Combinatorial aspects of code loops

Petr Vojtěchovský

Abstract. The existence and uniqueness (up to equivalence defined below) of code loops was first established by R. Griess in [3]. Nevertheless, the explicit construction of code loops remained open until T. Hsu introduced the notion of symplectic cubic spaces and their Frattini extensions, and pointed out how the construction of code loops followed from the (purely combinatorial) result of O. Chein and E. Goodaire contained in [2]. Within this paper, we focus on their combinatorial construction and prove a more general result 2.1 using the language of derived forms.

Keywords: code loops, symplectic cubic spaces, combinatorial polarization, binary linear codes, divisible codes

Classification: Primary 05A19; Secondary 94B05, 20N05

1. Symplectic cubic spaces and code loops

Throughout this paper, let $F = \{0, 1\}$ be the two-element field, and let V be a finite-dimensional vector space over F. For $v \in V$, let $|v|$ denote the number of non-zero coordinates of v — the *weight* of v. When w is another vector in V, let $v * w$ denote the vector whose ith coordinate is non-zero if and only if the ith coordinate of both v and w is non-zero. A binary linear code $C \leq V$ is said to be of *level* r if r is the biggest integer such that 2^r divides the weight of every codeword of C. We write $lev(C) = r$. A code C is *doubly even* if $lev(C) \geq 2$.

For the rest of this section, let C be a doubly even code. Following Griess, a mapping $\varphi : C \times C \longrightarrow F$ is called a *factor set* if $\varphi(c, c) = |c|/4$, $\varphi(c, d) + \varphi(d, c) = |c * d|/2$, and $\varphi(c, d) + \varphi(c, d + e) + \varphi(d, e) + \varphi(c + d, e) = |c * d * e|$ is satisfied for all $c, d, e \in C$. When φ is a factor set, then $(F \times C, \circ)$ with multiplication

$$(\alpha, c) \circ (\beta, d) = (\alpha + \beta + \varphi(c, d), c + d)$$

becomes a Moufang loop, a *code loop* of C. R. Griess shows in [3] that every C admits a factor set φ, and thus that there is a code loop for every doubly even code C. Moreover, when φ, ψ are two factor sets for C, then they are *equivalent* in the sense that the second derived form $(\varphi + \psi)_2$ is the zero mapping. (See Section 2 for the definition of derived forms.)

Note that a loop L is a code loop of C if there is a two-element central subgroup $Z \leq Z(L)$ such that L/Z is isomorphic to C as an elementary abelian 2-group.

The following ideas are due to T. Hsu [4]. Let L be a code loop of C. Let $[\gamma,\delta]$ denote the commutator of γ, δ, and $[\gamma,\delta,\epsilon]$ the associator of $\gamma,\delta,\epsilon\in L$. Define functions $\sigma : C \longrightarrow Z$, $\chi : C\times C \longrightarrow Z$, and $\alpha : C\times C\times C \longrightarrow Z$ by

$$\begin{aligned} \sigma(c) &= \gamma^2, \\ \chi(c,d) &= [\gamma,\delta], \\ \alpha(c,d,e) &= [\gamma,\delta,\epsilon], \end{aligned} \tag{1}$$

where $\gamma,\delta,\epsilon\in L$ are any preimages of c, d, e with respect to $L \longrightarrow L/Z = C$, respectively. One can check that these functions are well defined, and that the following equalities are satisfied for any $c,d,e,f\in C$, $n\in\mathbb{N}$ (cf. Theorems 3.3 and 4.6 of [4]):

$$\begin{aligned} \sigma(nc) &= n\sigma(c), \\ \sigma(c+d) &= \sigma(c)+\sigma(d)+\chi(c,d), \\ \chi(c,c) &= 0, \\ \chi(c,d) &= -\chi(d,c), \\ \chi(nc,d) &= n\chi(c,d), \\ \chi(c+d,e) &= \chi(c,e)+\chi(d,e)+\alpha(c,d,e), \\ \alpha(c,d,d) &= \alpha(d,c,c) = \alpha(d,d,c) = 0, \\ \alpha(c,d,e) &= -\alpha(d,c,e) = \alpha(d,e,c), \\ \alpha(nc,d,e) &= n\alpha(c,d,e), \\ \alpha(c+d,e,f) &= \alpha(c,e,f)+\alpha(d,e,f), \end{aligned} \tag{2}$$

where the operation in Z is written additively.

The above situation is a special instance of a so-called *symplectic cubic space* (V,σ,χ,α), where V is a vector space over F, and $\sigma : V \longrightarrow \mathbb{Z}_2$, $\chi : V\times V \longrightarrow \mathbb{Z}_2$, $\alpha : V\times V\times V \longrightarrow \mathbb{Z}_2$ are mappings satisfying (2).

For any symplectic cubic space $(V,\ \sigma,\ \chi,\ \alpha)$ it is reasonable to define a *Frattini extension* L, which is a loop with two-element central subgroup Z such that L/Z is isomorphic to V, and such that $\gamma^2=\sigma(c)$, $[\gamma,\delta]=\chi(c,d)$, and $[\gamma,\delta,\epsilon]=\alpha(c,d,e)$ is satisfied for all γ,δ,ϵ in L. The existence and uniqueness of Frattini extensions is discussed in detail in [4]. For our purposes it is sufficient to show that the code loops are precisely the Frattini extensions of symplectic cubic spaces.

To see this, let L be a code loop of C. Then L is a Frattini extension of the symplectic cubic space (C,σ,χ,α), where σ, χ, and α are defined as in (1).

Conversely, let L be a Frattini extension of (V,σ,χ,α). As remarked by T. Hsu; O. Chein and E. Goodaire proved in [2] that for any symplectic cubic space (V,σ,χ,α) there is a doubly even code C isomorphic to V, and a basis $\{e_1,\dots,e_n\}$ of C such that $|e_i|/4=\sigma(e_i)$, $|e_i*e_j|/2=\chi(e_i,e_j)$, and $|e_i*e_j*e_k|=\alpha(e_i,e_j,e_k)$ for all basis elements e_i, e_j, e_k. All we have to check then is that $\sigma' : c\mapsto |c|/4$,

$\chi' : (c,d) \mapsto |c*d|/2$, and $\alpha' : (c,d,e) \mapsto |c*d*e|$ form — together with C — a symplectic cubic space $(C,\sigma',\chi',\alpha')$, since then L is a Frattini extension of $(C,\sigma',\chi',\alpha')$, too, and whence L is a code loop of C. It is straightforward to show that σ', χ', and α' satisfy (2).

2. Generalization

We have seen in the previous section that code loops can be characterized as Frattini extensions of symplectic cubic spaces. The crucial step in the proof was to show that any symplectic cubic space can be identified with $(C,\sigma',\chi',\alpha')$, where C is a certain doubly even code, and σ', χ', and α' are defined as above. We need to introduce more notation in order to generalize this result.

Let $I = \{v_1,\dots,v_s\}$ be a subset of V with possible repetitions. Then $\sum I$ is defined to be the vector $v_1 + \cdots + v_s$, and $\prod I$ stands for $v_1 * \cdots * v_s$. To avoid inconvenience, let $\sum\emptyset = \prod\emptyset = 0$, where $\emptyset$ denotes the empty set.

When $P : V \longrightarrow F$ is a mapping with $P(0) = 0$, M. Aschbacher defined in [1] the *sth derived form* $P_s : V^s \longrightarrow F$ of P by

$$P_s(v_1,\dots,v_s) = \sum_{J\subseteq I} P\Big(\sum J\Big).$$

See [1, Section 11] for the basic properties of derived forms. At this point, let us at least recall that the derived forms of P can be defined inductively by

$$(3)\quad P_{s+1}(u,v,v_2,\dots,v_s) = P_s(u,v_2,\dots,v_s) + P_s(v,v_2,\dots,v_s) + P_s(u+v,v_2,\dots,v_s).$$

The smallest integer r such that P_s is the zero mapping for all $s > r$ is called the *combinatorial degree* of P, *deg*(P). Such an integer is guaranteed to exist and cannot exceed the dimension of V.

Since σ', χ', and α' are related by polarization — $\sigma'(c+d) = \sigma'(c) + \sigma'(d) + \chi'(c,d)$, $\chi'(c+d,e) = \chi'(c,e) + \chi'(d,e) + \alpha'(c,d,e)$ — we see that $\chi' = \sigma'_2$, and $\alpha' = \sigma'_3$. Therefore the Chein's and Goodaire's result can be restated as follows:

Given $P : V \longrightarrow F$ with $P(0) = 0$, deg$(P) = 3$, there is a doubly even code C isomorphic to V such that $P(c) = |c|/4$ for all $c \in C$.

In the rest of the paper, we prove the main result:

Theorem 2.1. *Let $P : V \longrightarrow F$ be a mapping of combinatorial degree $r+1$. Then there is a binary linear code C of level r isomorphic to V such that $P(c) = |c|/2^r$ is satisfied for each codeword c in C.*

3. Constructing binary linear codes from derived forms

For the sake of brevity let us write $P(I)$ instead of $P_s(v_1,\dots,v_s)$, where still $I = \{v_1,\dots,v_s\}$. Let $P(\emptyset) = 0$. Using this notation, the reverse formula for derived forms can be elegantly written as

$$P\Big(\sum I\Big) = \sum_{J\subseteq I} P(J). \tag{4}$$

This follows from (3) by induction on $|I|$.

Also recall the explicit formulae for the weights of sums and products of vectors in V:

$$\Big|\sum I\Big| = \sum_{J\subseteq I}(-2)^{|J|-1}\Big|\prod J\Big|, \tag{5}$$

$$2^{s-1}\Big|\prod I\Big| = \sum_{J\subseteq I}(-1)^{|J|-1}\Big|\sum J\Big|. \tag{6}$$

Proposition 3.1. *Let $P : V \longrightarrow F$ be a mapping with $P(0) = 0$. The following conditions are equivalent:*

(i) $2^r P(\sum I) \equiv |\sum I| \pmod{2^{r+1}}$ *for any subset* $I \subseteq V$,

(ii) $2^{r-|I|+1}P(I) \equiv |\prod I| \pmod{2^{r-|I|+2}}$ *for any subset* $I \subseteq V$.

PROOF: Suppose (i) is satisfied. Let I be a subset of V. We have

$$P(I) \equiv \sum_{J\subseteq I} P\Big(\sum J\Big) \equiv \sum_{J\subseteq I}(-1)^{|J|-1}P\Big(\sum J\Big) \pmod 2.$$

Multiplying this congruence by 2^r, and using (i), we immediately obtain

$$2^r P(I) \equiv \sum_{J\subseteq I}(-1)^{|J|-1}\Big|\sum J\Big| \pmod{2^{r+1}}.$$

Using (6), we finally get

$$2^{r-|I|+1}P(I) \equiv 2^{1-|I|}\cdot \sum_{J\subseteq I}(-1)^{|J|-1}\Big|\sum J\Big| \equiv \Big|\prod I\Big| \pmod{2^{r-|I|+2}}.$$

Now assume that (ii) is satisfied. By the reverse formula (4), and after some convenient rearrangements, we see that

$$2^r P\Big(\sum I\Big) \equiv \sum_{J\subseteq I}(-1)^{|J|-1}2^r P(J) \pmod{2^{r+1}}.$$

Condition (ii) says that $2^r P(J) \equiv 2^{|J|-1}|\prod J| \pmod{2^{r+1}}$. Thanks to (5), we get

$$2^r P\Big(\sum I\Big) \equiv \sum_{J\subseteq I}(-2)^{|J|-1}\Big|\prod J\Big| \equiv \Big|\sum I\Big| \pmod{2^{r+1}},$$

as desired. $\square$

Let us first outline the construction of C in words.

Let $\{v_1, \dots, v_m\}$ be a basis for V. Suppose that we have found linearly independent vectors $c_1, \dots, c_m$, which generate a linear code C of level r. Let us identify v_i with c_i, for $1 \le i \le m$. Every codeword $c \in C$ can be expressed as $\sum I$ for some $I \subseteq \{c_1, \dots, c_m\}$. We would like to have $P(\sum I) \equiv |\sum I|/2^r \pmod 2$ for every I. According to Proposition 3.1, we only need to guarantee condition

$$(I) \qquad 2^{r-|I|+1} P(I) \equiv \left| \prod I \right| \pmod{2^{r-|I|+2}}$$

for every $I \subseteq \{c_1, \dots, c_m\}$.

We construct the vectors $c_1, \dots, c_m$ in $2^m - 1$ steps. Let us label these steps by non-empty subsets of $\{1, \dots, m\}$, and order them as follows: if $I = \{i_1, \dots, i_k\}$, $J = \{j_1, \dots, j_l\}$, where $i_1 > \dots > i_k$, $j_1 > \dots > j_l$, then $I \le J$ if and only if $(i_1, \dots, i_k) \le (j_1, \dots, j_l)$ lexicographically.

Vector c_i is introduced in step $\{i\}$. In each step, a certain number of coordinates is adjoint to each of the previously introduced vectors. If $i \notin I$, and if c_i has already been mentioned, we extend c_i by zeros in step I. Let us identify subsets of $\{1, \dots, m\}$ with subsets of $\{c_1, \dots, c_m\}$ in the natural way. After each step I, we check that all conditions (J), $J \le I$, are satisfied, and that the previously introduced vectors generate a linear code of level at least r. In fact, after the construction is finished, we necessarily get $lev(C) = r$, otherwise P is the zero mapping.

Moreover, note that when $|I| > 1$, then all vectors $c_i \in I$ have already been introduced. In order to make the construction more transparent, we will construct the vectors in such a way that $\prod I = 0$ is satisfied before step I, for $|I| > 1$.

Now, we are ready to begin with the construction.

Steps $\{i\}$:

Add 2^{r+1} coordinates to all previously introduced vectors. Define a new vector c_i whose only non-zero coordinates are among the last 2^{r+1} coordinates, which consist of 2^r ones and 2^r zeros if $P(v_i) = 1$, and of 2^{r+1} ones if $P(v_i) = 0$.

Then $2^r P(v_i) \equiv |c_i| \pmod 2$, and condition (J) remains valid for every $J \le \{i\}$ because $i \notin J$. All introduced vectors generate a linear code of level at least r.

Steps I, for $|I| > 1$:

We need the following rather general proposition. It is the key to the whole construction.

Proposition 3.2. *Let $W = F^{2^k}$ be a vector space over F. Let $0 < l + 1 < k$. There are linearly independent vectors $w_0, \dots, w_l \in W$ such that for every proper subset A of $\{w_0, \dots, w_l\}$ we have $|\prod A| = 2^{k-|A|}$, and $|w_0 * \dots * w_l| = 2^{k-l-2}$.*

Proof: First, we define real vectors $u_0, \dots, u_l \in F^{2^l}$, where $u_i = (u_{i,j})_{j=0}^{2^l-1}$, $0 \le i \le l$. Let us identify the number $j = \sum_{i=0}^{l-1} j_i 2^i$ with the vector $(j_0, \dots, j_{l-1}) \in F^l$. Let $j^\perp$ denote the complement of j in F^l. Let $\varphi : F^l \longrightarrow F$ be a mapping defined by $\varphi(j) \equiv |j^\perp| \pmod 2$. For $0 \le i < l$, $0 \le j < 2^l$, put $u_{i,j} = j_i$. For $0 \le j < 2^l$, define $u_{l,j} = 1/4 + 1/2 \cdot \varphi(j)$, i.e. $u_{l,j} \in \{1/4, 3/4\}$.

To construct vectors w_i from u_i, $0 \le i \le l$, replace each $u_{i,j}$ with a block of $2^{k-l} \cdot u_{i,j}$ ones and $2^{k-l} \cdot (1 - u_{i,j})$ zeros.

We need to check that vectors $w_0, \dots, w_l$ have the desired properties. Let us get started with $|w_0 * \cdots * w_l|$. There is only one coordinate j, namely $2^l - 1$, for which $1 = j_i = u_{i,j}$, $0 \le i < l$. Since $\varphi(j) = 0$, we have $u_{l,j} = 1/4$. Therefore $|w_0 * \cdots * w_l| = 2^{k-l-2}$.

Let A be a proper subset of $\{w_0, \dots, w_l\}$. Suppose, for a while, that $w_l \notin A$. Define $M = \{0 \le j < 2^l \mid u_{i,j} = 1 \text{ for all } w_i \in A\}$. Clearly, $|\prod A| = 2^{k-l}|M|$. Because $u_{i,j}$ is arbitrary for $w_i \notin A$, we have $|M| = 2^{l-|A|}$. In other words, $|\prod A| = 2^{k-|A|}$.

Suppose that $w_l \in A$. For $t = 0, 1$, put $M_t = \{0 \le j < 2^l \mid u_{i,j} = 1 \text{ for } w_i \in A \setminus \{w_l\}, \text{ and } \varphi(j) = t\}$. Then $M_0 \cap M_1 = \emptyset$, and $|M_0 \cup M_1| = 2^{l-|A|}$. Since $|M_0| = |M_1| = 2^{l-1-|A|}$, we get $|\prod A| = 1/4 \cdot 2^{k-l} \cdot |M_0| + 3/4 \cdot 2^{k-l} \cdot |M_1| = 2^{k-l} \cdot 2^{l-|A|} = 2^{k-|A|}$. □

If $P(I) = 0$, we do not need to make any changes. Condition (I) is satisfied because $|\prod I| = 0$ has been true before step I.

Suppose that $P(I) = 1$. Then $r + 1 = deg(P) \ge |I|$, and we may use Proposition 3.2 with parameters $l = |I| - 1$, $k = r + 2$ to obtain vectors $w_0, \dots, w_{|I|-1}$. We extend vectors from I by these vectors w_i, one by one (in any order). By Proposition 3.2 we have $|\prod I| = 2^{r+2-(|I|-1)-2} = 2^{r-|I|+1}P(I)$. Let $J < I$. If J is not a proper subset of I, then $|\prod J|$ did not change (vectors not involved in I are extended by zeros), and that is why condition (J) still holds. If J is a proper subset of I, then $|\prod J|$ increased by $2^{r+2-|J|}$ (according to Proposition 3.2), therefore condition (J) holds, too.

All introduced vectors generate a linear code of level at least r, and we are done.

Remark 3.3. For the sake of completeness, let us consider the (much easier) inverse problem of Theorem 2.1: given a binary linear code C of level r, construct $P : C \longrightarrow F$ by $P(c) = |c|/2^r$, $c \in C$. Then $deg(P) \le r + 1$. (See [1, Lemma 11.4], or [5].)

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Department of Mathematics, Iowa State University, Ames, IA 50011, USA
E-mail: petr@iastate.edu

(*Received* October 10, 1999, *revised* January 24, 2000)