

Note

On independent cycles and edges in graphs

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Abstract

For integers k, s with $0 \leq s \leq k$, let $\mathcal{G}(n, k, s)$ be the class of graphs on n vertices not containing k independent (i.e., vertex disjoint) subgraphs of which $k - s$ are cycles and the remaining are complete graphs K_2 . Let $EX(n, k, s)$ be the set of members of $\mathcal{G}(n, k, s)$ with the maximum number of edges and denote the number of edges of a graph in $EX(n, k, s)$ by $ex(n, k, s)$; to avoid trivialities, assume $k \geq 2$ and $n \geq 3k - s$. Justesen (1989) determined $ex(n, k, 0)$ for all $n \geq 3k$ and $EX(n, k, 0)$ for all $n > (13k - 4)/4$, thereby settling a conjecture of Erdős and Pósa; further $EX(n, k, k)$ was determined by Erdős and Gallai ($n \geq 2k$). In the present paper, by modifying the argument presented by Justesen, we determine $EX(n, k, s)$ for all n, k, s ($0 \leq s \leq k$, $k \geq 2$, $n \geq 3k - s$).

1. Introduction

All graphs considered in this paper are finite, undirected and do not contain loops or multiple edges. For basic graph-theoretical terminology, we refer to [1]. To a large extent, we adopt the notation of [5]. The letter G always denotes a graph; by $|G|$ and $e(G)$, we denote the number of vertices and edges of G , respectively, and $v(X)$ denotes the valency of a vertex X (with respect to the graph denoted G). The number $e(G)$ is called the *size* of G . The complete graph on n vertices is denoted $\langle n \rangle$ (or likewise K_n); the symbol $\langle p, q \rangle$ denotes a complete bipartite graph with classes of cardinality p and q , respectively, and $\langle\langle p \rangle, q \rangle$ denotes the graph obtained from $\langle p, q \rangle$ by adding all possible edges between vertices in the class of cardinality p ; 0^k denotes a graph consisting of k independent (i.e., vertex disjoint) cycles, and $G \supseteq 0^k$ means that G contains k independent cycles. By $G \cup H$ we denote the union of the graphs G and H , and $G \dot{\cup} H$ denotes the *disjoint* union of G and H . By $m(G)$ we denote the *matching number* of G , i.e., the maximum number of independent edges of G . For

positive integers n, k such that $n \geq 2$, let $f(n, k)$ denote the number of edges of the graph $\langle\langle 2k-1 \rangle, n-2k+1 \rangle$, i.e.,

$$f(n, k) = \binom{2k-1}{2} + (2k-1)(n-2k+1) = (2k-1)(n-k).$$

A classical result in extremal graph theory is the following.

Theorem A (Erdős and Pósa [4]). *For an integer $k \geq 2$, let $|G| = n \geq 24k$. If $e(G) > f(n, k)$, then $G \supseteq 0^k$; further, $\langle\langle 2k-1 \rangle, n-2k+1 \rangle$ is the uniquely determined extremal graph, i.e., if $e(G) = f(n, k)$, then $G \not\supseteq 0^k$ if and only if $G \cong \langle\langle 2k-1 \rangle, n-2k+1 \rangle$.*

For positive integers n, k such that $n \geq 3k-1$, let

$$g(n, k) = \binom{3k-1}{2} + n - 3k + 1,$$

which (in particular) is the number of edges of a graph with n vertices resulting from the complete graph $\langle 3k-1 \rangle$ by attaching $n-3k+1$ pendant edges. Justesen established the following extension of Theorem A to the range $3k \leq n < 24k$, conjectured by Erdős and Pósa.

Theorem B (Justesen, [5]). *For any integer $k \geq 2$, if $|G| = n \geq 3k$ and $e(G) \geq \max\{f(n, k), g(n, k) + 1\}$, then $G \supseteq 0^k$ or $G \cong \langle\langle 2k-1 \rangle, n-2k+1 \rangle$.*

In the present paper we show that Justesen's argument can be modified to obtain an extended version of Theorem B which includes the complete determination of the corresponding extremal graphs. Let $\mathcal{H}_{\langle 3k-1 \rangle}^n$ be the class of graphs G on n vertices ($n \geq 3k-1, k \geq 2$) which can be written as

$$G = S_{\langle 3k-1 \rangle} \cup T_1 \cup \dots \cup T_r \quad (r \geq 0),$$

where $S_{\langle 3k-1 \rangle}$ is a subdivision of the complete graph $\langle 3k-1 \rangle$ and T_1, \dots, T_r are pairwise disjoint trees with the property that the intersection $T_i \cap S_{\langle 3k-1 \rangle}$ is just a single vertex ($i = 1, \dots, r$). Thus, roughly speaking, G results from $\langle 3k-1 \rangle$ by subdivision of edges and attachment of trees; note also that, in this definition, we have not excluded the special cases $r = 0$ and $S_{\langle 3k-1 \rangle} = \langle 3k-1 \rangle$. Clearly

$$e(G) = g(n, k) \quad \text{for all } G \in \mathcal{H}_{\langle 3k-1 \rangle}^n.$$

Now our extension of Theorem B reads as follows.

Theorem 1. *For an integer $k \geq 2$, let $|G| = n \geq 3k$. If $e(G) > \max\{f(n, k), g(n, k)\}$, then $G \supseteq 0^k$; the extremal graphs, i.e., the graphs G with $e(G) = \max\{f(n, k), g(n, k)\}$ and $G \not\supseteq 0^k$ are the following. If $n < (13k-4)/4$, then $\mathcal{H}_{\langle 3k-1 \rangle}^n$ is precisely the set of extremal graphs; if $n > (13k-4)/4$, then $\langle\langle 2k-1 \rangle, n-2k+1 \rangle$ is the unique extremal*

graph; if $n = (13k - 4)/4$, then G is an extremal graph if and only if $G \in \mathcal{X}_{\langle 3k-1 \rangle}^n$ or $G \cong \langle \langle 2k - 1 \rangle, n - 2k + 1 \rangle$.

The proof of Theorem 1 is the content of Section 2. Similar as the proof of Theorem B given by Justesen [5], our proof of Theorem 1 is based on a result of Corrádi and Hajnal [2] stating that $G \supseteq 0^k$ for each G with $|G| \geq 3k$ and minimum valency at least $2k$.

Let $\mathcal{G}(n, k, s)$ be defined as in the abstract ($0 \leq s \leq k$). Note that, for the particular case $s = 0$, Theorem 1 provides a solution of the problem of determining the members of $\mathcal{G}(n, k, s)$ having maximum size. For another particular case, namely, for $s = k$, the same problem was settled by Erdős and Gallai [3] who determined, for given n and k , the graphs of maximum size with $|G| = n$ and $m(G) < k$; see also [1, Ch. II, Corollary 1.10]. In Section 3 (Theorem 2), we settle the general case of an arbitrary s with $0 < s \leq k$.

2. The proof of Theorem 1

Clearly, $G \not\supseteq 0^k$ if $G \cong \langle \langle 2k - 1 \rangle, n - 2k + 1 \rangle$ or $G \in \mathcal{X}_{\langle 3k-1 \rangle}^n$. By an easy computation, one obtains

$$(1) \quad g(n, k) \geq f(n, k) \text{ if and only if } n \leq \frac{1}{4}(13k - 4),$$

where equality holds simultaneously. Hence Theorem 1 is proved if we show the following. (For proof-technical reasons, we have included the trivial case $n = 3k - 1$.)

$$(*) \quad \text{For each } n \geq 1, \text{ if } |G| = n \text{ and } e(G) \geq \max\{f(n, k), g(n, k)\} \text{ for an integer } k \text{ with } k \geq 2 \text{ and } n \geq 3k - 1, \text{ then } G \supseteq 0^k \text{ or } G \cong \langle \langle 2k - 1 \rangle, n - 2k + 1 \rangle \text{ or } G \in \mathcal{X}_{\langle 3k-1 \rangle}^n.$$

The proof of (*) is carried out by induction on n , the basis of the induction being trivial. Let G be a graph with $|G| = n \geq 2$ and assume that (*) holds for all graphs with fewer than n vertices; let further $k \geq 2$ such that $n \geq 3k - 1$ and $e(G) \geq \max\{f(n, k), g(n, k)\}$. If $n = 3k - 1$, then $e(G) \geq g(n, k)$ implies $G \cong \langle 3k - 1 \rangle$; hence $G \in \mathcal{X}_{\langle 3k-1 \rangle}^n$, and we are done. Thus let $n \geq 3k$. If $k = 2$, then the assertion (*) immediately follows from a well-known result stating that any G with $n \geq 6$ vertices and at least $3n - 6$ edges contains two disjoint cycles unless $G \cong \langle \langle 3 \rangle, n - 3 \rangle$; see [4,6] or [5]. Hence let $k \geq 3$.

Let X_1 be a vertex of G such that $v(X_1)$ is minimum. If $v(X_1) \geq 2k$, then $G \supseteq 0^k$ by the theorem of Corrádi and Hajnal mentioned in Section 1. Hence let $v(X_1) \leq 2k - 1$. We now finish the proof (similar as in [5]) by treating the alternatives: X_1 is contained or not contained in a triangle of G .

Case 1: X_1 is contained in a triangle of G . Let X_1, X_2, X_3 be the vertices of a triangle of G and put $G' = G - X_1 - X_2 - X_3$. Because $v(X_1) \leq 2k - 1$, we have

$$(2) \quad e(G) - e(G') \leq 2n + 2k - 6, \text{ where equality holds if and only if } v(X_1) = 2k - 1 \text{ and } v(X_2) = v(X_3) = n - 1.$$

One easily obtains the following equalities;

$$(3) \quad g(n, k) - g(n - 3, k - 1) = 9k - 9, \\ f(n, k) - f(n - 3, k - 1) = 2n + 2k - 6.$$

We claim that

$$(4) \quad e(G') \geq \max\{f(n - 3, k - 1), g(n - 3, k - 1) + 1\}.$$

For the proof of (4), note that from $e(G) \geq f(n, k)$, together with (2) and (3), one obtains $e(G') \geq f(n - 3, k - 1)$. Now, assume $g(n - 3, k - 1) \geq e(G')$. Then $g(n - 3, k - 1) \geq f(n - 3, k - 1)$, and thus by (1)

$$n \leq 3 + \frac{13(k - 1) - 4}{4} = \frac{13k - 5}{4}.$$

On the other hand, $g(n, k) - g(n - 3, k - 1) \leq e(G) - e(G')$ and thus, by (2) and (3), $9k - 9 \leq 2n + 2k - 6$. Hence

$$\frac{7k - 3}{2} \leq n \leq \frac{13k - 5}{4},$$

contradicting $k \geq 3$. Hence we have proved (4).

Applying the induction hypothesis to G' , we conclude from (4) that $G' \supseteq 0^{k-1}$ or $G' \cong \langle \langle 2k - 3 \rangle, n - 2k \rangle$. (Note that, because $e(G') > g(n - 3, k - 1)$, $G' \in \mathcal{H}_{\langle 3k-4 \rangle}^{n-3}$ is impossible.) If $G' \supseteq 0^{k-1}$, then $G \supseteq 0^k$ and we are done. If $G' \cong \langle \langle 2k - 3 \rangle, n - 2k \rangle$, then $e(G') = f(n - 3, k - 1)$ and thus (by (2), (3) and because $e(G) \geq f(n, k)$) $v(X_1) = 2k - 1$, $v(X_2) = v(X_3) = n - 1$. Hence $G - X_1 \cong \langle \langle 2k - 1 \rangle, n - 2k \rangle$ from which one easily obtains $G \cong \langle \langle 2k - 1 \rangle, n - 2k + 1 \rangle$ or $G \supseteq 0^k$.

Case 2: X_1 is not contained in a triangle of G . Clearly the following equalities hold.

$$(5) \quad g(n, k) - g(n - 1, k) = 1, \quad f(n, k) - f(n - 1, k) = 2k - 1.$$

If $v(X_1) = 0$, let $G' = G - X_1$. Then $e(G') = e(G) \geq \max\{f(n, k), g(n, k)\} > \max\{g(n - 1, k), f(n - 1, k)\}$, from which we obtain $G' \supseteq 0^k$ by applying the induction hypothesis to G' . Hence $G \supseteq 0^k$.

If $v(X_1) \geq 1$, then let G' result from G by contracting an edge (X_1, X_2) of G . Then $e(G') = e(G) - 1$ by the hypothesis of Case 2 and thus by (5) $e(G') \geq \max\{g(n - 1, k), f(n - 1, k) + 1\}$. Hence application of the induction hypothesis to G' yields $G' \supseteq 0^k$ or $G' \in \mathcal{H}_{\langle 3k-1 \rangle}^{n-1}$. If $G' \supseteq 0^k$, then $G \supseteq 0^k$, and we are done. Let $G' \in \mathcal{H}_{\langle 3k-1 \rangle}^{n-1}$. If $v(X_1) \leq 2$, then G can be obtained from G' by attaching a pendant edge to G' or subdividing an edge of G' and thus, in either case, we have $G \in \mathcal{H}_{\langle 3k-1 \rangle}^n$. Now let $v(X_1) \geq 3$. Then G has minimum valency at least 3 and we conclude from the hypothesis of Case 2 that the same holds for G' . Hence $G' \cong \langle 3k - 1 \rangle$ since, otherwise, $G' \in \mathcal{H}_{\langle 3k-1 \rangle}^n$ would imply that G' has minimum valency at most 2. Let $G'' = G - X_1 - X_2$. Then $G'' \cong \langle 3k - 2 \rangle$ and each of the vertices X_1 and X_2 has at least two neighbors in G'' . From this one immediately obtains $G \supseteq 0^k$. \square

3. The Case $s \geq 1$

We need some additional notation. Throughout, let k, s be integers with $k \geq s \geq 1$ and $k \geq 2$. By $0^{k-s} \dot{\cup} e^s$ we denote a graph consisting of k components of which s are complete graphs $\langle 2 \rangle$ and the remaining are cycles. By $\{n\}$ we denote the edgeless graph with n vertices. For $n \geq 2k - s$, let $f_s(n, k)$ denote the number of edges of the graph $\langle \langle 2k - s - 1 \rangle, n - 2k + s + 1 \rangle$, i.e.,

$$f_s(n, k) = \binom{2k - s - 1}{2} + (2k - s - 1)(n - 2k + s + 1).$$

Further, denote by $g_s(k)$ the number of edges of the complete graph $\langle 3k - s - 1 \rangle$, i.e.,

$$g_s(k) = \binom{3k - s - 1}{2}.$$

By an easy computation, one obtains that

$$(6) \quad g_s(k) \geq f_s(n, k) \text{ if and only if } n \leq 3k - s - 1 + \frac{k(k-1)}{2(2k-s-1)}$$

where equality holds simultaneously. Now, with the short-hand notation

$$\alpha(k, s) = 3k - s - 1 + \frac{k(k-1)}{2(2k-s-1)},$$

our result is the following.

Theorem 2. For integers k, s with $k \geq s \geq 1$ and $k \geq 2$, let $|G| = n \geq 3k - s$. If $e(G) > \max\{f_s(n, k), g_s(k)\}$, then $G \supseteq 0^{k-s} \dot{\cup} e^s$, and the extremal graphs are the following. If $n < \alpha(k, s)$, then $\langle 3k - s - 1 \rangle \dot{\cup} \{n - 3k + s + 1\}$ is the unique extremal graph; if $n > \alpha(k, s)$, then $\langle \langle 2k - s - 1 \rangle, n - 2k + s + 1 \rangle$ is the unique extremal graph; if $n = \alpha(k, s)$, then there are precisely two extremal graphs, $\langle 3k - s - 1 \rangle \dot{\cup} \{n - 3k + s + 1\}$ and $\langle \langle 2k - s - 1 \rangle, n - 2k + s + 1 \rangle$.

Proof. Because of (6), Theorem 2 is proved if we show the following.

$$(**) \quad \text{For each } n \geq 1, \text{ if } |G| = n \text{ and } e(G) \geq \max\{f_s(n, k), g_s(k)\} \text{ for integers } k, s \text{ with } k \geq s \geq 1, k \geq 2 \text{ and } n \geq 3k - s - 1, \text{ then } G \supseteq 0^{k-s} \dot{\cup} e^s \text{ or } G \cong \langle \langle 2k - s - 1 \rangle, n - 2k + s + 1 \rangle \text{ or } G \cong \langle 3k - s - 1 \rangle \dot{\cup} \{n - 3k + s + 1\}.$$

Proceeding similar as in the proof of Theorem 1, we use induction on n . For $n = 1$, assertion $(**)$ is trivial. Let $n \geq 2$ and assume that $(**)$ holds for graphs with fewer than n vertices. Let k, s such that $k \geq s \geq 1, k \geq 2, n \geq 3k - s - 1$ and let G be a graph with $|G| = n$ and $e(G) \geq \max\{f_s(n, k), g_s(k)\}$. If $n = 3k - s - 1$, then $e(G) \geq g_s(k)$ implies $G \cong \langle 3k - s - 1 \rangle$, and we are done. Hence let $n \geq 3k - s$.

For $s = 1$, assertion $(**)$ can be obtained from Theorem 1 as follows. Let G^+ result from G by adding to G a new vertex X which is joined by edges to all vertices of G . Note that $f(n+1, k) = f_1(n, k) + n$ and $g(n+1, k) = g_1(k) + n$. Hence $|G^+| = n + 1 \geq 3k$

and $e(G^+) = e(G) + n \geq \max\{f_1(n, k), g_1(k)\} + n = \max\{f(n + 1, k), g(n + 1, k)\}$, and we conclude from Theorem 1 that $G^+ \supseteq 0^k$ or $G^+ \in \mathcal{H}_{(3k-1)}^{n+1}$ or $G^+ \cong \langle 2k - 1 \rangle, n - 2k + 2$. If $G^+ \supseteq 0^k$, then (obviously) $G \supseteq 0^{k-1} \dot{\cup} e^1$. If $G^+ \in \mathcal{H}_{(3k-1)}^{n+1}$, then (because G^+ has a vertex of valency n) G^+ must be isomorphic to a graph which results from $\langle 3k - 1 \rangle$ by attaching $n - 3k + 2$ pendant edges to a fixed vertex of $\langle 3k - 1 \rangle$; hence $G \cong \langle 3k - 2 \rangle \dot{\cup} \{n - 3k + 2\}$. Finally, $G^+ \cong \langle 2k - 1 \rangle, n - 2k + 2$ immediately implies $G \cong \langle 2k - 2 \rangle, n - 2k + 2$. This settles the case $s = 1$. Hence let $s \geq 2$.

In addition, statement (**) is easily seen to be true for $k = s = 2$. Hence let $k \geq 3$.

If the minimum valency of G is at least $2k - s$, then we can apply the above mentioned theorem of Corrádi and Hajnal in the following way. Let G^+ result from G by adding s new vertices to G such that (i) each new vertex is adjacent to all vertices of G , and (ii) there is no edge between any two of the new vertices. Then $|G^+| \geq 3k$ and G^+ has minimum valency at least $2k$. Hence we can apply the theorem of Corrádi and Hajnal to G^+ , thus obtaining $G^+ \supseteq 0^k$. From this one easily obtains $G \supseteq 0^{k-s} \dot{\cup} e^s$. Indeed, for $t \in \{0, 1, \dots, \lfloor s/2 \rfloor\}$ call a spanning subgraph H of G a t -graph if $H = 0^{k-s+t} \dot{\cup} e^{s-2t} \dot{\cup} \{r\}$ with $r \geq 2t$ and note that G possesses at least one t -graph for some t since each system of k disjoint chordless cycles of G^+ gives rise to a t -graph of G (where t is the number of those of the k chordless cycles which do not contain an edge of G). For a t -graph H with t minimal denote by $C_1, \dots, C_{k-s+t}, e_1, \dots, e_{s-2t}, Y_1, \dots, Y_r$ the cycle-, edge-, and vertex-components of H , respectively. Suppose that $t \geq 1$. If there exists an edge of G joining a vertex Y_i to another vertex Y_j or to a cycle C_j , then one readily obtains a contradiction to the minimality of t . Otherwise, one concludes from the fact that each Y_i has valency at least $2k - s > s - 2t$ that there is an edge e_h such that Y_1 is a neighbor of one end-vertex of e_h and Y_2 is a neighbor of the other, which also gives rise to a contradiction to the minimality of t . Hence $t = 0$, implying $G \supseteq 0^{k-s} \dot{\cup} e^s$. Consequently, we may assume that G contains a vertex X_1 with $v(X_1) \leq 2k - s - 1$.

Case 1: $v(X_1) = 0$. Let $G' = G - X_1$ and observe that

$$(7) \quad f_s(n, k) - f_s(n - 1, k) = 2k - s - 1.$$

Hence $e(G') = e(G) \geq \max\{f_s(n, k), g_s(k)\} \geq \max\{f_s(n - 1, k) + 1, g_s(k)\}$. Thus, we can apply the induction hypothesis to G' and find $G' \supseteq 0^{k-s} \dot{\cup} e^s$ or $G' \cong \langle 3k - s - 1 \rangle \dot{\cup} \{n - 3k + s\}$. Hence $G \supseteq 0^{k-s} \dot{\cup} e^s$ or $G \cong \langle 3k - s - 1 \rangle \dot{\cup} \{n - 3k + s + 1\}$, and Case 1 is settled.

Case 2: $v(X_1) \geq 1$. Let X_2 be a neighbor of X_1 and put $G' = G - X_1 - X_2$. It follows from $v(X_1) \leq 2k - s - 1$ that

$$(8) \quad e(G) - e(G') \leq n + 2k - s - 3, \text{ where equality holds if and only if } v(X_1) = 2k - s - 1 \text{ and } v(X_2) = n - 1.$$

One easily obtains the following equalities:

$$(9) \quad \begin{aligned} g_s(k) - g_{s-1}(k - 1) &= 6k - 2s - 5, \\ f_s(n, k) - f_{s-1}(n - 2, k - 1) &= n + 2k - s - 3. \end{aligned}$$

We claim that

$$(10) \quad e(G') \geq \max\{f_{s-1}(n-2, k-1), g_{s-1}(k-1) + 1\}.$$

Clearly (by (8), (9) and because $e(G) \geq f_s(n, k)$) we have $e(G') \geq f_{s-1}(n-2, k-1)$ and thus it remains to show $e(G') \geq g_{s-1}(k-1) + 1$. Assume $e(G') \leq g_{s-1}(k-1)$. Then $f_{s-1}(n-2, k-1) \leq g_{s-1}(k-1)$ and we obtain from (6)

$$n \leq 3k - s - 1 + \frac{(k-1)(k-2)}{2(2k-s-2)}.$$

On the other hand, $6k - 2s - 5 = g_s(k) - g_{s-1}(k-1) \leq e(G) - e(G') \leq n + 2k - s - 3$, and thus $4k - s - 2 \leq n$. Hence

$$4k - s - 2 \leq 3k - s - 1 + \frac{(k-1)(k-2)}{2(2k-s-2)},$$

which (because $k \geq s$) implies

$$0 \leq 1 - k + \frac{(k-1)(k-2)}{2(2k-s-2)} \leq 1 - k + \frac{k-1}{2} = \frac{1-k}{2},$$

contradicting $k \geq 2$. This proves (10).

Applying the induction hypothesis to G' , we conclude (from (10)) $G' \supseteq 0^{k-s} \dot{\cup} e^{s-1}$ or $G' \cong \langle\langle 2k-s-2, n-2k+s \rangle\rangle$. The former clearly implies $G \supseteq 0^{k-s} \dot{\cup} e^s$; thus assume the latter. Then $e(G') = f_{s-1}(n-2, k-1)$, which (by (8), (9) and because $e(G) \geq f_s(n, k)$) implies $v(X_1) = 2k - s - 1$ and $v(X_2) = n - 1$. Hence $G - X_1 \cong \langle\langle 2k-s-1, n-2k+s \rangle\rangle$, from which one easily concludes $G \cong \langle\langle 2k-s-1, n-2k+s+1 \rangle\rangle$ or $G \supseteq 0^{k-s} \dot{\cup} e^s$. \square

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