

# Maximum likelihood thresholds for colored Gaussian graphical models

**Roser Homs Pons**, Centre de Recerca Matemàtica

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work *in progress* with Olga Kuznetsova, Bernadette Stolz, Danai Deligeorgaki, Joe Johnson, Bryson Kagy and Aida Maraj

**New Directions in Algebraic Statistics**

IMSI, July 25, 2025

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**Our models:** Gaussian graphical models with additional vertex and edge symmetries

# Start with an example

**Table 1.** Empirical concentrations (on or above the diagonal) and partial correlations (below the diagonal) for the examination marks in five mathematical subjects

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Concentrations (<math>\times 1000</math>) and partial correlations</i>				
	<i>Mechanics</i>	<i>Vectors</i>	<i>Algebra</i>	<i>Analysis</i>	<i>Statistics</i>
Mechanics	5.24	-2.44	-2.74	0.01	-0.14
Vectors	0.33	10.43	-4.71	-0.79	-0.17
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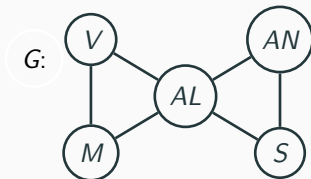
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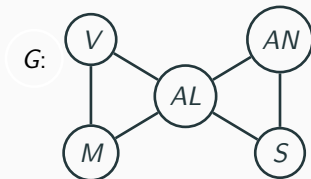
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**Theorem** Uncolored chordal graphs:  
 $wmlt(G) = mlt(G) = \text{maximal clique size}$

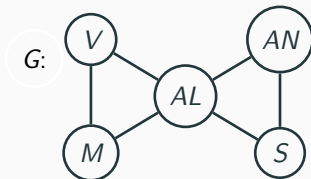
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**Theorem** Uncolored chordal graphs:  
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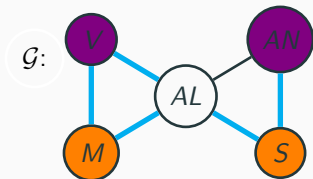
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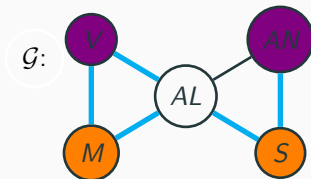
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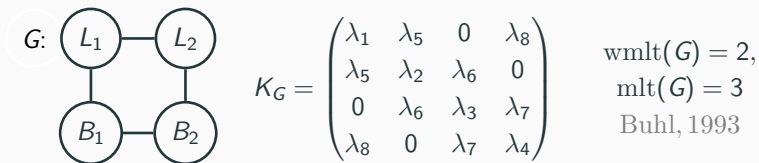
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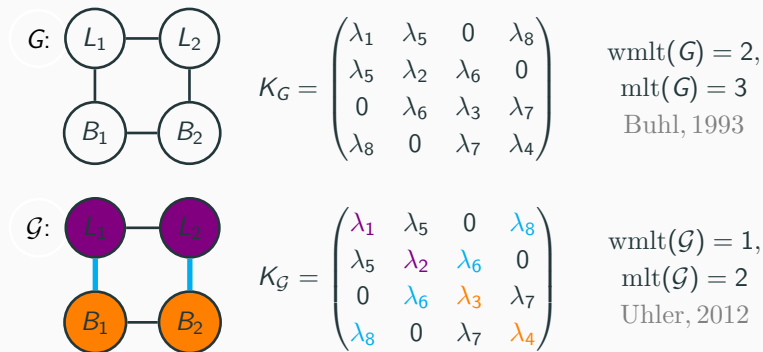
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$G = (V, E)$  graph with vertex set  $V = [m]$ ,

$\lambda : V \sqcup E \rightarrow [d]$  coloring of the vertices and edges of  $G$  for some  $d \in \mathbb{N}$ ,

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$$\mathcal{L}_{\mathcal{G}} = \left\{ \begin{pmatrix} \lambda_1 & \lambda_2 \\ \lambda_2 & \lambda_1 \end{pmatrix} \in \text{Sym}(2) \mid \lambda_1, \lambda_2 \in \mathbb{R} \right\}$$

## Existence of the maximum likelihood estimate

$S = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n x_i x_i^t$  sample covariance matrix,  $x_1, \dots, x_n \in \mathbb{R}^m$ .

MLE for the covariance matrix  $\hat{\Sigma} = (\hat{K})^{-1}$

$$\hat{K} = \begin{array}{ll} \arg \max_K & \log \det K - \langle S, K \rangle, \\ \text{subject to} & K \in \mathcal{K}_G \end{array} \quad \langle S, K \rangle := \text{tr}(SK) = \sum_{1 \leq i, j \leq m} s_{ij} k_{ij}$$

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Sufficient statistics:

$$\begin{aligned} \pi_G : \text{Sym}(m) &\longrightarrow \mathbb{R}^d \\ S &\longmapsto (\langle S, K_1 \rangle, \dots, \langle S, K_d \rangle) \end{aligned}$$

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$$\begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}, \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 1 \\ 1 & 0 \end{pmatrix} \text{ basis of } \mathcal{L}_G$$

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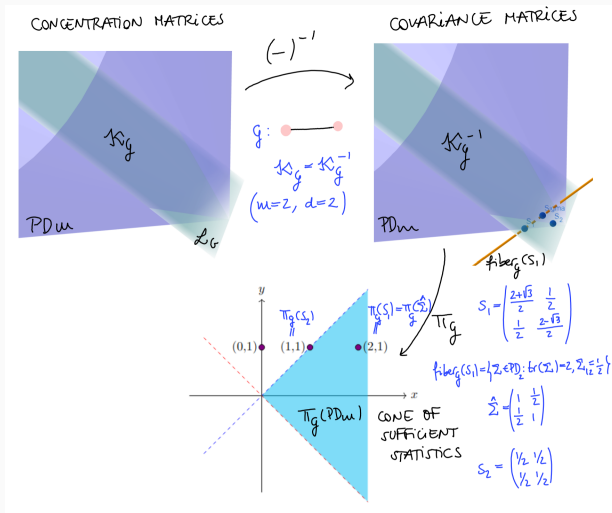
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**Theorem** The MLE  $\hat{\Sigma}$  exists for a sample covariance matrix  $S$  iff

$$\text{fiber}_G(S) := \{\Sigma \in \text{PD}_m \mid \pi_G(\Sigma) = \pi_G(S)\} \neq \emptyset.$$

Then the MLE  $\hat{\Sigma}$  is the unique matrix in  $\text{fiber}_G(S)$  such that  $\hat{\Sigma}^{-1} \in \mathcal{K}_G$ .

# Likelihood geometry by example

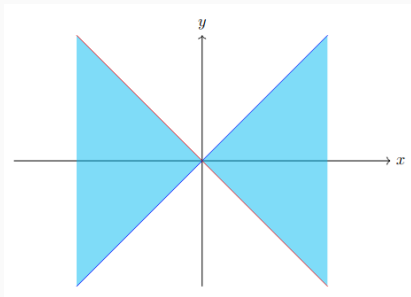


## An algebraic relaxation: the generic completion rank

Let  $\mathcal{G}$  be a colored graph on  $[m]$ . The *generic completion rank*  $\text{gcr}(\mathcal{G})$  is the smallest  $n$  such that  $\dim \pi_{\mathcal{G}}(\text{Sym}(m, n)) = d$ .

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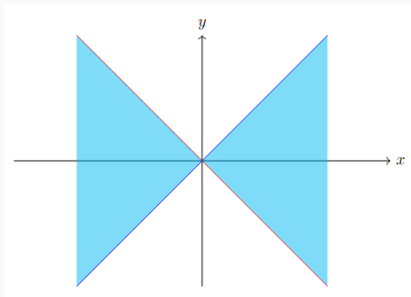


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**Figure 1:**  $\pi_{\mathcal{G}}(\text{Sym}(2, 1))$  for the 2-cycle with a single vertex color.

**Theorem** (Uhler, 2012)  $\text{mlt}(\mathcal{G}) \leq \text{gcr}(\mathcal{G})$

## Matrix completion problems

For  $S = \begin{pmatrix} s_{11} & 1/2 \\ 1/2 & s_{22} \end{pmatrix}$ , the MLE is  $\hat{\Sigma} = \begin{pmatrix} \text{tr}(S)/2 & 1/2 \\ 1/2 & \text{tr}(S)/2 \end{pmatrix}$  if it exists.

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Positive definite completions:

- $\text{tr}(S) = 2$ :  $\text{fiber}_{\mathcal{G}}(S) = \left\{ \begin{pmatrix} 1 \pm a & 1/2 \\ 1/2 & 1 \mp a \end{pmatrix} : 0 \leq a < \sqrt{3}/2 \right\}$
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Low rank completions (rank 1):

- $\text{tr}(S) = 2$ :  $\begin{pmatrix} (2 \pm \sqrt{3})/2 & 1/2 \\ 1/2 & (2 \mp \sqrt{3})/2 \end{pmatrix}$
- $\text{tr}(S) = 1$ :  $\begin{pmatrix} 1/2 & 1/2 \\ 1/2 & 1/2 \end{pmatrix}$
- $\text{tr}(S) = 0$ : no real rank 1 completion but  $\begin{pmatrix} \pm i/2 & 1/2 \\ 1/2 & \mp i/2 \end{pmatrix}$

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If  $\mathcal{G}$  is the disjoint union of a vertex and an  $m$ -complete graph with  $|\Lambda(V)| = 1$  and  $|\Lambda(E)| = |E|$ ,

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# MLE existence via the ideal of the projection

Ideal of the projection via  $\pi_{\mathcal{G}}$  of rank  $n$  matrices:

$$I_{\mathcal{G},n} := \left( I_{n+1}(S) + \left\langle \{t_i - \langle S, K_i \rangle\}_{1 \leq i \leq d} \right\rangle \right) \cap \mathbb{R}[t_1, \dots, t_d].$$

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- ...exists with probability strictly between 0 and 1

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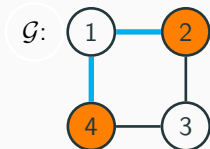
- ...**never** exists

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3-cycle with two vertex color for  $n = 1$



## Computing MLT via elimination ideal - an example

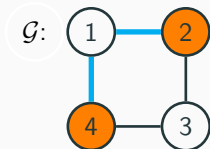


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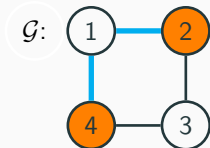


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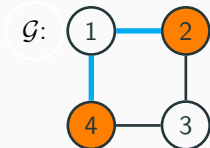
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$$\text{wmlt}(\mathcal{G}) = \text{mlt}(\mathcal{G}) = \text{gcr}(\mathcal{G}) = 2$$

# Reinterpretation of thresholds: generalizing Bleckherman-Sinn

**Theorem** The generic completion rank of  $\mathcal{G}$  is the smallest maximum likelihood threshold of  $\mathcal{G}$  is the smallest weak maximum likelihood threshold

$n$  for which there is no matrix  $K \neq 0$  in  $\mathcal{L}_{\mathcal{G}} \cap \text{PSD}_m$  such that

$x_i \in \ker(K)$  for some l.i. generic observations  $x_1, \dots, x_n \in \mathbb{R}^m$ .  
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# Reinterpretation of thresholds: generalizing Bleckherman-Sinn

**Theorem** The **generic completion rank** of  $\mathcal{G}$  is the smallest **weak maximum likelihood threshold** **is equal to**  $\text{Sym}_m$  **contains a PD matrix** **contains a PD matrix** **some** for **generic** observations  $x_1, \dots, x_n \in \mathbb{R}^m$ . **some**

$$I_{\mathcal{G}} := \langle \{(y_1 \dots y_m) K_i (y_1 \dots y_m)^t\}_{d+1 \leq i \leq m(m-1)/2} \rangle, \quad R := \mathbb{R}[y_1, \dots, y_m] / I_{\mathcal{G}},$$

$$K_{d+1}, \dots, K_{m(m-1)/2} \text{ basis of } \mathcal{L}_{\mathcal{G}}^{\perp}$$

$$\ell_i = x_i^{(1)} y_1 + \dots + x_i^{(m)} y_m \in R_1 \text{ for some } x_i^{(j)} \in \mathbb{R}$$

$$\langle \ell_1, \dots, \ell_n \rangle_2 \in R_2 \simeq \text{Sym}(m) / \mathcal{L}_{\mathcal{G}}^{\perp},$$

$$x_i = \left( x_i^{(1)}, \dots, x_i^{(m)} \right)^t \in \mathbb{R}^m.$$

## 4-cycle with a single vertex color

**Proposition** (H., Kuznetsova, Stolz 25+)

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  - Rewrite  $K(a_1 \dots a_m)^t = 0$  as  $A(\lambda_1 \dots \lambda_{m+1})^t = 0$ .
  - If  $a_1 \neq 0$ ,  $(\sum_i^m (-1)^{i+1} a_i^2) \lambda_1 = 0$  for  $m$  even:  $\lambda_1 = 0$ .

# Summary of techniques

For gcr:

- Compute ideal of the projection.

For mlt or wmlt:

- Studying the sign of the generators of the ideal of the projection.
- Studying the algebraic boundary of the cone of sufficient statistics.

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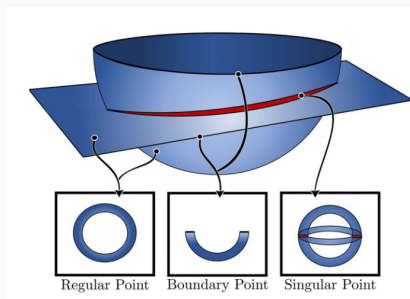
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- Compute rank of the jacobian of  $\pi_{\mathcal{G}}$  restricted to  $\text{Sym}(m, n)$ .

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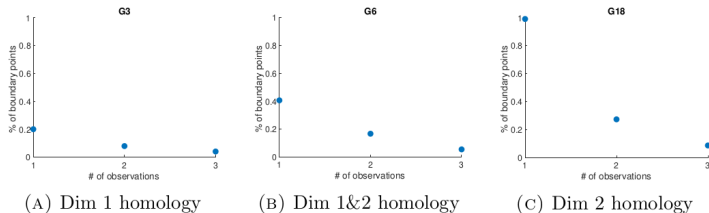
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# Local persistence homology

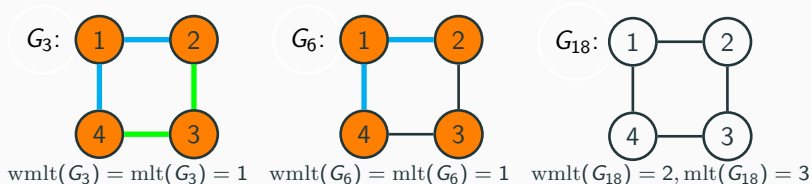


**Figure 2:** *Geometric anomaly detection in data*, Bernadette Stolz et al. PNAS (2020)

# Performance



**Figure 3:** Percentage of boundary points in two colored 4-cycles and the uncolored 4-cycle. Points with less than 4 neighbours in their annular neighbourhoods are excluded.



**Thanks a lot!**  
**Moltes gràcies!**