any $p \equiv v - r \pmod{\frac{d+1}{2}}$ elements L from $\{a_{\frac{d+1}{2}+1}, \dots, a_d\}$.

Define s' by $ONE(s') = ONE(s) \cup K \cup L$. Then the edge incident to s' and having star at position $a_{\frac{d+1}{2}}$ has color (u, v) .

For even d a similar construction works; the only difference is that we take the number of ones left of the label of the edge modulo $\frac{d}{2}$ and the number of ones to the right modulo $\frac{d+2}{2}$. Then one can prove that among the edges with label $\frac{d}{2}$ all colors appear. \square

3 Upper bound in the Ramsey problems.

First we prove the upper bound in Theorem 4.

Proof of Theorem 4 Suppose we have a d -polychromatic p -edge-coloring c of Q_n where n is huge. We will use Ramsey's theorem for d -uniform hypergraphs with $p^{d2^{d-1}}$ colors. We define a $p^{d2^{d-1}}$ -coloring of the d -subsets of $[n]$. Fix an arbitrary ordering of the edges of Q_d . For an arbitrary subset S of the coordinates, define $cube(S)$ to be the subcube whose \star coordinates are at the positions of S and all its other coordinates are 0, i.e. $STAR(cube(S)) = S$ and $ZERO(cube(S)) = [n] \setminus S$. Let S be a d -subset of $[n]$ and define the color of S to be the vector whose coordinates are the c -values of the edges of the d -dimensional subcube $cube(S)$ (according to the fixed ordering of the edges of Q_d). By Ramsey's theorem, if n is large enough, there is a set $T \subseteq [n]$ of $d^2 + d - 1$ coordinates such that the color-vector is the same for any d -subset of T . Let us now fix a set S of d particular coordinates from T : those ones which are the $(id)^{th}$ elements of T for some $i = 1, \dots, d$. Hence any two elements of S have at least $d - 1$ elements of T in between.

Claim 10. *The c -value of an edge e of $cube(S)$ depends only on the number of 1s to the left of the \star of e and the number of 1s to the right of this \star .*

Proof. Let e_1 and e_2 be two edges of $\text{cube}(S)$ such that they have the same number of 1s to the left of their respective star and the same number of 1s to the right as well. We can find d coordinates S' from T such that $\text{STAR}(e_2) \cup \text{ONE}(e_2) \subseteq S'$ (i.e., e_2 is an edge of $\text{cube}(S')$), and the vector e_2 restricted to S' is *equal* to the vector e_1 restricted to S . Indeed, there are enough unused 0-coordinates of e_2 in T between any two elements of S .

Now, since every d -subset of T has the same color-vector, the corresponding edges of the cubes $\text{cube}(S)$ and $\text{cube}(S')$ have the same c -value. In particular the colors of e_1 and e_2 are equal. The claim is proved. \square

To finish the proof of the upper bound in Theorem 4 we just note that there are exactly $1 + \dots + d = \binom{d+1}{2}$ many ways to separate at most $d - 1$ 1s by a \star . By the Claim a d -polychromatic edge-coloring is not possible with more colors. \square

With a very similar argument one can prove the matching upper bound in the analogous question for vertices.

Proof of Theorem 7 Assume we have a d -polychromatic coloring of the vertices of Q_n . Let us define a d^{2^d} -coloring of the d -tuples of $[n]$. For a d -subset S let the color be determined by the vector of the 2^d colors of the vertices of the subcube $\text{cube}(S)$ with $\text{STAR}(\text{cube}(S)) = S$ and $\text{ZERO}(\text{cube}(S)) = [n] \setminus S$ (according to some fixed ordering of the vertex set of Q_d). By Ramsey's theorem there is a set T of $d^2 + d - 1$ coordinates such that the color-vector is the same for any d -subset of T . Let us again fix d coordinates S in T such that any two elements of S have at least $d - 1$ elements of T in between (in a way similar to the one in the edge-coloring case).

Claim 11. *The color of a vertex in $\text{cube}(S)$ depends only on its number of 1s.*

Proof. Let v_1 and v_2 be two vectors from $\text{cube}(S)$ such that $|\text{ONE}(v_1)| = |\text{ONE}(v_2)|$. We can find d coordinates S' from T such that $\text{ONE}(v_2) \subseteq S'$ and the vector v_2 restricted to S' is *equal* to the vector v_1 restricted to S . Indeed, there are enough unused 0-coordinates in T between any two elements of S to do this. Now, since T is monochromatic according to our color-vectors, the color of v_1 and v_2 is the same as well. The claim is proved. \square

To finish the proof of the upper bound in Theorem 7 we just note that there are exactly $d + 1$ possible values for the number of 1s on d coordinates. By the Claim a d -polychromatic coloring is not possible with more colors.

For the lower bound in Theorem 7 one can color each vertex of the cube by the number of its non-zero coordinates modulo $d + 1$. This gives a d -polychromatic vertex coloring in $d + 1$ colors. \square

4 A lower bound on c_d

The lower bound in Proposition 6 can be deduced from earlier results on the d -independent set problem and is essentially stated (implicitly) in [10]. For completeness we sketch the proof.

Let G be a set of g vertices which intersects all d -cubes of the n -cube. This happens if and only if, interpreting these vertices as subsets of an n -element base set X , G shatters

all $(n-d)$ -element subsets of X . (A family \mathcal{F} of subsets *shatters* a given subset K , if all the $2^{|K|}$ subsets of K can be represented as $K \cap F$ for some $F \in \mathcal{F}$.) Now let M_G be the $g \times n$ 0-1-matrix whose rows correspond to the elements of G . Then the columns of M_G can be interpreted as a family L of n subsets of a g -element base set Y , such that all the 2^{n-d} parts of the Venn diagram of any $n-d$ members of L are nonempty. (A family L satisfying this property is usually called $(n-d)$ -independent.)

Thus determining $g(d+t, d)$ is the same problem as determining the largest size of a t -independent family. This was first done by Schönheim [15] and Brace and Daykin [4] for $t=2$ and later reproved and generalized by many others, e.g. Kleitman and Spencer [12].

It is known that $g(d+2, d) \geq \log d$ and thus the lower bound on c_d^0 follows by the monotonicity of $g(n, d)/2^n$. The lower bound in Theorem 1 also follows since $f(d+2, d) \geq g(d+2, d)$ and $f(n, d)/e(Q_n)$ is non-decreasing.

5 Remarks and More Open Problems

Remark. The following Claim shows that if c_d is indeed larger than inverse exponential, then one has to search for the evidence in very large, i.e. doubly exponential, dimensions.

For simplicity we write here the proof for c_d^0 (the vertex version); the argument for c_d follows along similar lines.

Claim. For any $p \leq \frac{2^d}{2d}$, there is a d -polychromatic p -coloring of the n -cube, with $n = \frac{1}{2} \exp \left\{ \frac{2^d}{2dp} \right\}$. In particular, for any $\epsilon > 0$ and $n \leq \frac{1}{2} \exp \left\{ 2^{(1-\epsilon)d} \right\}$,

$$g(n, d) \leq \frac{2d}{2^{\epsilon d}} \cdot 2^n.$$

Proof. We randomly color the vertices of Q_n with p colors. For each vertex v select a color uniformly at random from $\{1, \dots, p\}$, choices being independent from the choices on all other vertices. For a d -cube D , let A_D be the event that there is a color which does not appear on the vertices of D . The probability of A_D is at most $p(1-1/p)^{2^d}$. Each d -cube intersects less than $2^d \binom{n}{d}$ other d -cubes. Obviously A_D is independent from the set of all events $A_{D'}$ where D' is disjoint from D .

For $p \leq \frac{2^d}{2d}$ and $n = \frac{1}{2} \exp \left\{ \frac{2^d}{2dp} \right\}$,

$$e \cdot p \left(1 - \frac{1}{p} \right)^{2^d} 2^d \binom{n}{d} \leq e^{1 + \log p - \frac{2^d}{p} + d \log 2n} = o_d(1).$$

Hence the Local Lemma implies that with nonzero probability all p colors are represented on all d -cubes.

For the second part of the Claim, choose $p = 2^{\epsilon d}/2d$ and leave out the vertices of the sparsest color class in a d -polychromatic p -coloring of the n -cube. \square

Open Problems. Since $f(n, 2)$ is known to be strictly larger than one third of the number of edges in Q_n for large n [6], it is clear that $p_2 = 2$. Bialostocki [3] proved that in

any 2-polychromatic edge-two-coloring of Q_n the color classes are asymptotically equal. The next natural question is the determination of p_3 , which is either 4, 5 or 6. Once p_3 is known, it would be interesting to generalize Bialostocki's theorem and decide whether in any 3-polychromatic p_3 -edge-coloring of Q_n , each color class contains approximately $\frac{1}{p_3}e(Q_n)$ edges.

Everything above could be generalized, quite straightforwardly, but would not answer the following problems:

Turán-type: Let $f^{(l)}(n, d)$ be the smallest integer f such that there is a family of f l -faces of Q_n , such that every d -face contains at least one member of this family. Again, $f^{(l)}(n, d)/\binom{n}{l}2^{n-l}$ is non-decreasing, so there is a limit $c_d^{(l)}$. Determine it!

Ramsey-type: A coloring of the l -faces of Q_n is d -polychromatic if for every d -face S and color s there is an l -face of S with color s . Let $pc^{(l)}(n, d)$ be the largest number of colors with which there is a d -polychromatic coloring of the l -faces of Q_n . Again, the limit $p_d^{(l)}$ of $pc^{(l)}(n, d)$ exists. Determine it!

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