Generalizations of the Grunwald-Wang Theorem and Applications to Ramsey Theory

George Mason University
Combinatorics, Algebra and Geometry Seminar (CAGS) Seminar

Based on http://math.colgate.edu/ integers/x18/x18.pdf

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Overview

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The Grunwald-Wang Theorem

Exercise: Suppose that $x \in \mathbb{Z}$ is such that $x = y^2 \pmod{p}$ has a solution for every prime p. Show that x is a perfect square.

Theorem

Let $n \in \mathbb{N}$ be arbitrary and suppose that $x \in \mathbb{Z}$ is such that x is an nth power modulo p for every prime p. x is either an nth power or $8|n$ and $x = 2^{\frac{n}{2}} y^n = 16^{\frac{n}{8}} y^n$.

W. Grunwald [8] in 1933 proved an incorrect version of this theorem since he failed to find the exceptional case when $8|n$. G. Whaples [15] in 1942 gave another incorrect proof of Grunwald's Theorem. S. Wang [13],[14] in 1948 found the counter example of 16 and gave a proof of the corrected theorem in his doctoral thesis.

The Exceptional case of $x = 16$

It is clear that $16 = 2^4$ is not an 8th power in $\mathbb{N}$. To see that 16 is an 8th power modulo p for every prime p, we observe that

$$x^8 - 16 = (x^4 - 4)(x^4 + 4) = (x^2 - 2)(x^2 + 2)(x^2 - 2x + 2)(x^2 + 2x + 2)$$

We note that the discriminant of the last 2 factors is -4. Since one of $2, -2$, and -4 will be a square modulo p, we see that $x^8 - 16$ will have a root modulo p.

The Grunwald-Wang Theorem intuitively says that 16 is the only obstruction to a certain local-global principle.

Grunwald-Wang for 3 Variables

Theorem (F., Magner, 2023)

Let $n \in \mathbb{N}$ be arbitrary and suppose that $a, b, c \in \mathbb{Z}$ are such that at least one of a, b, and c is an nth power modulo p for every prime p. Then either

1. *n is odd and one of a, b, and c is an nth power.*
2. *n is even and either one of a, b, and c is an $\frac{n}{2}$th power, or $4|n$ and each of a, b, and c is an $\frac{n}{4}$th power.*

In our paper we also address the situation for a general number field K with ring of integers $\mathcal{O}_K$.
This number theory is needed because one of the most commonly used partitions in the Ramsey Theory of diophantine equations are the Rado c_p-partitions. Given a prime p, the c_p-partition is $\mathbb{N} = \bigcup_{i=1}^{r} C_i$ where C_i consists of those natural numbers whose first non-zero digit in the base p expansion is i.

Some Exceptional Cases

It is clear that we still have an exceptional case if $8|n$ and one of a, b, and c is of the form $2^{\frac{n}{2}}y^n$.

A new exceptional case is found with $n = 4$, $a = 3^4 \cdot 4^2 \cdot 5^2$, $b = 3^2 \cdot 4^4 \cdot 5^2$, and $c = a + b = 3^2 \cdot 4^2 \cdot 5^4$.

There are more exceptional cases that actually show up from the 2 variable situation.

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Ramsey Theory Preliminaries

Definition

If $p \in \mathbb{Z}[x_1, \cdots, x_n]$ is a polynomial and S is a set such as $\mathbb{N}$, $\mathbb{Z} \setminus \{0\}$, or the ring of integers $\mathcal{O}_K$ of some number field K, then the equation

$$p(x_1, \cdots, x_n) = 0 \tag{1}$$

is **partition regular (p.r.) over** S if for any partition $S = \sqcup_{i=1}^r C_i$ there exists $1 \leq i_0 \leq r$ and $x_1, \cdots, x_n \in C_{i_0}$ satisfying (1).

The equation $x + y = 2z + 1$ is **NOT** partition regular over $\mathbb{N}$ as seen by considering the partition $\mathbb{N} = (2\mathbb{N}) \sqcup (2\mathbb{N} + 1)$.
The equation $x + y = z$ **is** partition regular over $\mathbb{N}$, and this can be proven using Ramsey's theorem about complete graphs.

Polynomial Equations and Partition Regularity

1. $x + y = z$ is p.r. over $\mathbb{N}$ (Schur [12])
2. $xy = z$ is p.r. over $\mathbb{N}$ (corollary of Schur)
3. $ax + by = dz$ is p.r. over $\mathbb{N}$ if and only if $d \in \{a, b, a + b\}$ (special case of Rado's Theorem [10])
4. $ax = wz^n$ is p.r. over $\mathbb{N}$ if and only if $\sqrt[n]{a} \in \mathbb{N}$. (See [4])
5. $x + y = wz$ is p.r. over $\mathbb{N}$ (Bergelson-Hindman [3],[9])
6. $x - y = q(z)$ with $q \in x\mathbb{Z}[x]$ is p.r. over $\mathbb{N}$ (Bergelson [2, Page 53])
7. $x + y = z^2$ is not non-trivially p.r. over $\mathbb{N}$ (Csikvári, Gyarmati and Sárkozy [5], see also Green and Lindqvist [7])
8. It is open as to whether $x^2 + y^2 = z^2$ is p.r. over $\mathbb{N}$ [6].
9. It is open as to whether $z = xy + x$ is p.r. over $\mathbb{N}$ [11].
10. $z = x^y$ is p.r. over $\mathbb{N}$, but $z = x^{y+1}$ is open. Sahasrabudhe [11]

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When is $ax + by = cw^m z^n$ p.r.?

Theorem (F., Magner 2022)

Let $m, n \in \mathbb{N}$ and $a, b, c \in \mathbb{Z} \setminus \{0\}$.

1. *If $m, n \geq 2$, then the equation*
$$ax + by = cw^m z^n \tag{2}$$
is p.r. over $\mathbb{Z} \setminus \{0\}$ if and only if $a + b = 0$.
2. *If one of $\frac{a}{c}$, $\frac{b}{c}$, or $\frac{a+b}{c}$ is a nth power in $\mathbb{Q}$, then the equation*
$$ax + by = cwz^n \tag{3}$$
is p.r. over $\mathbb{Z} \setminus \{0\}$. If $\mathbb{Q}$ is replaced with $\mathbb{Q}^+$ then $\mathbb{Z} \setminus \{0\}$ can be replaced with $\mathbb{N}$. This holds when $\mathbb{Z}$ and $\mathbb{Q}$ are replaced by a general integral domain R and its field of fractions K.

When is $ax + by = cw^m z^n$ p.r.? (Continued)

Theorem (F., Magner 2022)

3 *Suppose that*

$$ax + by = cwz^n \tag{4}$$

is p.r. over $\mathbb{Q} \setminus \{0\}$.

- (a) *If n is odd then one of $\frac{a}{c}$, $\frac{b}{c}$, or $\frac{a+b}{c}$ is an nth power in $\mathbb{Q}$.*
- (b) *If $n \neq 4, 8$ is even then one of $\frac{a}{c}$, $\frac{b}{c}$, or $\frac{a+b}{c}$ is a $\frac{n}{2}$th power in $\mathbb{Q}$. We used Fermat's Last Theorem here!*
- (c) *If n is even, then either one of $\frac{a}{c}$, $\frac{b}{c}$, or $\frac{a+b}{c}$ is a square in $\mathbb{Q}$, or $(\frac{a}{c})(\frac{b}{c})(\frac{a+b}{c})$ is a square in $\mathbb{Q}$.*

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Examples

$$-x - y = wz \text{ is p.r. over } \mathbb{Z} \setminus \{0\} \text{ but not } \mathbb{N}. \tag{5}$$

$$-8x + 2y = wz^3 \text{ is p.r. over } \mathbb{Z} \setminus \{0\}, \text{ but what about } \mathbb{N}? \tag{6}$$

$$4x + 5y = 2wz^2 \text{ is p.r. over } \mathbb{N}[\sqrt{2}] \text{ but not } \mathbb{Z} \setminus \{0\}. \tag{7}$$

$$3^4 \cdot 4^2 \cdot 5^2 x + 3^2 \cdot 4^4 \cdot 5^2 y = wz^4 \text{ is not p.r. over } \mathbb{Z} \setminus \{0\}. \tag{8}$$

(In light of slide 7, this result required additional work.)

More Examples

$$16x + 17y = wz^8 \text{ remains open.} \tag{9}$$

$$(2^{12} - 33)x + 33y = wz^8 \text{ remains open.} \tag{10}$$

$$\begin{aligned} 16x_1 + 17y_1 &= w_1 z_1^8 \\ (2^{12} - 33)x_2 + 33y_2 &= w_2 z_2^8 \text{ is not p.r. over } \mathbb{Z} \setminus \{0\} \text{ as a system.} \end{aligned} \tag{11}$$

$$\begin{aligned} 16x_1 + 17y_1 &= w_1 z_1^8 \\ 33x_2 - 17y_2 &= w_2 z_2^8 \text{ remains open.} \end{aligned} \tag{12}$$

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The c_p-coloring

For $p \in \mathbb{N}$ a prime define a partition $c_p : \mathbb{Q} \setminus \{0\} \to [1, p-1]$ by the first nonzero digit of the p-adic expansion, i.e.,

$$c_p\left(\frac{r}{s}\right) \equiv (p^{-v_p(r)}r)(p^{-v_p(s)}s)^{-1} \pmod{p}. \qquad (13)$$

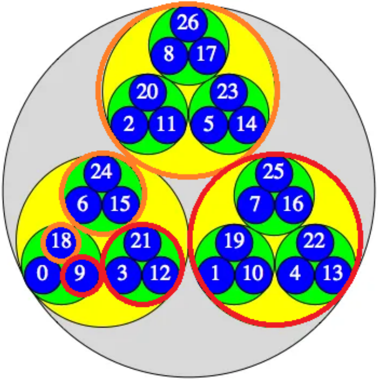

Figure: $c_3^{-1}(\{1\})$ is red and $c_3^{-1}(\{2\})$ is orange. See also [1] and [4].

Using the c_p colorings 1/3

The equation $2x + 3y = z$ is not partition regular over $\mathbb{N}$, as it contains no solutions in any cell of c_7. To see this, let us assume for the sake of contradiction that for some $i \in [1, 6]$ and $x, y, z \in c_7^{-1}(\{i\})$ we have $2x + 3y = z$. By considering the fact that $c_7(2x + 3y) = c_7(z)$, we see that

$$i \equiv c_7(z) \equiv \begin{cases} 2i \equiv c_7(2x) & \text{if } v_7(x) < v_7(y) \\ 3i \equiv c_7(3y) & \text{if } v_7(x) > v_7(y) \\ 5i \equiv c_7(2x + 3y) & \text{if } v_7(x) = v_7(y), \end{cases} \pmod 7$$

but none of these congruences can hold modulo 7, which yields the desired contradiction.

Using the c_p colorings 2/3

The following system of equations is not partition regular over $\mathbb{N}$.

$$\begin{aligned} 2x + y &= z \\ 3w + y &= z \end{aligned} \tag{14}$$

We again assume for the sake of contradiction that there is some $i \in [1,6]$ and $w, x, y, z \in C_i$ satisfying the above system. The considerations of the previous slide show us that we must have $i = 1$ and $v_7(x), v_7(w) > v_7(y) = v_7(z)$. WLOG, $v_7(x) \geq v_7(w)$, so a contradiction is obtained by considering the digit $z_{v_7(w)}$ in position $v_7(w)$ of the base 7 expansion of z. In particular, we have that

$$z_{v_7(w)} \equiv y_{v_7(w)} + 3i \notin y_{v_7(w)} + \{0, 2i\} \pmod 7. \tag{15}$$

Using the c_p colorings 3/3

The equation $2x + 3y = wz^2$ is not partition regular over $\mathbb{N}$. Let us assume for the sake of contradiction that there was some $i \in [1, 42]$ and $w, x, y, z \in c_{43}^{-1}(\{i\})$ satisfying the given equation. Since we have $c_{43}(2x + 3y) = c_{43}(wz^2)$, we see that

$$i^3 \equiv c_{43}(wz^2) \equiv \begin{cases} 2i \equiv c_{43}(2x) & \text{if } v_{43}(x) < v_{43}(y) \\ 3i \equiv c_{43}(3y) & \text{if } v_{43}(x) > v_{43}(y) \\ 5i \equiv c_{43}(2x+3y) & \text{if } v_{43}(x) = v_{43}(y), \end{cases} \pmod{43}$$

but none of the above congruences are solvable since 2, 3, and 5 are not squares modulo 43, which yields the desired contradiction.

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