

ON THE $T(q)$ -CONDITIONS OF SMALL CANCELLATION THEORY

BY

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ABSTRACT

In this paper we give a graphical method which can be used to determine whether or not a group presentation satisfies the small cancellation condition $T(q)$. We use this method to determine all 2- and 3-generator presentations satisfying $T(4)$.

1. Introduction

The small cancellation conditions $C(p)$ and $T(q)$ arise naturally when one uses van Kampen diagrams to study groups given by presentations. A number of results have been found for groups defined by $C(p)$, $T(q)$ presentations where $1/p + 1/q = 1/2$ (that is, where $(p, q) = (6, 3), (4, 4), (3, 6)$) [2–5]. It is therefore useful to be able to recognise when a presentation satisfies the conditions $C(p)$, $T(q)$. In this paper we describe a graphical method which can be used to determine whether or not a presentation satisfies $T(q)$.

The values of q for which $T(q)$ is of interest are 3, 4, 6. The condition $T(3)$ is no restriction. The $T(6)$ condition will be discussed in another paper by the second author. Our principal concern in this paper is with the $T(4)$ condition. We determine all 2- and 3-generator presentations satisfying $T(4)$. We also give enough graphical information to enable the reader to determine all 4-generator presentations satisfying $T(4)$ if he/she so wishes.

2. Star complexes and the $T(q)$ condition

2.1. 1-Complexes

A 1-complex consists of two disjoint subsets V (vertices), E (edges) together with functions $\iota : E \rightarrow V, \tau : E \rightarrow V, \bar{\cdot} : E \rightarrow E$ satisfying: $\iota(e) = \tau(\bar{e}), \bar{\bar{e}} = e, \bar{e} \neq e$ for all $e \in E$. A closed path in this 1-complex is a succession of edges e_1, e_2, \dots, e_m with $\tau(e_i) = \iota(e_{i+1})$ for $i = 1, \dots, m$ (where subscripts are computed mod m). The closed path is said to be *reduced* if $e_{i+1} \neq \bar{e}_i$ for $i = 1, \dots, m$. We call m the *length* of the path. A closed path of length 1 is called a *loop*. For a vertex v of a 1-complex, the set of edges e with $\iota(e) = v$ is denoted by $\text{Star}(v)$.

We remark that 1-complexes are often called graphs by combinatorial group theorists (for example, in [6]). However, we reserve the term graph for a different concept, namely the following: a *graph* consists of a set V (vertices) together with a set of two-element subsets of V (edges). Our basic reference for graph theory will be [1].

Given any 1-complex \mathcal{X} (with vertex set V , say), we can associate with it a graph $\Gamma(\mathcal{X})$ as follows. The vertex set of $\Gamma(\mathcal{X})$ is V ; $\{u, v\}$ is an edge of $\Gamma(\mathcal{X})$ if and only if there is an edge e of \mathcal{X} with $\iota(e) = u, \tau(e) = v$. For each ordered pair (u, v) of elements of V we define

$$m_{u,v} = |\{e : e \text{ is an edge of } \mathcal{X}, \iota(e) = u, \tau(e) = v\}|.$$

Note that $m_{u,v} = m_{v,u}$. If Γ is any graph with vertex set V then we can define a *weight function* on Γ by assigning weight $m_{u,v}$ to the edge $\{u, v\}$ (assuming, of course, that the $m_{u,v}$ are finite). The *weight of a vertex* of Γ is then defined to be the sum of the weights of the edges incident with the given vertex (provided the sum exists). Note that if Γ contains $\Gamma(\mathcal{X})$ then the weight (if it exists) of a vertex v of Γ is $|\text{Star}(v)| - m_{v,v}$.

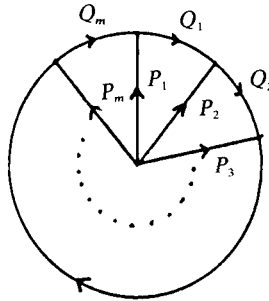
2.2. A Formulation of the $T(q)$ Condition

A set r of words on an alphabet x is said to be *symmetrized* provided:

- (i) each element of r is non-empty and cyclically reduced;
- (ii) if $R \in r$ then all cyclic permutations of $R^{\pm 1}$ belong to r .

(We note for future reference that if s is a set satisfying (i) then the set of all cyclic permutations of elements of $s \cup s^{-1}$ is a symmetrized set, called the *symmetrized closure* of s .) A group presentation $\langle x; r \rangle$ is said to be symmetrized if r is symmetrized.

Consider the symmetrized presentation $\mathcal{P} = \langle x; r \rangle$. A *wheel* (over \mathcal{P}) is a reduced van Kampen diagram of the form

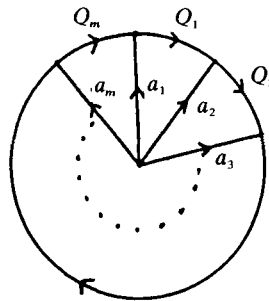


where $m \geq 3$. Here the P_i and Q_i are non-empty words and $P_i Q_i P_{i+1}^{-1} \in r$ for $i = 1, \dots, m$ (subscripts are computed mod m). We say that the wheel has m spokes. If q is an integer greater than 2, then the $T(q)$ condition asserts that every wheel over \mathcal{P} has at least q spokes. We wish to give an alternative formulation of this condition.

We associate with \mathcal{P} a 1-complex \mathcal{P}^{st} (called the *star complex* of \mathcal{P}) as follows. The vertex set is $x \cup x^{-1}$, and the edge set is r . For a given edge R of \mathcal{P}^{st} we define $\iota(R)$ to be the first symbol of R , and $\tau(R)$ to be the inverse of the last symbol of R . We define \bar{R} to be R^{-1} . Note that since each element of r is cyclically reduced, \mathcal{P}^{st} has no loops.

Now observe that our wheel above gives rise to a reduced closed path of length m in \mathcal{P}^{st} , namely the path $P_1 Q_1 P_2^{-1}, \dots, P_m Q_m P_1^{-1}$.

Conversely, consider a reduced closed path $\alpha = R_1, R_2, \dots, R_m$ ($m \geq 3$) in \mathcal{P}^{st} . If each R_i has length at least 3, then α gives rise to a wheel with m spokes. For let $R_1 = a_1 Q_1 a_2^{-1}$ where $a_1, a_2 \in x \cup x^{-1}$. Since $\tau(R_1) = \iota(R_2)$ we have $R_2 = a_2 Q_2 a_3^{-1}$ where $a_3 \in x \cup x^{-1}$. Then $R_3 = a_3 Q_3 a_4^{-1}$ where $a_4 \in x \cup x^{-1}$, and so on. Since α is closed we eventually obtain $R_m = a_m Q_m a_1^{-1}$. Thus we have the wheel



(Note that this van Kampen diagram is reduced since α is reduced.)

If some term R_i of the path α above has length less than 3, then α does not give rise to a wheel. However, this is a very pathological situation, for each letter of R_i will be a piece, and so, in particular, \mathcal{P} will not even satisfy the small cancellation condition $C(3)$. Since $T(q)$ is only useful when considered in conjunction with $C(p)$ with $p \geq 3$, this pathological situation will not occur in practice.

We see from the above discussion that, apart from the pathology described in the previous paragraph, $T(q)$ is equivalent to:

(*) *there is no reduced closed path in \mathcal{P}^{st} of length m , where $3 \leq m < q$.*

We will take (*) to be the definition of $T(q)$ for any symmetrized presentation \mathcal{P} .

2.3. On Star Complexes and their Associated Graphs

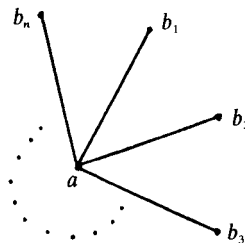
We note some facts about the star complex \mathcal{P}^{st} , and the associated graph $\Gamma(\mathcal{P}^{st})$, of a symmetrized presentation $\mathcal{P} = \langle \mathbf{x}; \mathbf{r} \rangle$.

We remark that star complexes have been considered by other authors (see [4]). They will be discussed in a wider context in a forthcoming article by S. J. Pride.

2.3.1. Consider $\Gamma(\mathcal{P}^{st})$. In passing from \mathcal{P}^{st} to $\Gamma(\mathcal{P}^{st})$ some information is lost. Information not lost is which elements of $\mathbf{x} \cup \mathbf{x}^{-1}$ are predecessors of a given element of $\mathbf{x} \cup \mathbf{x}^{-1}$ in relators of \mathcal{P} . Thus, if we have an edge



in $\Gamma(\mathcal{P}^{st})$, then this tells us that in at least one relator, a is preceded by b^{-1} . Consequently, if we look at all edges of $\Gamma(\mathcal{P}^{st})$ incident with a given vertex a



then in relators of \mathcal{P} , a is preceded by precisely $b_1^{-1}, b_2^{-1}, \dots, b_n^{-1}$.

2.3.2. It is clear that if \mathbf{x} is finite then there is a finite symmetrized

subpresentation $\mathcal{P}_0 = \langle \mathbf{x}; \mathbf{r}_0 \rangle$ ($\mathbf{r}_0 \subseteq \mathbf{r}$) of \mathcal{P} such that $\Gamma(\mathcal{P}_0^{\text{st}}) = \Gamma(\mathcal{P}^{\text{st}})$. This observation will enable us to restrict attention to finite presentations.

2.3.3. Suppose the presentation \mathcal{P} is finite. Let Γ be a graph containing $\Gamma(\mathcal{P}^{\text{st}})$ and having the same vertex set, and consider the weight function on Γ as described in §2.1. Then the weight of a vertex x is equal to the weight of x^{-1} . For since \mathcal{P}^{st} has no loops, the weights of x and x^{-1} are $|\text{Star}(x)|$, $|\text{Star}(x^{-1})|$ respectively. Let $R \in \text{Star}(x)$, so that $R = xS$ for some word S . Then $x^{-1}S^{-1} \in \text{Star}(x^{-1})$. This gives a bijection from $\text{Star}(x)$ to $\text{Star}(x^{-1})$.

3. On $T(4)$ presentations

3.1. Some Definitions

In order to state our results we need to make a number of definitions.

Let \mathbf{x} be an alphabet. A word on \mathbf{x} is said to be *positive* (resp. *negative*) if only positive (resp. negative) powers of elements of \mathbf{x} appear in the word. A word is said to be *square-free* if it has no subword of the form x^k with $x \in \mathbf{x}$ and $|k| > 1$. A word is said to be *cyclically square-free* if it has length greater than 1 and if all its cyclic permutations are square-free. Let $\mathbf{w}_{-1}, \mathbf{w}_1$ be disjoint sets of non-empty words on \mathbf{x} . A word $t_1 t_2 \cdots t_s$ ($s \geq 1, t_i \in \mathbf{w}_{-1} \cup \mathbf{w}_1$ for $i = 1, \dots, s$) is called an *alternating* ($\mathbf{w}_{-1}, \mathbf{w}_1$)-*word* if the following holds: for $1 \leq i < s$, if $t_i \in \mathbf{w}_\varepsilon$ ($\varepsilon = \pm 1$) then $t_{i+1} \in \mathbf{w}_{-\varepsilon}$. The word is called a *cyclically alternating* ($\mathbf{w}_{-1}, \mathbf{w}_1$)-*word* if it is an alternating ($\mathbf{w}_{-1}, \mathbf{w}_1$)-word with the additional property that t_1 and t_s do not belong to the same set \mathbf{w}_{-1} or \mathbf{w}_1 . The t_i are called the *factors*. When considering a factor t_i of a cyclically alternating ($\mathbf{w}_{-1}, \mathbf{w}_1$)-word $t_1 t_2 \cdots t_s$, we will sometimes be interested in the adjacent factors t_{i-1}, t_{i+1} . In this regard, it is to be understood that subscripts are computed mod s , so that if $i = 1$ then $t_{i-1} = t_s$, while if $i = s$ then $t_{i+1} = t_1$.

The *extended symmetric group* (on \mathbf{x}) is the group of permutations of $\mathbf{x} \cup \mathbf{x}^{-1}$ generated by the permutations $(xy)(x^{-1}y^{-1}), (xx^{-1})$ ($x, y \in \mathbf{x}$). We denote this group by Ω_n where $n = |\mathbf{x}|$. The group Ω_n induces a group of automorphisms (also denoted Ω_n) of the free group on \mathbf{x} .

Let Γ be a graph with vertex set V , and let X be a set with $|X| = |V|$. A *labelling of Γ (by X)* is a graph with vertex set X and edge set

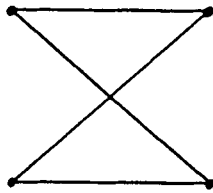
$$\{ \{ \lambda(u), \lambda(v) \} : \{u, v\} \text{ is an edge of } \Gamma \},$$

where $\lambda : V \rightarrow X$ is some bijection. If Σ is a group of permutations of X , then two labellings of Γ , with underlying bijections λ, λ' say, are said to be Σ -*equivalent* if $\lambda = \sigma\lambda'$ for some $\sigma \in \Sigma$.

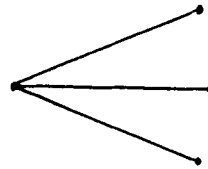
3.2. Two-Generator Presentations

We will show that a symmetrized presentation $\mathcal{P} = \langle a, b; r \rangle$ satisfies $T(4)$ if and only if either: each element of r is cyclically square-free; or, there is an automorphism $\sigma \in \Omega_2$ such that each element of σr is positive or negative.

For \mathcal{P} satisfies $T(4)$ if and only if $\Gamma(\mathcal{P}^{st})$ is a subgraph of a labelling by $\{a, a^{-1}, b, b^{-1}\}$ of one of:

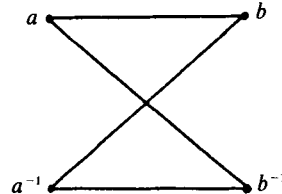
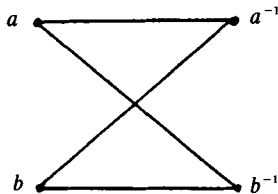


$K_{2,2}$



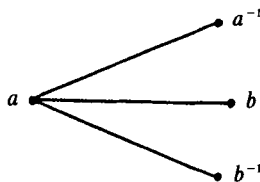
$K_{1,3}$

Up to Ω_2 -equivalence, the labellings of $K_{2,2}$ are:



Now $\Gamma(\mathcal{P}^{st})$ will be a subgraph of the former labelling if and only if each relator of \mathcal{P} is positive or negative; $\Gamma(\mathcal{P}^{st})$ will be a subgraph of the latter labelling if and only if each relator of \mathcal{P} is cyclically square-free.

Up to Ω_2 -equivalence, the only labelling of $K_{1,3}$ is:



Suppose $\Gamma(\mathcal{P}^{st})$ is a subgraph of this graph. If the vertex a^{-1} of $\Gamma(\mathcal{P}^{st})$ is isolated then so is a , in which case all vertices are isolated, and \mathcal{P} has no relators. If the edge $\{a, a^{-1}\}$ belongs to $\Gamma(\mathcal{P}^{st})$ then a^{-1} is preceded by a^{-1} (and only by a^{-1}) in relators of \mathcal{P} . Thus neither of the edges $\{a, b\}$, $\{a, b^{-1}\}$ belongs to $\Gamma(\mathcal{P}^{st})$, so r consists solely of powers of a .

3.3. Three-Generator Presentations

We will show that a symmetrized presentation $\mathcal{P} = \langle a, b, c; r \rangle$ satisfies $T(4)$ if and only if there is an automorphism $\sigma \in \Omega_3$ such that r is the symmetrized closure of a set rs , where s satisfies one of the seven conditions 3.3.1–3.3.7 listed below.

3.3.1. Each element of s is positive.

3.3.2. Each element of s is either a power of c , or a cyclically square-free word in a and b , or a cyclically alternating word $t_1 t_2 \cdots t_s$ in non-zero powers of c and non-empty square-free words in a and b with the property that for each factor t_i which is a positive power of c , t_{i-1} ends with $b^{\pm 1}$ and t_{i+1} starts with $a^{\pm 1}$, while for each factor t_i which is a negative power of c , t_{i-1} ends with $a^{\pm 1}$ and t_{i+1} starts with $b^{\pm 1}$.

EXAMPLE. $s = \{c^6, a^{-1}baba^{-1}b^{-1}, (a^{-1}baba^{-1})c^{-5}(ba^{-1}ba)c^{-4}(b^{-1}a^{-1}b^{-1})c^3\}$.

3.3.3. Each element of s is a cyclically alternating $(\{a, a^{-1}, b, b^{-1}\}, \{c, c^{-1}\})$ -word.

EXAMPLE. $s = \{cac^{-1}b^{-1}c^{-1}acb\}$.

3.3.4. Each element of s is either a power of c , or a cyclically square-free word in a and b , or a cyclically alternating word $t_1 t_2 \cdots t_s$ in non-zero powers of c and non-empty square-free words in a and b with the property that for each factor t_i which is a positive power of c , t_{i-1} ends with a and t_{i+1} starts with a , while for each factor t_i which is a negative power of c , t_{i-1} ends with a^{-1} and t_{i+1} starts with a^{-1} .

EXAMPLE. $s = \{c^6, a^{-1}baba^{-1}b^{-1}, (abab^{-1}a^{-1})c^{-5}(a^{-1}b^{-1}aba^{-1})c^{-4}(a^{-1}ba)c^3\}$.

3.3.5. Each element of s is either a cyclically alternating $(\{a\}, \{b, c, bc\})$ -word, or a cyclically alternating (\mathbf{u}, \mathbf{v}) -word, where \mathbf{u} is the set of alternating $(\{a\}, \{b, c, bc\})$ -words and \mathbf{v} is the set of inverses of words in \mathbf{u} . In addition, it is required in the latter case that no \mathbf{u} -factor begins with c or ends with b , and no \mathbf{v} -factor begins with b^{-1} or ends with c^{-1} .

EXAMPLE. $s = \{ababcac, (ababc)(bababca)^{-1}(abaca)(babc)^{-1}\}$.

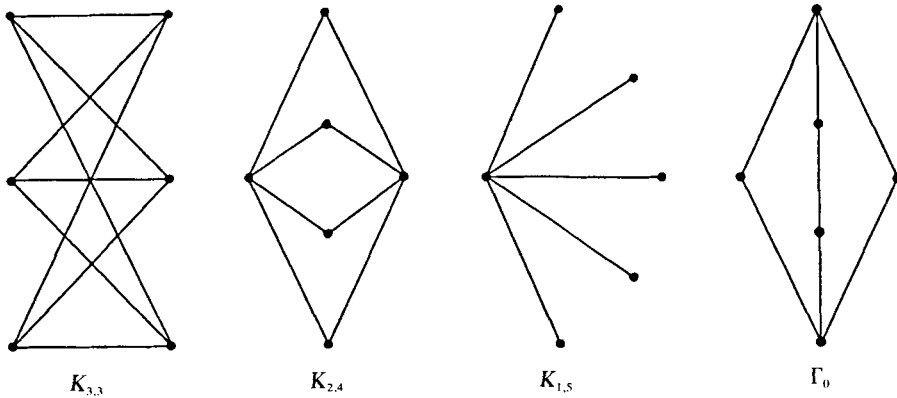
3.3.6. Each element of s is either a power of a , or a power of c , or a cyclically alternating (\mathbf{u}, \mathbf{v}) -word, where $\mathbf{u} = \{b, b^{-1}\}$ and \mathbf{v} is the set of words of the form $(a^m c^{-n})^{\pm 1}$ (m, n positive integers).

EXAMPLE. $s = \{a^{10}, c^6, (a^2 c^{-3})b(ac^{-5})^{-1}b(a^7 c^{-2})^{-1}b^{-1}\}$.

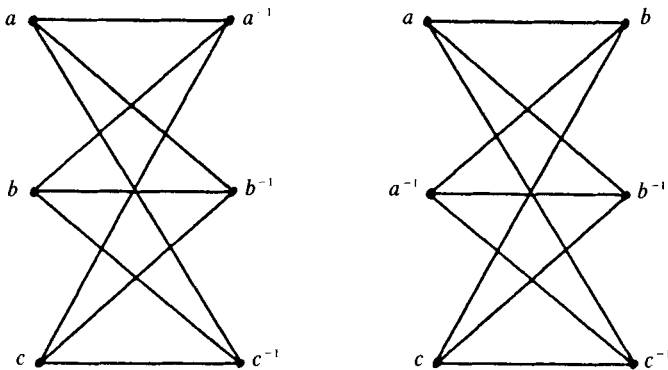
3.3.7. Each element of s is either a power of ac , or a cyclically alternating (u, v) -word, where $u = \{b, b^{-1}\}$ and v is the set of words of the form PQ^{-1} (P, Q non-empty positive square-free words in a and c).

EXAMPLE. $s = \{(ac)^4, [(ac)^2(a^{-1}c^{-1})^3a^{-1}]b[aca(c^{-1}a^{-1})]b^{-1}\}$.

To prove the above, observe that \mathcal{P} satisfies $T(4)$ if and only if $\Gamma(\mathcal{P}^{st})$ is a subgraph of a labelling by $\{a, a^{-1}, b, b^{-1}, c, c^{-1}\}$ of one of the following:



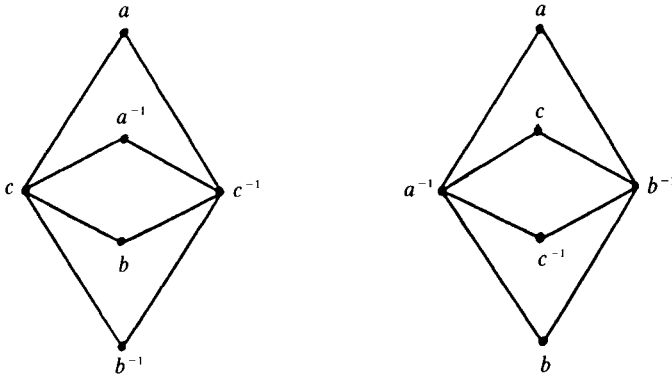
Up to Ω_3 -equivalence, the labellings of $K_{3,3}$ are:



Now $\Gamma(\mathcal{P}^{st})$ will be a subgraph of the former labelling if and only if each relator of \mathcal{P} is positive or negative; $\Gamma(\mathcal{P}^{st})$ will be a subgraph of the latter labelling if and only if r is the symmetrized closure of a set s satisfying 3.3.2.

We will say that \mathcal{P} is of *Type A* if $\Gamma(\mathcal{P}^{st})$ is Ω_3 -equivalent to a subgraph of one of the above labellings of $K_{3,3}$.

Up to Ω_3 -equivalence, the labellings of $K_{2,4}$ are:



Now $\Gamma(\mathcal{P}^{st})$ will be a subgraph of the former labelling if and only if r is the symmetrized closure of a set s satisfying 3.3.3. We will show that if $\Gamma(\mathcal{P}^{st})$ is a subgraph of the latter labelling then \mathcal{P} is already of Type A. By 2.3.2 we can assume that \mathcal{P} is finite, so that we can make use of 2.3.3. Looking at the weights of the vertices a, a^{-1}, b, b^{-1} we obtain:

$$m_{a,a^{-1}} + m_{a,b^{-1}} = m_{a^{-1},a} + m_{a^{-1},c} + m_{a^{-1},c^{-1}} + m_{a^{-1},b},$$

$$m_{b,a^{-1}} + m_{b,b^{-1}} = m_{b^{-1},a} + m_{b^{-1},c} + m_{b^{-1},c^{-1}} + m_{b^{-1},b}.$$

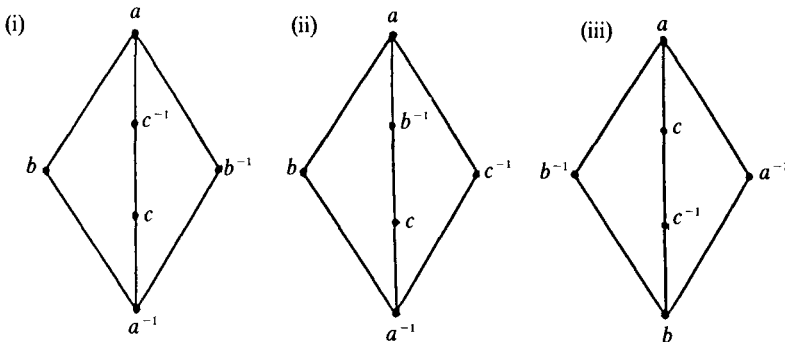
These give

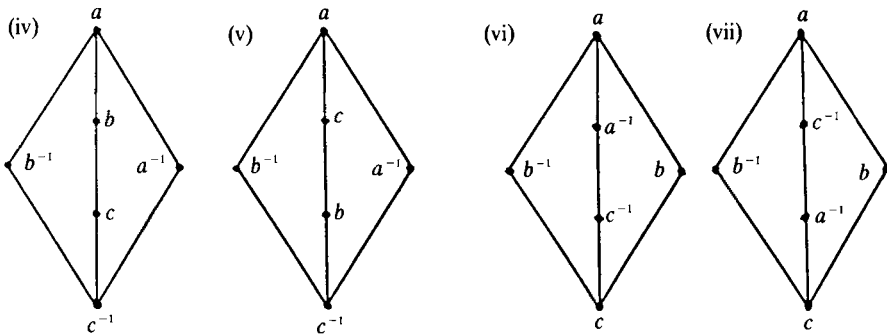
$$0 = m_{a^{-1},c} + m_{a^{-1},c^{-1}} + m_{b^{-1},c} + m_{b^{-1},c^{-1}},$$

and so $m_{a^{-1},c} = m_{a^{-1},c^{-1}} = m_{b^{-1},c} = m_{b^{-1},c^{-1}} = 0$. Thus the edges $\{a^{-1}, c\}, \{a^{-1}, c^{-1}\}, \{b^{-1}, c\}, \{b^{-1}, c^{-1}\}$ do not belong to $\Gamma(\mathcal{P}^{st})$.

An argument like that used for two-generator presentations above shows that if $\Gamma(\mathcal{P}^{st})$ is a subgraph of a labelling of $K_{1,5}$ then \mathcal{P} is of Type A. (Alternatively, one can use a weight argument.)

Up to Ω_3 -equivalence, the labellings of Γ_0 are:





Now $\Gamma(\mathcal{P}^{st})$ will be a subgraph of (i) (resp. (ii), (vi), (vii)) if and only if r is the symmetrized closure of a set s satisfying 3.3.4 (resp. 3.3.5, 3.3.6, 3.3.7). We now show that if $\Gamma(\mathcal{P}^{st})$ is a subgraph of one of (iii), (iv), (v), then \mathcal{P} is already of Type A. As before, we can assume that \mathcal{P} is finite.

Consider (iii). Looking at the weights of a, a^{-1} and b, b^{-1} and using 2.3.3 we have:

$$m_{a,b^{-1}} + m_{a,c} + m_{a,a^{-1}} = m_{a^{-1},a} + m_{a^{-1},b},$$

$$m_{b,a^{-1}} + m_{b,c^{-1}} + m_{b,b^{-1}} = m_{b^{-1},b} + m_{b^{-1},a}.$$

From these we obtain

$$m_{a,c} + m_{b,c^{-1}} = 0.$$

Thus $m_{a,c} = m_{b,c^{-1}} = 0$, so the edges $\{a, c\}, \{b, c^{-1}\}$ do not belong to $\Gamma(\mathcal{P}^{st})$.

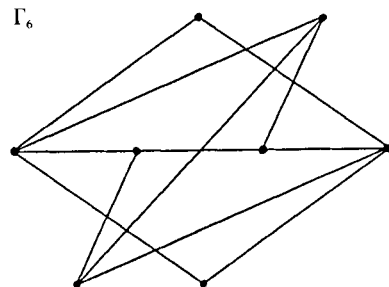
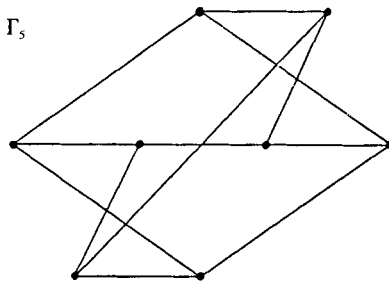
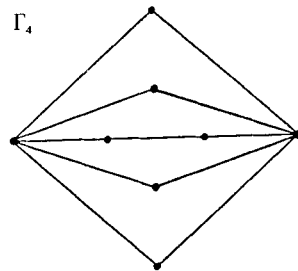
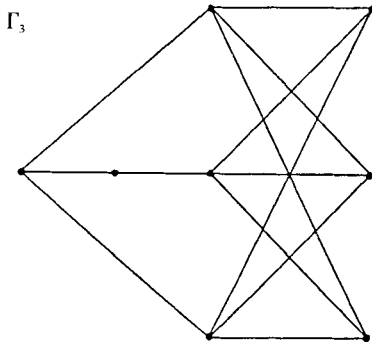
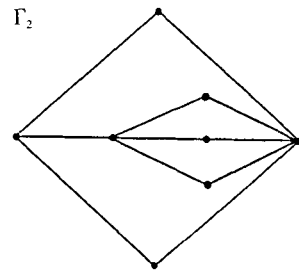
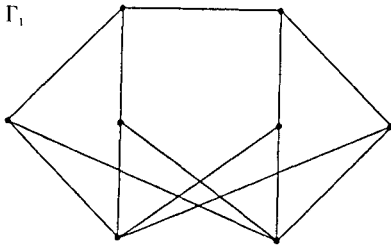
Now consider (iv) and (v). Looking at the weights of a and a^{-1}, b and b^{-1}, c and c^{-1} , and proceeding similarly as above we obtain that $m_{a,b} = 0$ (for (iv)), $m_{b,c^{-1}} = 0$ (for (v)).

3.4. n -Generator Presentations

One can obviously, in theory, use arguments similar to those above to determine, for any n , all n -generator presentations satisfying $T(4)$. Firstly one must compute all graphs on $2n$ vertices without triangles, and which are maximal with this property. (We remark that, by Turán's Theorem [1, p. 17], a graph on $2n$ vertices without triangles has at most n^2 edges.) Then one must analyse the labellings of these graphs by $\{x_1, \dots, x_n, x_1^{-1}, \dots, x_n^{-1}\}$, making use of weight arguments as above.

Unfortunately, even for $n = 4$, the amount of labour involved in carrying out these computations by hand is prohibitive. There are 10 graphs on 8 vertices

without triangles, and which are maximal with this property, namely: the bipartite graphs $K_{4,4}$, $K_{3,5}$, $K_{2,6}$, $K_{1,7}$, and the graphs $\Gamma_1, \dots, \Gamma_6$ depicted below. Some of these graphs are easily analysed, but others (such as Γ_2) have a large number of labellings (up to Ω_4 -equivalence).



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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