

# Polyhedral products, loop homology and right-angled Coxeter groups

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# 1. Preliminaries

## Polyhedral product

$(\mathbf{X}, \mathbf{A}) = \{(X_1, A_1), \dots, (X_m, A_m)\}$  a sequence of pairs of spaces,  $A_i \subset X_i$ .

$\mathcal{K}$  a simplicial complex on  $[m] = \{1, 2, \dots, m\}$ ,  $\emptyset \in \mathcal{K}$ .

Given  $I = \{i_1, \dots, i_k\} \subset [m]$ , set

$$(\mathbf{X}, \mathbf{A})^I = Y_1 \times \dots \times Y_m \quad \text{where } Y_i = \begin{cases} X_i & \text{if } i \in I, \\ A_i & \text{if } i \notin I. \end{cases}$$

The  $\mathcal{K}$ -polyhedral product of  $(\mathbf{X}, \mathbf{A})$  is

$$(\mathbf{X}, \mathbf{A})^{\mathcal{K}} = \bigcup_{I \in \mathcal{K}} (\mathbf{X}, \mathbf{A})^I = \bigcup_{I \in \mathcal{K}} \left( \prod_{i \in I} X_i \times \prod_{j \notin I} A_j \right) \subset \prod_{i=1}^m X_i.$$

Notation:  $(X, A)^{\mathcal{K}} = (\mathbf{X}, \mathbf{A})^{\mathcal{K}}$  when all  $(X_i, A_i) = (X, A)$ ;

$\mathbf{X}^{\mathcal{K}} = (\mathbf{X}, pt)^{\mathcal{K}}$ ,  $X^{\mathcal{K}} = (X, pt)^{\mathcal{K}}$ .

## Categorical approach

Category of faces  $\text{CAT}(\mathcal{K})$ .

Objects: simplices  $I \in \mathcal{K}$ . Morphisms: inclusions  $I \subset J$ .

TOP the category of topological spaces.

Define the  $\text{CAT}(\mathcal{K})$ -diagram

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{D}_{\mathcal{K}}(\mathbf{X}, \mathbf{A}) : \text{CAT}(\mathcal{K}) &\longrightarrow \text{TOP}, \\ I &\longmapsto (\mathbf{X}, \mathbf{A})^I, \end{aligned}$$

which maps the morphism  $I \subset J$  of  $\text{CAT}(\mathcal{K})$  to the inclusion of spaces  $(\mathbf{X}, \mathbf{A})^I \subset (\mathbf{X}, \mathbf{A})^J$ .

Then we have

$$(\mathbf{X}, \mathbf{A})^{\mathcal{K}} = \text{colim } \mathcal{D}_{\mathcal{K}}(\mathbf{X}, \mathbf{A}) = \text{colim}_{I \in \mathcal{K}} (\mathbf{X}, \mathbf{A})^I.$$

Replacing spaces by groups in the construction of the polyhedral product  $\mathbf{X}^{\mathcal{K}} = \operatorname{colim}_{I \in \mathcal{K}} \mathbf{X}^I$  we arrive at the following

## Graph product

$\mathbf{G} = (G_1, \dots, G_m)$  a sequence of  $m$  (topological) groups,  $G_i \neq \{1\}$ .

Given  $I = \{i_1, \dots, i_k\} \subset [m]$ , set

$$\mathbf{G}^I = \{(g_1, \dots, g_m) \in \prod_{k=1}^m G_k : g_k = 1 \text{ for } k \notin I\}.$$

Consider the following  $\operatorname{CAT}(\mathcal{K})$ -diagram of groups:

$$\mathcal{D}_{\mathcal{K}}(\mathbf{G}) : \operatorname{CAT}(\mathcal{K}) \longrightarrow \operatorname{GRP}, \quad I \longmapsto \mathbf{G}^I,$$

which maps a morphism  $I \subset J$  to the canonical monomorphism  $\mathbf{G}^I \rightarrow \mathbf{G}^J$ .

The **graph product** of the groups  $G_1, \dots, G_m$  is

$$\mathbf{G}^{\mathcal{K}} = \operatorname{colim}^{\operatorname{GRP}} \mathcal{D}_{\mathcal{K}}(\mathbf{G}) = \operatorname{colim}_{I \in \mathcal{K}}^{\operatorname{GRP}} \mathbf{G}^I.$$

The graph product  $\mathbf{G}^{\mathcal{K}}$  depends only on the 1-skeleton (graph) of  $\mathcal{K}$ .  
Namely,

### Proposition

*The is an isomorphism of groups*

$$\mathbf{G}^{\mathcal{K}} \cong \bigstar_{k=1}^m G_k / (g_i g_j = g_j g_i \text{ for } g_i \in G_i, g_j \in G_j, \{i, j\} \in \mathcal{K}),$$

where  $\bigstar_{k=1}^m G_k$  denotes the free product of the groups  $G_k$ .

## Example

Let  $G_i = \mathbb{Z}$ . Then  $\mathbf{G}^{\mathcal{K}}$  is the **right-angled Artin group**

$$RA_{\mathcal{K}} = F(g_1, \dots, g_m) / (g_i g_j = g_j g_i \text{ for } \{i, j\} \in \mathcal{K}),$$

where  $F(g_1, \dots, g_m)$  is a free group with  $m$  generators.

When  $\mathcal{K}$  is a full simplex, we have  $RA_{\mathcal{K}} = \mathbb{Z}^m$ . When  $\mathcal{K}$  is  $m$  points, we obtain a free group of rank  $m$ .

## Example

Let  $G_i = \mathbb{Z}_2$ . Then  $\mathbf{G}^{\mathcal{K}}$  is the **right-angled Coxeter group**

$$RC_{\mathcal{K}} = F(g_1, \dots, g_m) / (g_i^2 = 1, g_i g_j = g_j g_i \text{ for } \{i, j\} \in \mathcal{K}).$$

## 2. Classifying spaces

A natural question: when  $B(\mathbf{G}^{\mathcal{K}}) \simeq (B\mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}}$ ?

### Proposition

*There is a homotopy fibration*

$$(E\mathbf{G}, \mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}} \longrightarrow (B\mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}} \longrightarrow \prod_{k=1}^m B\mathbf{G}_k.$$

In particular, there are homotopy fibrations

$$(\mathbb{R}, \mathbb{Z})^{\mathcal{K}} = \mathcal{L}_{\mathcal{K}} \longrightarrow (S^1)^{\mathcal{K}} \longrightarrow (S^1)^m \quad G = \mathbb{Z}$$

$$(D^1, S^0)^{\mathcal{K}} = \mathcal{R}_{\mathcal{K}} \longrightarrow (\mathbb{R}P^{\infty})^{\mathcal{K}} \longrightarrow (\mathbb{R}P^{\infty})^m \quad G = \mathbb{Z}_2$$

$$(D^2, S^1)^{\mathcal{K}} = \mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}} \longrightarrow (\mathbb{C}P^{\infty})^{\mathcal{K}} \longrightarrow (\mathbb{C}P^{\infty})^m \quad G = S^1$$

A **missing face** (a **minimal non-face**) of  $\mathcal{K}$  is a subset  $I \subset [m]$  such that  $I \notin \mathcal{K}$ , but  $J \in \mathcal{K}$  for each  $J \subsetneq I$ .

$\mathcal{K}$  a **flag complex** if each of its missing faces consists of two vertices. Equivalently,  $\mathcal{K}$  is flag if any set of vertices of  $\mathcal{K}$  which are pairwise connected by edges spans a simplex.

Every flag complex  $\mathcal{K}$  is determined by its 1-skeleton  $\mathcal{K}^1$ , and is obtained from the graph  $\mathcal{K}^1$  by filling in all complete subgraphs by simplices.

Theorem (P.–Ray–Vogt, 2002)

$B(\mathbf{G}^{\mathcal{K}}) \simeq (B\mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}}$  if and only if  $\mathcal{K}$  is flag.

**Higher Whitehead products** in  $\pi_*((B\mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}})$  are what obstructs the homotopy equivalence  $B(\mathbf{G}^{\mathcal{K}}) \simeq (B\mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}}$  in the general case.

This can be fixed by replacing colim by hocolim in the definition of the graph product  $\mathbf{G}^{\mathcal{K}} = \operatorname{colim}_{I \in \mathcal{K}}^{\text{GRP}} \mathbf{G}^I$ .



In the case of discrete groups we obtain

## Proposition

Let  $\mathbf{G}^{\mathcal{K}}$  be a graph product of discrete groups.

- 1  $\pi_1((B\mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}}) \cong \mathbf{G}^{\mathcal{K}}$ .
- 2 Both spaces  $(B\mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}}$  and  $(E\mathbf{G}, \mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}}$  are aspherical iff  $\mathcal{K}$  is flag.
- 3  $\pi_i((B\mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}}) \cong \pi_i((E\mathbf{G}, \mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}})$  for  $i \geq 2$ .
- 4  $\pi_1((E\mathbf{G}, \mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}})$  is isomorphic to the kernel of the canonical projection  $\mathbf{G}^{\mathcal{K}} \rightarrow \prod_{k=1}^m G_k$  (the *Cartesian subgroup* of  $\mathbf{G}^{\mathcal{K}}$ ).

## Part of proof

Assume now that  $\mathcal{K}$  is not flag. Choose a missing face

$J = \{j_1, \dots, j_k\} \subset [m]$  with  $k \geq 3$  vertices. Let  $\mathcal{K}_J = \{I \in \mathcal{K} : I \subset J\}$ .

Then  $(B\mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}_J}$  is the fat wedge of the spaces  $\{BG_j, j \in J\}$ , and it is a retract of  $(B\mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}}$ .

The homotopy fibre of the inclusion  $(B\mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}_J} \rightarrow \prod_{j \in J} BG_j$  is  $\Sigma^{k-1} G_{j_1} \wedge \dots \wedge G_{j_k}$ , a wedge of  $(k-1)$ -dimensional spheres.

Hence,  $\pi_{k-1}((B\mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}_J}) \neq 0$  where  $k \geq 3$ .

Thus,  $(B\mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}_J}$  and  $(B\mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}}$  are non-aspherical.

The rest of the proof (the asphericity of  $(E\mathbf{G}, \mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}}$  and statements (3) and (4)) follow from the homotopy exact sequence of the fibration  $(E\mathbf{G}, \mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}} \rightarrow (B\mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}} \rightarrow \prod_{k=1}^m BG_k$ .

Specialising to the cases  $G_k = \mathbb{Z}$  and  $G_k = \mathbb{Z}_2$  respectively we obtain:

## Corollary

Let  $RA_{\mathcal{K}}$  be a right-angled Artin group.

- 1  $\pi_1((S^1)^{\mathcal{K}}) \cong RA_{\mathcal{K}}$ .
- 2 Both  $(S^1)^{\mathcal{K}}$  and  $\mathcal{L}_{\mathcal{K}} = (\mathbb{R}, \mathbb{Z})^{\mathcal{K}}$  are aspherical iff  $\mathcal{K}$  is flag.
- 3  $\pi_i((S^1)^{\mathcal{K}}) \cong \pi_i(\mathcal{L}_{\mathcal{K}})$  for  $i \geq 2$ .
- 4  $\pi_1(\mathcal{L}_{\mathcal{K}})$  is isomorphic to the commutator subgroup  $RA'_{\mathcal{K}}$ .

## Corollary

Let  $RC_{\mathcal{K}}$  be a right-angled Coxeter group.

- 1  $\pi_1((\mathbb{R}P^\infty)^{\mathcal{K}}) \cong RC_{\mathcal{K}}$ .
- 2 Both  $(\mathbb{R}P^\infty)^{\mathcal{K}}$  and  $\mathcal{R}_{\mathcal{K}} = (D^1, S^0)^{\mathcal{K}}$  are aspherical iff  $\mathcal{K}$  is flag.
- 3  $\pi_i((\mathbb{R}P^\infty)^{\mathcal{K}}) \cong \pi_i(\mathcal{R}_{\mathcal{K}})$  for  $i \geq 2$ .
- 4  $\pi_1(\mathcal{R}_{\mathcal{K}})$  is isomorphic to the commutator subgroup  $RC'_{\mathcal{K}}$ .

## Example

Let  $\mathcal{K}$  be an  $m$ -cycle (the boundary of an  $m$ -gon).

A simple argument with Euler characteristic shows that  $\mathcal{R}_{\mathcal{K}} = (D^1, S^0)^{\mathcal{K}}$  is homeomorphic to a closed orientable surface of genus  $(m-4)2^{m-3} + 1$ .

(This observation goes back to a 1938 work of Coxeter.)

Therefore, the commutator subgroup of the corresponding right-angled Coxeter group  $RC_{\mathcal{K}}$  is a surface group.

Similarly, when  $|\mathcal{K}| \cong S^2$  (which is equivalent to  $\mathcal{K}$  being the boundary of a 3-dimensional simplicial polytope),  $\mathcal{R}_{\mathcal{K}}$  is a 3-dimensional manifold.

Therefore, the commutator subgroup of the corresponding  $RC_{\mathcal{K}}$  is a 3-manifold group.

### 3. Commutator subgroups and subalgebras

First consider the case  $G_i = S^1$ . The homotopy fibration

$$(D^2, S^1)^{\mathcal{K}} = \mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}} \longrightarrow (\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^{\mathcal{K}} \longrightarrow (\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^m$$

splits after looping:

$$\Omega(\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^{\mathcal{K}} \simeq \Omega\mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}} \times T^m$$

**Warning:** this is not an  $H$ -space splitting!

#### Proposition

*There exists an exact sequence of Hopf algebras (over a base ring  $\mathbf{k}$ )*

$$\mathbf{k} \longrightarrow H_*(\Omega\mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}}) \longrightarrow H_*(\Omega(\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^{\mathcal{K}}) \xrightarrow{\text{Ab}} \Lambda[u_1, \dots, u_m] \longrightarrow 0$$

*where  $\Lambda[u_1, \dots, u_m]$  denotes the exterior algebra and  $\deg u_i = 1$ .*

Here,  $H_*(\Omega\mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}})$  is the commutator subalgebra of a largely non-commutative algebra  $H_*(\Omega(\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^{\mathcal{K}})$ .

Consider the **graph product Lie algebra**

$$L_{\mathcal{K}} = FL\langle u_1, \dots, u_m \rangle / ([u_i, u_j] = 0, [u_i, u_j] = 0 \text{ for } \{i, j\} \in \mathcal{K}),$$

where  $FL\langle u_1, \dots, u_m \rangle$  is the free graded Lie algebra,  $\deg u_i = 1$ , and  $[a, b] = -(-1)^{|a||b|}[b, a]$  denotes the graded Lie bracket.

We can write  $L_{\mathcal{K}} = \operatorname{colim}_{I \in \mathcal{K}}^{\text{GLA}} CL\langle u_i : i \in I \rangle$ , where  $CL$  denotes the trivial graded Lie algebra and the colimit taken in the category of graded Lie algebras. (Similar to  $RC_{\mathcal{K}} = \operatorname{colim}_{I \in \mathcal{K}}^{\text{GRP}} (\mathbb{Z}_2)^I$ .)

The universal enveloping algebra of  $L_{\mathcal{K}}$  is the quotient of the free associative algebra  $T\langle \lambda_1, \dots, \lambda_m \rangle$  by the same relations.

## Theorem

*There is an injective homomorphism of Hopf algebras*

$$T\langle u_1, \dots, u_m \rangle / (u_i^2 = 0, u_i u_j + u_j u_i = 0 \text{ for } \{i, j\} \in \mathcal{K}) \hookrightarrow H_*(\Omega(\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^{\mathcal{K}})$$

*which is an isomorphism if and only if  $\mathcal{K}$  is flag.*

Now consider the case of discrete  $G_i$  (e. g.,  $G_i = \mathbb{Z}_2$ ). The homotopy fibration

$$(EG, \mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}} \longrightarrow (B\mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}} \longrightarrow \prod_{k=1}^m BG_k.$$

gives rise to a short exact sequence of groups

$$1 \longrightarrow \pi_1((EG, \mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}}) \longrightarrow \mathbf{G}^{\mathcal{K}} \longrightarrow \prod_{k=1}^m G_k \longrightarrow 1$$

so

$$\text{Ker}\left(\mathbf{G}^{\mathcal{K}} \rightarrow \prod_{k=1}^m G_k\right) = \pi_1((EG, \mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}}).$$

In the case of right-angled Artin or Coxeter groups (or when each  $G_i$  is abelian), the group above is the commutator subgroup  $(\mathbf{G}^{\mathcal{K}})'$ .

## Theorem (Grbić–P–Theriault–Wu, 2012)

Assume that  $\mathcal{K}$  is flag. The commutator subalgebra  $H_*(\Omega\mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}})$  is generated by  $\sum_{I \subset [m]} \dim \tilde{H}^0(\mathcal{K}_I)$  iterated commutators of the form

$$[u_j, u_i], \quad [u_{k_1}, [u_j, u_i]], \quad \dots, \quad [u_{k_1}, [u_{k_2}, \dots [u_{k_{m-2}}, [u_j, u_i]] \dots]]$$

where  $k_1 < k_2 < \dots < k_p < j > i$ ,  $k_s \neq i$  for any  $s$ , and  $i$  is the smallest vertex in a connected component not containing  $j$  of the subcomplex  $\mathcal{K}_{\{k_1, \dots, k_p, j, i\}}$ . Furthermore, this multiplicative generating set is minimal, that is, the commutators above form a basis in the submodule of indecomposables in  $H_*(\Omega\mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}})$ .

## Theorem (P–Veryovkin, 2016)

The commutator subgroup  $RC'_{\mathcal{K}} = \pi_1(\mathcal{R}_{\mathcal{K}}) = H_*(\Omega\mathcal{R}_{\mathcal{K}})$  has a minimal generator set consisting of  $\sum_{J \subset [m]} \text{rank } H_0(\mathcal{K}_J)$  iterated commutators

$$(g_j, g_i), \quad (g_{k_1}, (g_j, g_i)), \quad \dots, \quad (g_{k_1}, (g_{k_2}, \dots (g_{k_{m-2}}, (g_j, g_i)) \dots)),$$

with the same condition on the indices as in the previous theorem.



## 4. When the commutator subgroup is free?

A graph  $\Gamma$  is called **chordal** (in other terminology, **triangulated**) if each of its cycles with  $\geq 4$  vertices has a chord.

By a result of Fulkerson–Gross, a graph is chordal if and only if its vertices can be ordered in such a way that, for each vertex  $i$ , the lesser neighbours of  $i$  form a complete subgraph. (A **perfect elimination order**.)

### Theorem (Grbić–P–Theriault–Wu, 2012)

Let  $\mathcal{K}$  be a flag complex and  $\mathbf{k}$  a field. The following conditions are equivalent:

- 1  $H_*(\Omega\mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}}; \mathbf{k})$  is a free associative algebra;
- 2  $\mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}}$  has homotopy type of a wedge of spheres;
- 3  $\mathcal{K}^1$  is a chordal graph.

## Theorem (P–Veryovkin, 2016)

Let  $\mathcal{K}$  be a flag complex. The following conditions are equivalent:

- 1  $\text{Ker}(\mathbf{G}^{\mathcal{K}} \rightarrow \prod_{k=1}^m G_k)$  is a free group;
- 2  $(E\mathbf{G}, \mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}}$  is homotopy equivalent to a wedge of circles;
- 3  $\mathcal{K}^1$  is a chordal graph.

## Proof

(2) $\Rightarrow$ (1) Because  $\text{Ker}(\mathbf{G}^{\mathcal{K}} \rightarrow \prod_{k=1}^m G_k) = \pi_1((E\mathbf{G}, \mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}})$ .

(3) $\Rightarrow$ (2) Use induction and perfect elimination order.

(1) $\Rightarrow$ (3) Assume that  $\mathcal{K}^1$  is not chordal. Then, for each chordless cycle of length  $\geq 4$ , one can find a subgroup in  $\text{Ker}(\mathbf{G}^{\mathcal{K}} \rightarrow \prod_{k=1}^m G_k)$  which is a surface group. Hence,  $\text{Ker}(\mathbf{G}^{\mathcal{K}} \rightarrow \prod_{k=1}^m G_k)$  is not a free group.

## Corollary

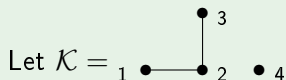
Let  $RA_{\mathcal{K}}$  and  $RC_{\mathcal{K}}$  be the right-angled Artin and Coxeter groups corresponding to a simplicial complex  $\mathcal{K}$ .

- (a) The commutator subgroup  $RA'_{\mathcal{K}}$  is free iff  $\mathcal{K}^1$  is a chordal graph.
- (b) The commutator subgroup  $RC'_{\mathcal{K}}$  is free iff  $\mathcal{K}^1$  is a chordal graph.

Part (a) is the result of Servatius, Droms and Servatius.

The difference between (a) and (b) is that the commutator subgroup  $RA'_{\mathcal{K}}$  is infinitely generated, unless  $RA_{\mathcal{K}} = \mathbb{Z}^m$ , while the commutator subgroup  $RC'_{\mathcal{K}}$  is finitely generated.

## Example



Then the commutator subgroup  $RC'_{\mathcal{K}}$  is free with the following basis:

$$\begin{aligned} & (g_3, g_1), (g_4, g_1), (g_4, g_2), (g_4, g_3), \\ & (g_2, (g_4, g_1)), (g_3, (g_4, g_1)), (g_1, (g_4, g_3)), (g_3, (g_4, g_2)), \\ & (g_2, (g_3, (g_4, g_1))). \end{aligned}$$

## Example

Let  $\mathcal{K}$  be an  $m$ -cycle with  $m \geq 4$  vertices.

Then  $\mathcal{K}^1$  is not a chordal graph, so the group  $RC'_{\mathcal{K}}$  is not free.

In fact,  $\mathcal{R}_{\mathcal{K}}$  is an orientable surface of genus  $(m-4)2^{m-3} + 1$ , so  $RC'_{\mathcal{K}} \cong \pi_1(\mathcal{R}_{\mathcal{K}})$  is a one-relator group.

## 5. One-relator groups

### Theorem (Grbić–Ilyasova–P–Simmons, 2020)

Let  $\mathcal{K}$  be a flag complex. The following conditions are equivalent:

- 1  $\pi_1(\mathcal{R}_{\mathcal{K}}) = RC'_{\mathcal{K}}$  is a one-relator group;
- 2  $H_2(\mathcal{R}_{\mathcal{K}}) = \mathbb{Z}$ ;
- 3  $\mathcal{K} = C_p$  or  $\mathcal{K} = C_p * \Delta^q$  for  $p \geq 4$  and  $q \geq 0$ , where  $C_p$  is a  $p$ -cycle,  $\Delta^q$  is a  $q$ -simplex, and  $*$  denotes the join of simplicial complexes.

### Theorem (Grbić–Ilyasova–P–Simmons, 2020)

Let  $\mathcal{K}$  be a flag complex. The following conditions are equivalent:

- 1  $H_*(\Omega \mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}})$  is a one-relator algebra;
- 2  $H_{2-j, 2j}(\mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}}) = \begin{cases} \mathbb{Z} & \text{if } j = p \text{ for some } p, 4 \leq p \leq m \\ 0 & \text{otherwise;} \end{cases}$
- 3  $\mathcal{K} = C_p$  or  $\mathcal{K} = C_p * \Delta^q$  for  $p \geq 4$  and  $q \geq 0$ .

## References

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