On the energy of some circulant graphs

Igor Shparlinski *

Department of Computing, Macquarie University, Sydney, NSW 2109, Australia

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Abstract

We give an explicit construction of circulant graphs of very high energy. This construction is based on Gauss sums. We also show the Littlewood conjecture can be used to establish new result for a certain class of circulant graphs.

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1. Introduction

Given a graph $G$ with $n$ vertices and eigenvalues $\lambda_0, \ldots, \lambda_{n-1}$, we define its energy as

$$E(G) = \sum_{j=0}^{n-1} |\lambda_j|.$$ 

This notion is related to some applications of graph theory to chemistry and has been studied intensively in the literature, see [1,3,5,6,9–12,15,17] and references therein. In particular, it is shown in [9] that

$$E(G) \leq \frac{n}{2}(\sqrt{n} + 1)$$

for any graph $G$ with $n$ vertices as well as that the bound (1) can be achieved for infinitely many graphs.
For the family of bipartite graphs a stronger bound
\[ E(G) \leq \frac{n}{4}(\sqrt{2n} + 2) \]
has been shown in [10]. Here we give an explicit construction of an infinite family of circulant graphs which attain the bound (1) asymptotically.

We now recall that an \( n \)-vertex graph \( \mathcal{G} \) is called hyperenergetic if \( E(\mathcal{G}) > 2(n - 1) \). This concept has been introduced in [4] in relation to some problems of molecular chemistry.

Recently several results have been obtained for the hyperenergetic circulant graphs, see [1,17]. In particular, it is well known that the complete \( n \)-vertex graph \( \mathcal{K}_n \) satisfies \( E(\mathcal{K}_n) = 2(n - 1) \). In [1] a conjecture is made that the graphs obtained from \( \mathcal{K}_n \) by removing a Hamiltonian circuit are not hyperenergetic. In fact, in [17] this conjecture has been shown to be wrong for this and an even more general class of circulant graphs. Here we derive a somewhat stronger, albeit less explicit, lower bound on the energy of such graph.

Our proofs follow almost immediately from two classical number theoretic results, the formula for the absolute value of Gauss sums, see [13, Chapter 5] and the Littlewood conjecture, which has been independently settled by Konyagin [8] and McGehee et al. [14], see also [16].

### 2. Background on circulant graphs

For an integer \( n \geq 1 \) we let \( \mathbb{Z}_n \) denote the residue ring modulo \( n \), which we assume to be represented by the integers \( \{1, \ldots, n\} \).

Given a subset \( \mathcal{S} \subseteq \{1, \ldots, [n/2]\} \) an indirected \( n \)-vertex circulant graph \( \mathcal{C}_n(\mathcal{S}) \) is a graph whose vertices are labeled by elements of \( \mathbb{Z}_n \) and the vertices \( i, j \in \mathbb{Z}_n \), are connected if and only if either \( j - i \in \mathcal{S} \) (certainly we compute \( i - j \) in \( \mathbb{Z}_n \) and also treat \( \mathcal{S} \) as a subset of \( \mathbb{Z}_n \)).

We also define \( \overline{\mathcal{C}_n(\mathcal{S})} \) as the complement of \( \mathcal{C}_n(\mathcal{S}) \), which is clearly is also a circulant graph. Moreover
\[
\overline{\mathcal{C}_n(\mathcal{S})} = \mathcal{C}_n(\mathcal{R}),
\]
where
\[
\mathcal{R} = \{1, \ldots, [n/2]\} \setminus \mathcal{S}. \tag{2}
\]

Let us define \( e(z) = \exp(2\pi iz) \) where \( i = \sqrt{-1} \). Then, it is well known that for \( \mathcal{S} \subseteq \{1, \ldots, [n/2]\} \), the eigenvalues of the graph \( \mathcal{G}_n(\mathcal{S}) \) are given by
\[
\lambda_j(\mathcal{S}) = \sum_{s \in \mathcal{S} \cup -\mathcal{S}} e(js/n), \quad j = 0, 1, \ldots, n - 1. \tag{3}
\]

In particular, if \( \mathcal{R} \) is given by (2), then we easily see that
\[
\lambda_0(\mathcal{S}) = 2\#\mathcal{S} - \delta(\mathcal{S}) \quad \text{and} \quad \lambda_0(\mathcal{R}) = n - 2\#\mathcal{S} - 1 + \delta(\mathcal{S}), \tag{4}
\]
where \( \delta(\mathcal{S}) = 1 \) if \( n/2 \in \mathcal{S} \) and \( \delta(\mathcal{S}) = 0 \) otherwise. Also
\[
\lambda_j(\mathcal{S}) + \lambda_j(\mathcal{R}) = \sum_{s=1}^{n-1} e(js/n) = -1, \quad j = 1, \ldots, n - 1. \tag{5}
\]

### 3. Highly energetic circulants

Let \( p \) be a prime number. We denote by \( \mathcal{Q}_p \) the set of all quadratic residues modulo \( p \) in the set \( \{1, \ldots, (p - 1)/2\} \).
**Theorem 1.** For any prime \( p \equiv 1 \pmod{4} \), we have
\[
E(\mathcal{E}_p(\mathcal{Q}_p)) \geq \frac{(p-1)(p^{1/2}+1)}{2}.
\]

**Proof.** Since \(-1\) is a quadratic residue modulo \( p \equiv 1 \pmod{4} \), we see that \( \mathcal{Q}_p \cup -\mathcal{Q}_p \) is the set of all \((p-1)/2\) quadratic residues modulo \( p \). Therefore, by (4) we obtain \( \lambda_0(\mathcal{Q}_p) = (p-1)/2 \).

Also, from (3) we derive that for \( j = 1, \ldots, p-1 \) we have
\[
|\lambda_j(\mathcal{Q}_p)| = \sum_{s \in \mathcal{Q}_p \cup -\mathcal{Q}_p} e(js/p) = \frac{1}{2} \sum_{u=1}^{p-1} e(ju^2/p)
\]
since for every quadratic residue \( s \) the congruence \( s \equiv u^2 \pmod{p} \) has exactly two solutions.

Recalling the properties of Gauss sums, see [13, Theorems 5.15 and 5.33], we see that
\[
\sum_{u=1}^{p-1} e(ju^2/p) = \sum_{u=0}^{p-1} e(ju^2/p) - 1 = \begin{cases} \frac{p^{1/2} - 1}{2}, & \text{if } j \in \mathcal{Q}_p; \\ -\frac{p^{1/2} - 1}{2}, & \text{otherwise}; \end{cases}
\]
for \( j = 1, \ldots, p-1 \). Therefore
\[
|\lambda_j(\mathcal{Q}_p)| = \begin{cases} \left(\frac{p^{1/2} + 1}{2}\right) / 2, & \text{if } j \in \mathcal{Q}_p; \\ \left(\frac{p^{1/2} - 1}{2}\right) / 2, & \text{otherwise}; \end{cases} \quad j = 1, \ldots, p-1
\]
and after simple calculations the result follows. \( \square \)

4. Circulants with fixed links and the Littlewood conjecture

As we have remarked, it has been conjectured in [1] that the graphs obtained from the complete \( n \)-vertex graph \( \mathcal{K}_n \) by removing a Hamiltonian circuit, that is, the graphs \( \mathcal{C}_n(\{1\}) \), are not hyperenergetic. This conjecture has turned out to be wrong and in fact it is shown in [17] that the following limit exists and also that
\[
\liminf_{n \to \infty} E(\mathcal{C}_n(\mathcal{I}))/n > 2
\]
for any fixed set \( \mathcal{I} = \{s_1, \ldots, s_m\} \) of \( m \geq 1 \) distinct positive integers. Here we show that in fact more is true for these graphs and also for their complements \( \mathcal{C}_n(\mathcal{I}) \).

Let us define the constants \( \kappa_r, r = 1, 2, \ldots \), by the equation
\[
\kappa_r = \inf_{\#U = r} \frac{1}{2\pi} \int_0^1 \left| \sum_{u \in U} e(\alpha u) \right| d\alpha,
\]
where the infimum is taken over all \( r \)-element sets \( U \) of integers. We recall that the famous Littlewood conjecture, which has been proved by Konyagin [8] and McGehee et al. [14], asserts that
\[
\kappa_r > C \log r, \quad (6)
\]
where \( C > 0 \) is an absolute constant. Moreover, Stegeman [16] has proved that one can take
\[
C = \frac{4}{\pi^2}, \quad (7)
\]
while is expected that in fact (6) holds for any \( C < 4/\pi^2 \), provided that \( r \) is large enough.
Theorem 2. For any fixed set $\mathcal{S} = \{s_1, \ldots, s_m\}$ of $m \geq 1$ distinct positive integers, we have
\[
\lim_{n \to \infty} E(\overline{\mathcal{C}}_n(\mathcal{S}))/n \geq 1 + \kappa_2m.
\]

Proof. We have
\[
E(\overline{\mathcal{C}}_n(\mathcal{S})) = \sum_{j=0}^{n-1} |\lambda_j(\mathcal{R})|,
\]
where $\mathcal{R}$ is given by (2). Assuming that $n > 2m$, by (4) and (5), we derive
\[
E(\overline{\mathcal{C}}_n(\mathcal{S})) = n - 2m - 1 + \sum_{j=1}^{n-1} |1 + \lambda_j(\mathcal{S})|.
\]
Since
\[
f(\alpha) = \left| 1 + \sum_{s \in \mathcal{S} \cup \{0\}} e(\alpha s) \right|
\]
is a continuous function of $\alpha$, we see that by (3) that
\[
\frac{1}{n-1} \sum_{j=1}^{n-1} |1 + \lambda_j(\mathcal{S})| = \frac{1}{n-1} \sum_{j=1}^{n-1} \left| \sum_{s \in \mathcal{S} \cup \{0\}} e(js/n) \right| = \int_0^1 \left| \sum_{s \in \mathcal{S} \cup \{0\}} e(\alpha s) \right| d\alpha + o(1)
\]
\[
\geq \kappa_2m + o(1)
\]
which finishes the proof. \qed

In particular, we see from (6), (7) and Theorem 2 that
\[
\lim_{n \to \infty} E(\overline{\mathcal{C}}_n(\mathcal{S}))/n > 1 + \frac{4}{\pi^3} \log(2m).
\]

Certainly the same arguments also apply that under the conditions of Theorem 2 we have
\[
\lim_{n \to \infty} E(\mathcal{C}_n(\mathcal{S}))/n \geq \kappa_2m > \frac{4}{\pi^3} \log(2m).
\]

5. Remarks

It is easy to see that the bound (6) is tight up to the value of the constant. For example, it is attained for the set $\mathcal{U} = \{1, \ldots, r\}$. However for some sets $\mathcal{U}$ satisfying some additional properties it can be improved. Typically for such special sets $\log r$ can be replaced with $r^{1/2}$, see [2,7] and references therein. Accordingly, one can improve Theorem 2 for sets $\mathcal{S}$ satisfying some special properties.

There is also a reverse link between graph theory and number theory. For example, Lemma 2.4 of [15] generalises a result of [7].
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References