

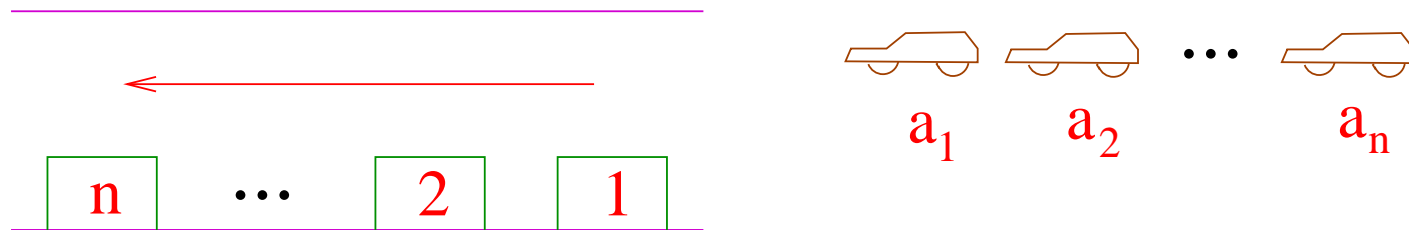


A Survey of Parking Functions

Richard P. Stanley

M.I.T.

Parking functions



Car C_i prefers space a_i . If a_i is occupied, then C_i takes the next available space. We call (a_1, \dots, a_n) a **parking function** (of length n) if all cars can park.

$n = 2$: 11 12 21

$n = 3$: 111 112 121 211 113 131 311 122
212 221 123 132 213 231 312 321

Permutations of parking functions

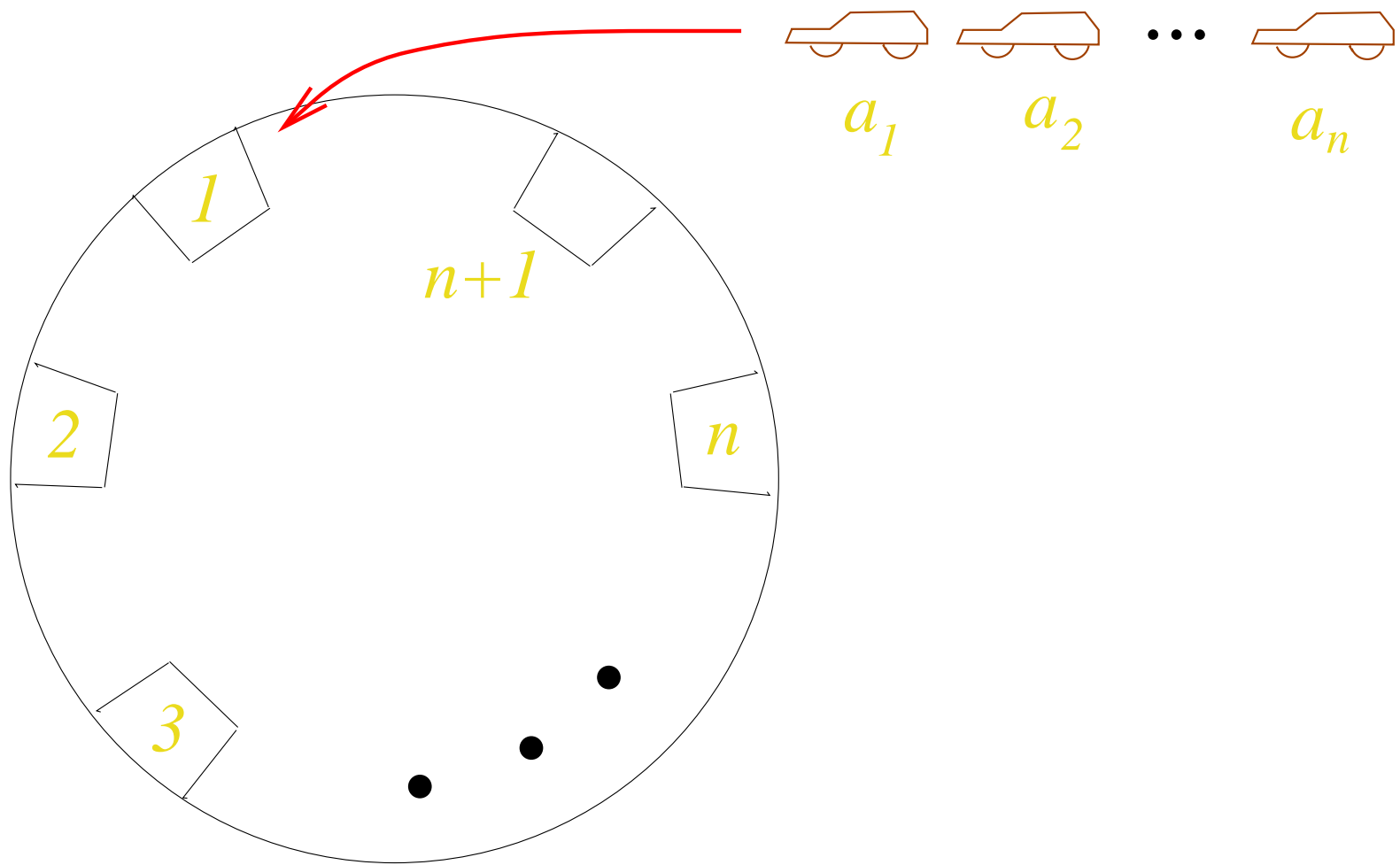
Easy: Let $\alpha = (a_1, \dots, a_n) \in \mathbb{P}^n$. Let $b_1 \leq b_2 \leq \dots \leq b_n$ be the increasing rearrangement of α . Then α is a parking function if and only $b_i \leq i$.

Corollary. *Every permutation of the entries of a parking function is also a parking function.*

Enumeration of parking functions

Theorem (**Pyke**, 1959; **Konheim and Weiss**, 1966). Let $f(n)$ be the number of parking functions of length n . Then $f(n) = (n + 1)^{n-1}$.

Proof (**Pollak**, c. 1974). Add an additional space $n + 1$, and arrange the spaces in a circle. Allow $n + 1$ also as a preferred space.



Conclusion of Pollak's proof

Now all cars can park, and there will be one empty space. α is a parking function \Leftrightarrow if the empty space is $n + 1$. If $\alpha = (a_1, \dots, a_n)$ leads to car C_i parking at space p_i , then $(a_1 + j, \dots, a_n + j)$ (modulo $n + 1$) will lead to car C_i parking at space $p_i + j$. Hence exactly one of the vectors

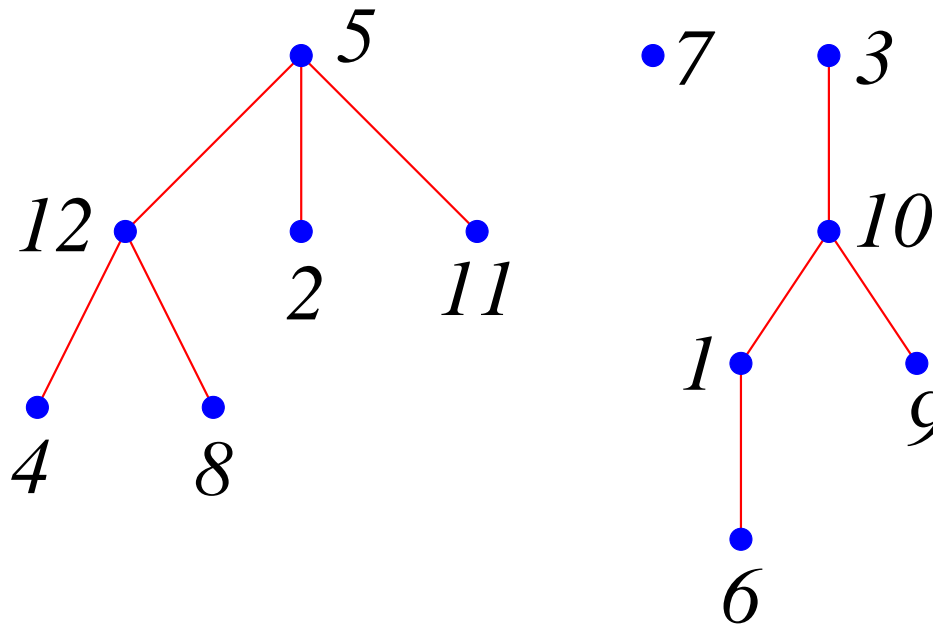
$$(a_1 + i, a_2 + i, \dots, a_n + i) \pmod{n + 1}$$

is a parking function, so

$$f(n) = \frac{(n + 1)^n}{n + 1} = (n + 1)^{n-1}.$$

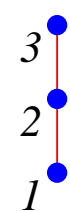
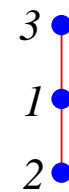
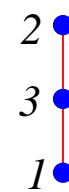
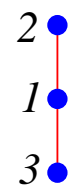
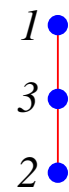
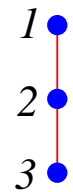
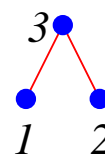
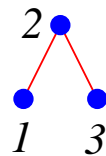
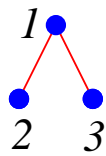
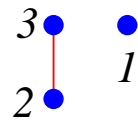
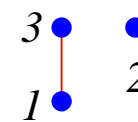
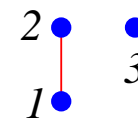
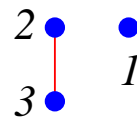
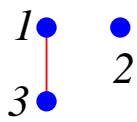
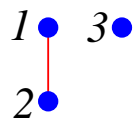
Forest inversions

Let F be a rooted forest on the vertex set $\{1, \dots, n\}$.



Theorem (Sylvester-Borchardt-Cayley). *The number of such forests is $(n + 1)^{n-1}$.*

The case $n = 3$

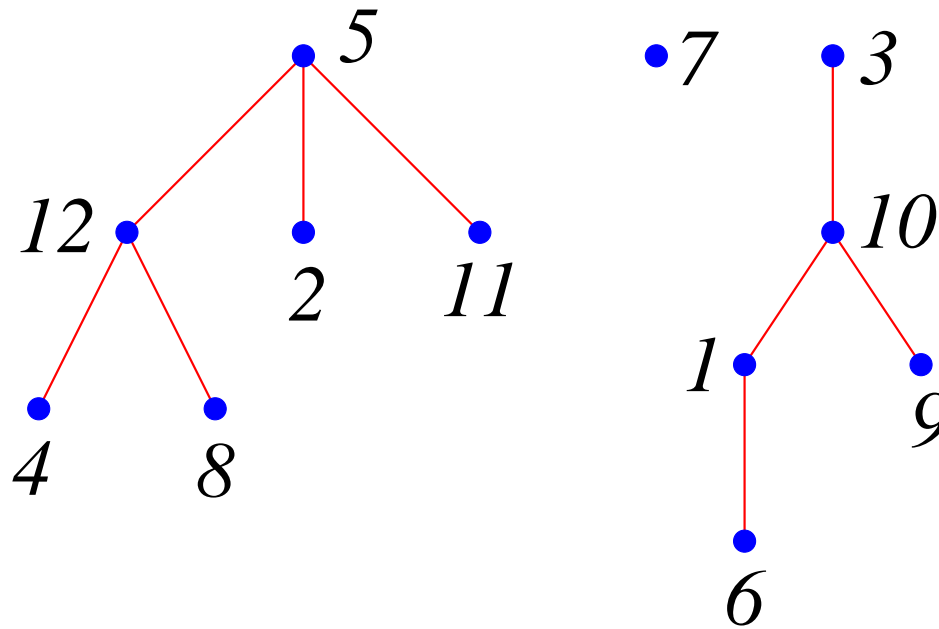


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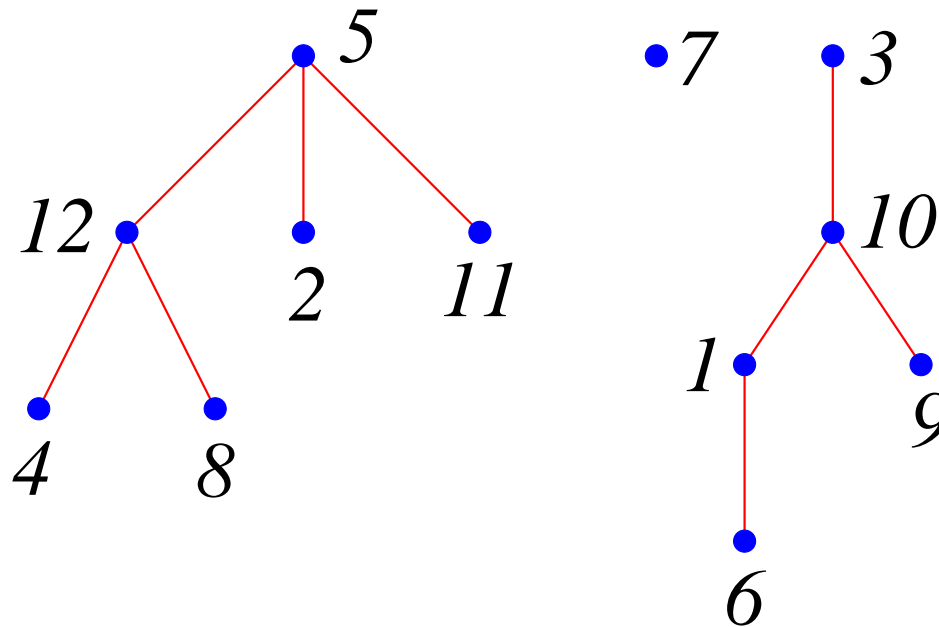
An **inversion** in F is a pair (i, j) so that $i > j$ and i lies on the path from j to the root.

$$\mathbf{inv}(F) = \#(\text{inversions of } F)$$

Example of forest inversions



Example of forest inversions



Inversions: $(5, 4)$, $(5, 2)$, $(12, 4)$, $(12, 8)$

$(3, 1)$, $(10, 1)$, $(10, 6)$, $(10, 9)$

$$\text{inv}(F) = 8$$

The inversion enumerator

Let

$$I_n(q) = \sum_F q^{\text{inv}(F)},$$

summed over all forests F with vertex set $\{1, \dots, n\}$. E.g.,

$$I_1(q) = 1$$

$$I_2(q) = 2 + q$$

$$I_3(q) = 6 + 6q + 3q^2 + q^3$$

Relation to connected graphs

Theorem (Mallows-Riordan 1968,
Gessel-Wang 1979) *We have*

$$I_n(1 + q) = \sum_G q^{e(G)-n},$$

where G ranges over all connected graphs (without loops or multiple edges) on $n + 1$ labelled vertices, and where $e(G)$ denotes the number of edges of G .

A generating function

Corollary.

$$\sum_{n \geq 0} I_n(q) (q-1)^n \frac{x^n}{n!} = \frac{\sum_{n \geq 0} q^{\binom{n+1}{2}} \frac{x^n}{n!}}{\sum_{n \geq 0} q^{\binom{n}{2}} \frac{x^n}{n!}}$$

$$\sum_{n \geq 1} I_n(q) (q-1)^{n-1} \frac{x^n}{n!} = \log \sum_{n \geq 0} q^{\binom{n}{2}} \frac{x^n}{n!}$$

Relation to parking functions

Theorem (**Kreweras**, 1980). *We have*

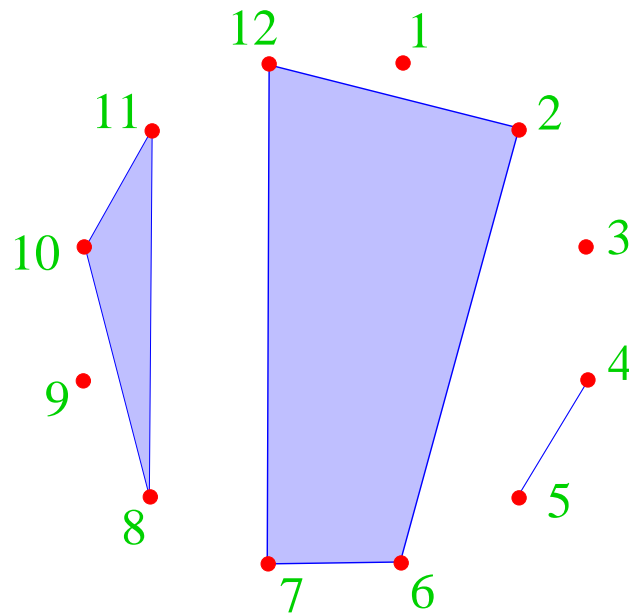
$$q^{\binom{n}{2}} I_n(1/q) = \sum_{(a_1, \dots, a_n)} q^{a_1 + \dots + a_n},$$

where (a_1, \dots, a_n) ranges over all parking functions of length n .

Noncrossing partitions

A **noncrossing partition** of $\{1, 2, \dots, n\}$ is a partition $\{B_1, \dots, B_k\}$ of $\{1, \dots, n\}$ such that

$$a < b < c < d, a, c \in B_i, b, d \in B_j \Rightarrow i = j.$$



Enumeration of noncrossing partitions

Theorem (H. W. Becker, 1948–49). *The number of noncrossing partitions of $\{1, \dots, n\}$ is the Catalan number*

$$C_n = \frac{1}{n+1} \binom{2n}{n}.$$

Chains of noncrossing partitions

A **maximal chain** \mathfrak{m} of noncrossing partitions of $\{1, \dots, n + 1\}$ is a sequence

$$\pi_0, \pi_1, \pi_2, \dots, \pi_n$$

of noncrossing partitions of $\{1, \dots, n + 1\}$ such that π_i is obtained from π_{i-1} by merging two blocks into one. (Hence π_i has exactly $n + 1 - i$ blocks.)

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1-2-3-4-5 1-25-3-4 1-25-34

125-34 12345

A chain labeling

Define:

$\min B$ = least element of B

$j < B$: $j < k \ \forall k \in B$.

Suppose π_i is obtained from π_{i-1} by merging together blocks B and B' , with $\min B < \min B'$.

Define

$$\Lambda_i(\mathbf{m}) = \max\{j \in B : j < B'\}$$

$$\Lambda(\mathbf{m}) = (\Lambda_1(\mathbf{m}), \dots, \Lambda_n(\mathbf{m})).$$

An example

1-2-3-4-5 1-25-3-4 1-25-34
125-34 12345

we have

$$\Lambda(\mathfrak{m}) = (2, 3, 1, 2).$$

Number of chains

Theorem. Λ is a bijection between the maximal chains of noncrossing partitions of $\{1, \dots, n + 1\}$ and parking functions of length n .

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Is there a connection with Voiculescu's theory of free probability?

The Shi arrangement: background

Braid arrangement \mathcal{B}_n : the set of hyperplanes

$$x_i - x_j = 0, \quad 1 \leq i < j \leq n,$$

in \mathbb{R}^n .

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Let R_0 be the **base region**

$$R_0 : x_1 > x_2 > \cdots > x_n.$$

Labeling the regions

Label R_0 with

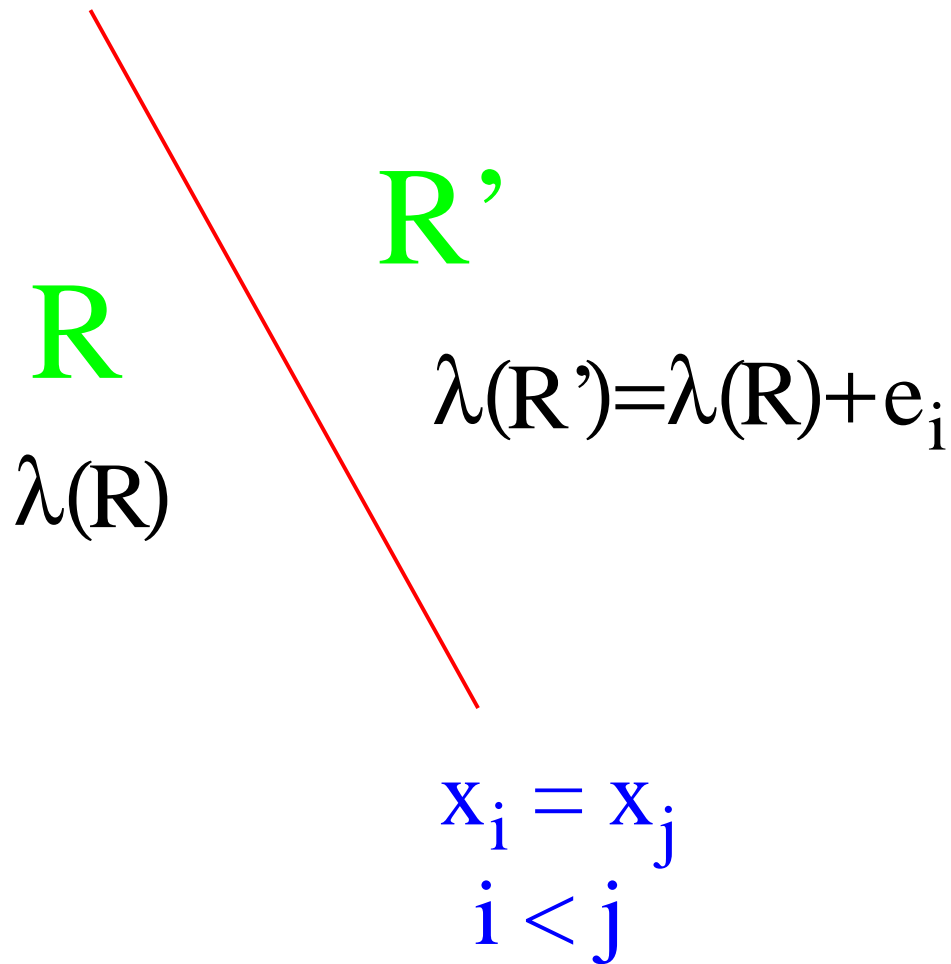
$$\lambda(R_0) = (1, 1, \dots, 1) \in \mathbb{Z}^n.$$

If R is labelled, R' is separated from R only by $x_i - x_j = 0$ ($i < j$), and R' is unlabelled, then set

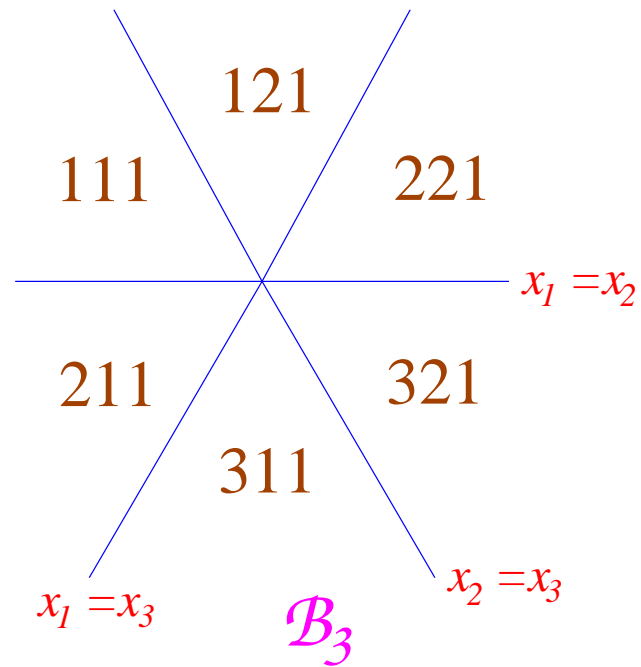
$$\lambda(R') = \lambda(R) + e_i,$$

where $e_i = i$ th unit coordinate vector.

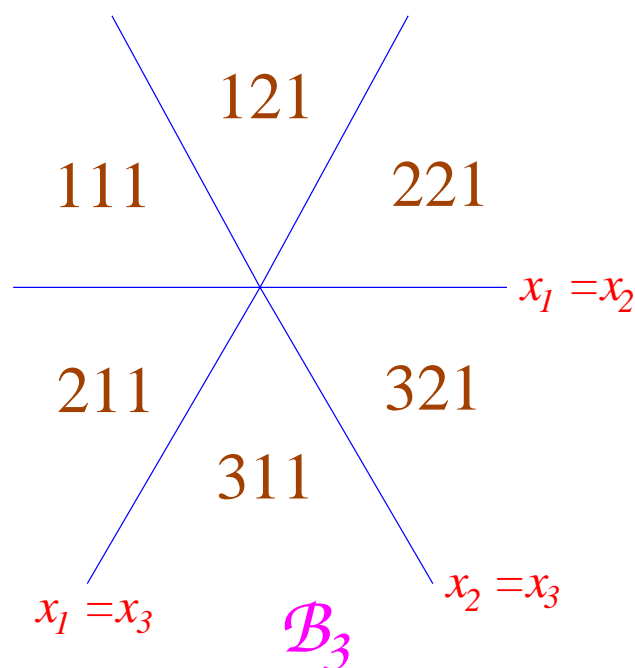
The labeling rule



Description of labels



Description of labels



Theorem (easy). *The labels of \mathcal{B}_n are the sequences $(b_1, \dots, b_n) \in \mathbb{Z}^n$ such that $1 \leq b_i \leq n - i + 1$.*

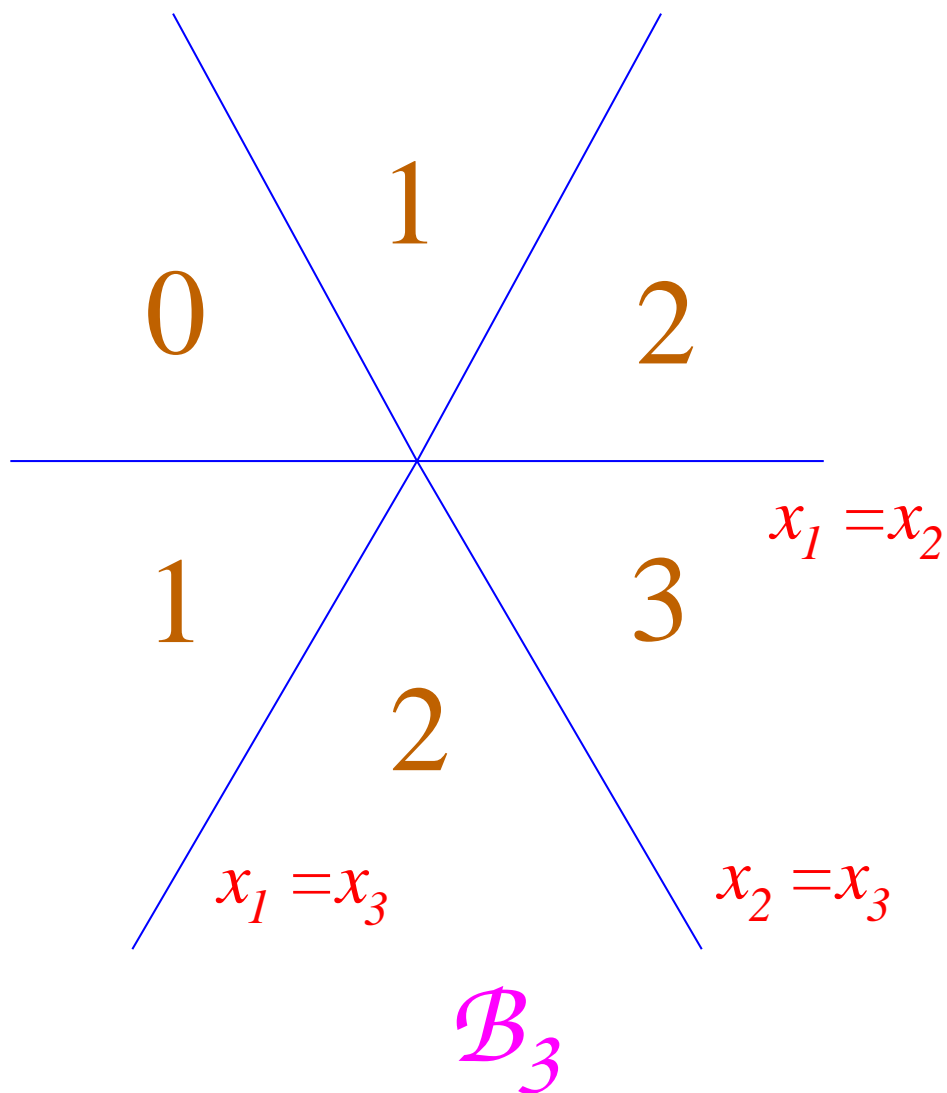
Separating hyperplanes

Recall

$$R_0 : x_1 > x_2 > \cdots > x_n.$$

Let $d(R)$ be the number of hyperplanes in \mathcal{B}_n separating R_0 from R .

The case $n = 3$



Generating function for $d(R)$

NOTE: If $\lambda(R) = (b_1, \dots, b_n)$, then
 $d(R) = \sum (b_i - 1)$.

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 $d(R) = \sum (b_i - 1)$.

Easy consequence:

Corollary.

$$\sum_{R \in \mathcal{R}} q^{d(R)} = (1 + q)(1 + q + q^2) \cdots (1 + q + \cdots + q^{n-1}).$$

The Shi arrangement

Shi Jianyi (时俭益)

The Shi arrangement

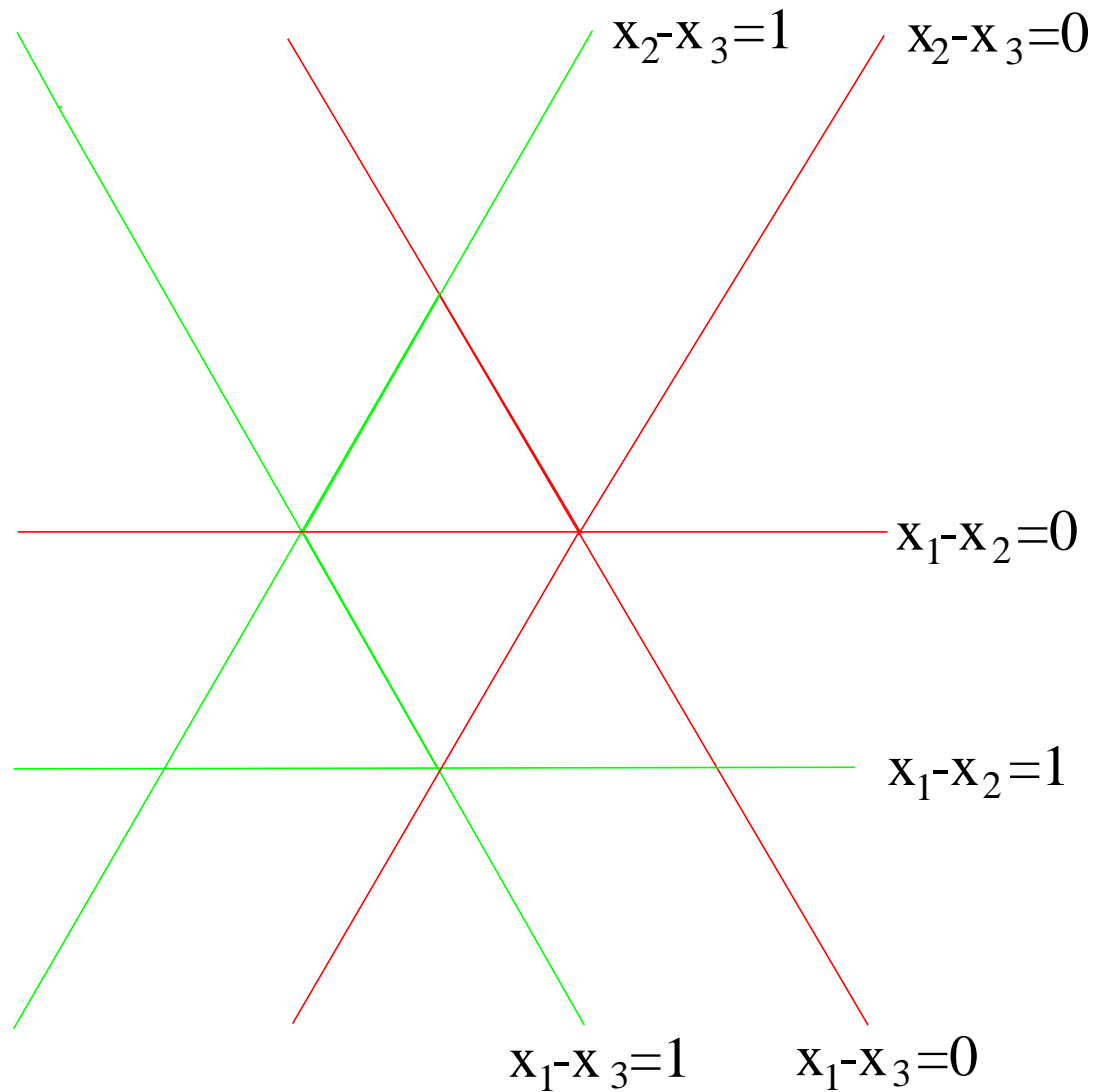
Shi Jianyi (时俭益)

Shi arrangement \mathcal{S}_n : the set of hyperplanes

$$x_i - x_j = 0, 1,$$

$$1 \leq i < j \leq n, \text{ in } \mathbb{R}^n.$$

The case $n = 3$



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base region:

$$R_0 : x_n + 1 > x_1 > \cdots > x_n$$

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The labeling rule

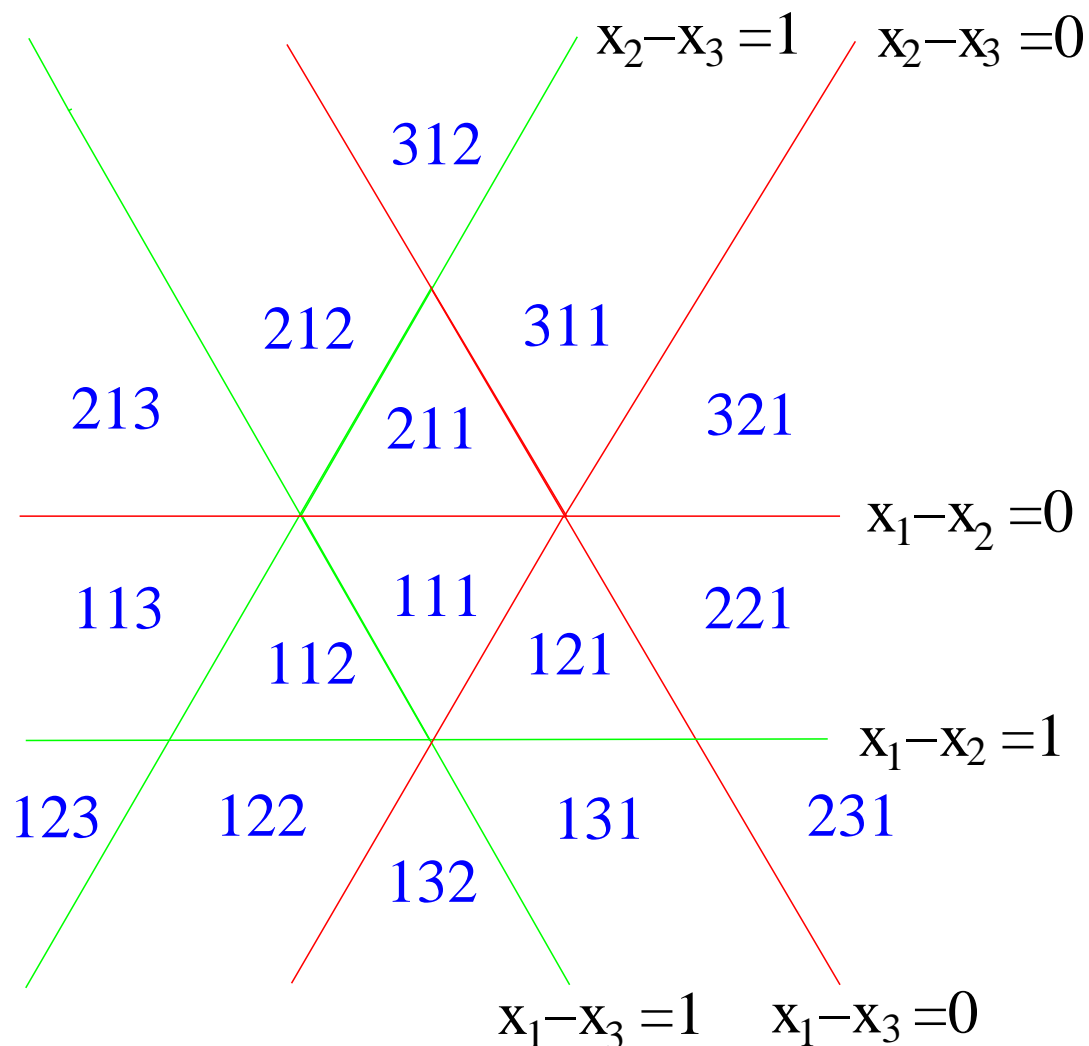
$$\begin{array}{l} \mathbf{R} \\ \lambda(\mathbf{R}) \end{array} \quad \begin{array}{l} \mathbf{R}' \\ \lambda(\mathbf{R}') = \lambda(\mathbf{R}) + e_i \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{l} x_i = x_j \\ i < j \end{array}$$

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$$\begin{array}{l} x_i = x_j + 1 \\ i < j \end{array}$$

The labeling for $n = 2$



Description of the labels

Theorem (Pak, S.). *The labels of S_n are the parking functions of length n (each occurring once).*

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Theorem (Pak, S.). *The labels of \mathcal{S}_n are the parking functions of length n (each occurring once).*

Corollary (Shi, 1986)

$$r(\mathcal{S}_n) = (n + 1)^{n-1}$$

The parking function \mathfrak{S}_n -module

The symmetric group \mathfrak{S}_n acts on the set \mathcal{P}_n of all parking functions of length n by permuting coordinates.

Sample properties

- Multiplicity of trivial representation (number of orbits) = $C_n = \frac{1}{n+1} \binom{2n}{n}$

$$n = 3 : \quad \mathbf{111 \quad 211 \quad 221 \quad 311 \quad 321}$$

- Number of elements of \mathcal{P}_n fixed by $w \in \mathfrak{S}_n$ (character value at w):

$$\#\mathbf{Fix}(w) = (n + 1)^{(\#\text{cycles of } w) - 1}$$

Symmetric functions

For symmetric function aficionados: Let $\mathbf{PF}_n = \text{ch}(\mathcal{P}_n)$.

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbf{PF}_n &= \sum_{\lambda \vdash n} (n+1)^{\ell(\lambda)-1} z_\lambda^{-1} p_\lambda \\ &= \sum_{\lambda \vdash n} \frac{1}{n+1} s_\lambda(1^{n+1}) s_\lambda \\ &= \sum_{\lambda \vdash n} \frac{1}{n+1} \left[\prod_i \binom{\lambda_i + n}{n} \right] m_\lambda \end{aligned}$$

More properties

$$\text{PF}_n = \sum_{\lambda \vdash n} \frac{n(n-1) \cdots (n - \ell(\lambda) + 2)}{m_1(\lambda)! \cdots m_n(\lambda)!} h_\lambda.$$

$$\omega \text{PF}_n = \sum_{\lambda \vdash n} \frac{1}{n+1} \left[\prod_i \binom{n+1}{\lambda_i} \right] m_\lambda.$$

Background: invariants of \mathfrak{S}_n

The group \mathfrak{S}_n acts on $R = \mathbb{C}[x_1, \dots, x_n]$ by permuting variables, i.e., $w \cdot x_i = x_{w(i)}$. Let

$$R^{\mathfrak{S}_n} = \{f \in R : w \cdot f = f \text{ for all } w \in \mathfrak{S}_n\}.$$

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Well-known:

$$R^{\mathfrak{S}_n} = \mathbb{C}[e_1, \dots, e_n],$$

where

$$e_k = \sum_{1 \leq i_1 < i_2 < \dots < i_k \leq n} x_{i_1} x_{i_2} \cdots x_{i_k}.$$

The coinvariant algebra

Let

$$D = R / \left(R_+^{\mathfrak{S}_n} \right) = R / (e_1, \dots, e_n).$$

Then $\dim D = n!$, and \mathfrak{S}_n acts on D according to the **regular representation**.

Diagonal action of \mathfrak{S}_n

Now let \mathfrak{S}_n act **diagonally** on

$$R = \mathbb{C}[x_1, \dots, x_n, y_1, \dots, y_n],$$

i.e.,

$$w \cdot x_i = x_{w(i)}, \quad w \cdot y_i = y_{w(i)}.$$

As before, let

$$R^{\mathfrak{S}_n} = \{f \in R : w \cdot f = f \text{ for all } w \in \mathfrak{S}_n\}$$

$$D = R / \left(R_+^{\mathfrak{S}_n} \right).$$

Haiman's theorem

Theorem (Haiman, 1994, 2001).

$\dim D = (n + 1)^{n-1}$, and the action of \mathfrak{S}_n on D is isomorphic to the action on \mathcal{P}_n , tensored with the sign representation. (Connections with Macdonald polynomials, Hilbert scheme of points in the plane, etc.)

λ -parking functions

Let

$$\lambda = (\lambda_1, \dots, \lambda_n), \quad \lambda_1 \geq \dots \geq \lambda_n > 0.$$

A **λ -parking function** is a sequence $(a_1, \dots, a_n) \in \mathbb{P}^n$ whose increasing rearrangement $b_1 \leq \dots \leq b_n$ satisfies $b_i \leq \lambda_{n-i+1}$.

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Ordinary parking functions:

$$\lambda = (n, n - 1, \dots, 1)$$

Enumeration of λ -parking fns.

Theorem (**Steck** 1968, **Gessel** 1996). *The number $N(\lambda)$ of λ -parking functions is given by*

$$N(\lambda) = n! \det \left[\frac{\lambda_{n-i+1}^{j-i+1}}{(j-i+1)!} \right]_{i,j=1}^n$$

The parking function polytope

Given $x_1, \dots, x_n \in \mathbb{R}_{\geq 0}$, define

$\mathcal{P} = \mathcal{P}(x_1, \dots, x_n) \subset \mathbb{R}^n$ by: $(y_1, \dots, y_n) \in \mathcal{P}_n$ if

$$0 \leq y_i, \quad y_1 + \dots + y_i \leq x_1 + \dots + x_i$$

for $1 \leq i \leq n$.

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for $1 \leq i \leq n$.

(also called **Pitman-Stanley polytope**)

Volume of \mathcal{P}

Theorem. (a) *Let $x_1, \dots, x_n \in \mathbb{N}$. Then*

$$n! V(\mathcal{P}_n) = N(\lambda),$$

where $\lambda_{n-i+1} = x_1 + \dots + x_i$.

$$(b) \quad n! V(\mathcal{P}_n) = \sum_{\substack{\text{parking functions} \\ (i_1, \dots, i_n)}} x_{i_1} \cdots x_{i_n}.$$

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NOTE. If each $x_i > 0$, then \mathcal{P}_n has the combinatorial type of an n -cube.

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