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4-CYCLE PROPERTIES FOR CHARACTERIZING RECTAGRAPHS AND HYPERCUBES

Khadra Bouanane, Ouargla, Algiers, Abdelhafid Berrachedi, Algiers

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Abstract. A $(0,2)$-graph is a connected graph, where each pair of vertices has either 0 or 2 common neighbours. These graphs constitute a subclass of $(0,\lambda)$-graphs introduced by Mulder in 1979. A rectagraph, well known in diagram geometry, is a triangle-free $(0,2)$-graph. $(0,2)$-graphs include hypercubes, folded cube graphs and some particular graphs such as icosahedral graph, Shrikhande graph, Klein graph, Gewirtz graph, etc. In this paper, we give some local properties of 4-cycles in $(0,\lambda)$-graphs and more specifically in $(0,2)$-graphs, leading to new characterizations of rectagraphs and hypercubes.

Keywords: hypercube; $(0,2)$-graph; rectagraph; 4-cycle; characterization

MSC 2010: 05C75

1. Introduction

A $(0,2)$-*graph* is a connected graph, where each pair of vertices has either 0 or 2 common neighbours. This class of graphs is a special case of $(0,\lambda)$-*graphs*, introduced by Mulder, who showed that they are regular in [6]. A *rectagraph*, well-known in diagram geometry, see [9], is a $(0,2)$-graph without any triangles.

Since every pair of adjacent edges engenders a unique 4-cycle, we can easily compute the number of 4-cycles in a $(0,2)$-graph. In fact, there are $|V(G)|d(d-1)/8$ 4-cycles in a $(0,2)$-graph G of order $|V(G)|$ and degree d.

$(0,2)$-graphs were studied in various contexts; existence and construction of $(0,2)$-graphs were intensively studied by several researchers, we can cite for instance [2], [3]. Another important aspect is characterizing hypercubes as $(0,2)$-graphs; due to their remarkable properties and multiple applications, many authors have investigated this topic in order to give a new point of view which can be used for recognizing and constructing hypercubes, see [1], [5], [6], [7], [10].

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In this paper, we give new characterizations of hypercubes and rectagraphs, in addition to many local properties of 4-cycles in $(0, \lambda)$-graphs and more specifically in $(0, 2)$-graphs, using an edge binary relation introduced by Sabidussi in his work [11] on Cartesian graph products.

2. Definitions and notation

Let G be a simple connected graph with $V(G)$ its vertex set and $E(G)$ its edge set, let x and y be two vertices in $V(G)$. We denote by $N(x)$ the set of neighbours of x and by $N(x, y)$ the set of common neighbours of x and y. An edge $\{x, y\}$ will be denoted xy, where vertices x and y are its *extremities*.

A *hypercube* or a d-dimensional cube is the graph, denoted Q_d, with $V(Q_d) = \{0, 1\}^d$ where the d-tuples x and y are joined if and only if they differ in exactly one coordinate. Let G be a graph and let $u, v \in V(G)$. The *distance* $d(u, v)$ between two vertices u and v is the length of a shortest (u, v)-path. The *diameter* of the graph G, denoted $\mathrm{diam}(G)$, is the maximum distance between any pairs of vertices. The *interval* $I(u, v)$ can be defined by $I(u, v) = \{w \in V(G) \colon d(u, v) = d(u, w) + d(w, v)\}$.

A vertex $\bar{u}$ is an *antipode* of a vertex u if $I(u, \bar{u}) = V(G)$. A graph G is an *antipodal graph* if each vertex has a unique antipode. A subset $W \subseteq V(G)$ is *convex* if $I(u, v) \subseteq W$ for any $u, v \in W$. A graph G is *interval monotone* if each of its intervals is convex. A graph G is *interval regular* if $|I(u, v) \cap N(u)| = d(u, v)$ for any two vertices u and v in $V(G)$. Note that a hypercube is characterized as a $(0, 2)$-graph, see [5], [6], interval monotone [4], interval regular [8] and an antipodal graph [10].

Let G be a graph. A 4-cycle denoted C is defined by the sequence of its four vertices. The set of all 4-cycles in G is denoted $\Phi(G)$.

Let $e, \acute{e} \in E(G)$, we define a binary relation θ on $E(G)$, where $e\theta\acute{e}$ if there is a 4-cycle $C \in \Phi(G)$ such that $e, \acute{e}$ are nonadjacent edges of C. We say that the edge e is *parallel* to $\acute{e}$ and denote $\theta(e) = \{\acute{e} \in E(G) \colon e\theta\acute{e}\}$. Note that θ was introduced by Sabidussi in [11] as the relation $\sim^{(0)}$.

Let G be a $(0, 2)$-graph and let e be an edge in $E(G)$. We define the *edge level decomposition relative to* e by defining the subsets $N_i(e) \subseteq E(G)$, $0 \leqslant i \leqslant m$, which constitute the *levels* of the decomposition, where $N_0(e) = \{e\}$ and $e_i \in N_i(e)$, if there is at least one edge $e_{i-1} \in N_{i-1}(e)$ such that $e_i \in \theta(e_{i-1})$ for $1 \leqslant i \leqslant m$, where m denotes the index of the last level in the decomposition. It is then clear that in any edge level decomposition relative to e, every edge $f = xy$ in $E(G)$ is either in $N_k(e)$, $0 \leqslant k \leqslant m$, or belongs to $E(G) \setminus \bigcup_{i=1}^{m} N_i(e)$. In this case, its two extremities

x and y are incident with two different edges from $\bigcup_{i=1}^{m} N_i(e)$, which are either in the same level or different levels.

3. Some 4-cycle properties in $(0,2)$-graphs

In this section, we give first some local properties of 4-cycles in $(0,\lambda)$-graphs. After that, other results, using the relation θ, are presented for the specific case $\lambda = 2$, including a characterization of rectagraphs.

Lemma 3.1. *If G is a $(0,\lambda)$-graph, then every vertex in $V(G)$ is in $d(d-1)\times(\lambda-1)/2$ 4-cycles.*

Proof. Let u be a vertex. Since G is regular, $|N(u)| = d$ and for each pair of vertices $v, w \in N(u)$, there are $(\lambda-1)$ 4-cycles containing u, v, w at one time. Thus the number of 4-cycles containing u equals $(\lambda-1)\binom{d}{2}$. □

Lemma 3.2. *If G is a $(0,\lambda)$-graph, then every edge e is contained in $(\lambda-1)(d-1)$ 4-cycles.*

Proof. Let $e = uv$ be an edge. For each edge e_u incident to u, there are $\lambda-1$ edges $e_1, e_2, \ldots, e_{\lambda-1}$ incident to v such that e, e_u and e_i, $1 \leqslant i \leqslant \lambda-1$ are contained in a 4-cycle. Since G is d-regular, e is then contained in $(\lambda-1)(d-1)$ 4-cycles. □

Lemma 3.3. *Let G be a $(0,\lambda)$-graph. If there is an edge $e \in E(G)$ such that $\theta(e)$ is a nonempty matching, then $\lambda = 2$.*

Proof. Let G be a $(0,\lambda)$-graph. It is easy to see that if $\lambda = 1$ then $\Phi(G) = \emptyset$. Therefore, $\theta(e) = \emptyset$ for all edges in $E(G)$. Note that if $\lambda \geqslant 2$ and $|E(G)| \geqslant 2$, then every two adjacent edges are contained in $(\lambda-1)$ 4-cycles, thus for any edge e, there are at least $\lambda-1$ adjacent edges that are parallel to e. Therefore, if there is an edge e such that $\theta(e)$ is a matching, then we have necessarily $\lambda = 2$. □

Lemma 3.4. *In a $(0,2)$-graph G, we have*

$$d-2 \leqslant |\theta(e)| \leqslant d-1, \quad e \in E(G).$$

Furthermore, G is K_4 free if and only if $|\theta(e)| = d-1$ for all $e \in E(G)$.

Proof. Let G be a $(0,2)$-graph. First, we prove that $d-2 \leqslant |\theta(e)| \leqslant d-1$ for all $e \in E(G)$.

Let $e = uv$ be an edge in $E(G)$. According to Lemma 3.2, e is contained in $(d-1)$ 4-cycles, and by definition of the relation θ, we can easily deduce that $|\theta(e)| \leqslant d-1$. On the other hand, assume that $|\theta(e)| \leqslant d-3$, then there are $e_1 = xy$, $e_2 = zt \in \theta(e)$, $e_1 \neq e_2$, such that e and e_1 are contained in two 4-cycles C_1, C_2 and e and e_2 are contained in two other 4-cycles C_3, C_4. Thus on one hand we have $N(u,v) = \{x,y\}$, and on the other hand we have $N(u,v) = \{z,t\}$. By the $(0,2)$-property, this implies that $\{x,y\} = \{z,t\}$ which contradicts the fact that $e_1 \neq e_2$.

Note that if the edge $e = uv \in E(G)$ is such that $|\theta(e)| < d-1$, then there is an edge $\bar{e} \in \theta(e)$ such that e and $\bar{e}$ are contained in two different 4-cycles C_1, C_2, with $C_1 = uvwt$ and $C_2 = uvtw$, which means that vertices u, v, w, and t are pairwise adjacent and the subgraph induced by the set $\{u,v,w,t\}$ is isomorphic to K_4.

Conversely, if the subgraph induced by $Y = \{u,v,w,t\} \subseteq V(G)$ is isomorphic to K_4, then there are two 4-cycles $C_1, C_2 \in \Phi(G)$ containing e and $\bar{e}$ with $C_1 = uvwt$ and $C_2 = uvtw$, hence $|\theta(e)| = d-2 < d-1$. □

Lemma 3.5. *Let G be a $(0,2)$-graph and let $\acute{e} \in E(G)$. If $\bar{e} \in \theta(\acute{e})$, then there is at most one edge $\bar{\bar{e}} \in \theta(\acute{e})$ such that $\bar{e}, \bar{\bar{e}}$ are adjacent. In this case, G contains $K_4 - e$ as an induced subgraph.*

Proof. Let G be a $(0,2)$-graph. Let $\acute{e} = uv \in E(G)$ and $\bar{e} = wz \in \theta(\acute{e})$. Suppose that there are two edges e_1, e_2 adjacent to $\bar{e}$ such that $e_1, e_2 \in \theta(\acute{e})$. We have then, without loss of generality, two cases:

Case 1: $e_1 = wt$ and $e_2 = wy$. Since $\bar{e} \in \theta(\acute{e})$, there is a 4-cycle $C_1 = uvwz$ and $N(u,w) = \{v,z\}$. On the other hand, $e_1 = wt \in \theta(\acute{e})$ implies that $ut \notin E(G)$ (otherwise $N(u,w) = \{v,z,t\}$) thus there is a 4-cycle $C_2 = uvtw$ and $N(v,w) = \{u,t\}$. Since $e_2 = wy \in \theta(\acute{e})$, there is a 4-cycle C_3 such that $C_3 = uvyw$ or $C_3 = uvwy$. But if $C_3 = uvyw$, then $N(v,w) = \{u,t,y\}$ and if $C_3 = uvwy$, then $N(u,w) = \{v,z,y\}$, which is impossible in both the cases.

Case 2: $e_1 = wt$ and $e_2 = zy$. Since $\bar{e} \in \theta(\acute{e})$, there is a 4-cycle $C_1 = uvwz$ and $N(v,z) = \{u,w\}$. We have also $e_1 = wt \in \theta(\acute{e})$ and $ut \notin E(G)$ (otherwise $N(u,w) = \{v,z,t\}$) which implies that there is $C_2 = uvtw$ and thus $N(v,w) = \{u,t\}$. On the other hand, $e_2 = zy \in \theta(\acute{e})$ implies that there is $C_3 \in \Phi(G)$ such that $C_3 = uvyz$ or $C_3 = uvzy$. But if $C_3 = uvyz$, then $N(v,z) = \{u,w,y\}$, and if $C_3 = uvzy$, then $N(v,w) = \{u,z,t\}$, which is also impossible.

Note that if $\bar{e} = wz$ and $e_1 = wt$ are parallel to $\acute{e} = uv$, then there are two 4-cycles $C_1 = uvwz$ and $C_2 = uvtw$ in $\Phi(G)$ and the subgraph induced by $\{u,v,z,w\}$ is isomorphic to $K_4 - e$ with $e = uz$, which concludes this proof. □

Theorem 3.6. *Let G be a $(0,\lambda)$-graph of degree d. G is a rectagraph if and only if $\theta(\acute{e})$ is a matching of $(d-1)$ edges for any edge $\acute{e}$.*

P r o o f. Let G be a rectagraph and let $\acute{e} \in E(G)$. Since G is triangle free, G is also K_4 free and $(K_4 - e)$ free. According to Lemma 3.4, $|\theta(\acute{e})| = d-1$ and by Lemma 3.5, there are no adjacent edges in $\theta(\acute{e})$. It follows that $\theta(\acute{e})$ is a matching of $d-1$ edges.

Conversely, if $\theta(\acute{e})$ is a matching of $d-1$ edges for every edge $\acute{e} \in E(G)$ then according to Lemma 3.3, G is a $(0,2)$-graph. Now assume that G is a $(0,2)$-graph that contains triangles, and let x, y, z be three vertices inducing a triangle. Let $e_1 = xy$, $e_2 = yz$ and $e_3 = xz$. Since $z \in N(x,y)$, there is a unique vertex t such that $N(x,y) = \{t,z\}$. Hence there is $C_1 \in \Phi(G)$ such that $C_1 = xzyt$ and it follows that $\hat{e} = xt \in \theta(e_2)$. On the other hand, since $y \in N(x,z)$, there is a unique vertex w such that $N(x,z) = \{w,y\}$. Note that $w \neq t$, otherwise the subgraph induced by $\{x,y,z,t\}$ is isomorphic to K_4 and according to Lemma 3.4, $|\theta(\hat{e})| = d-2 < d-1$. Consequently, there is a 4-cycle $C_2 \in \Phi(G)$ such that $C_2 = xyzw$ and $\tilde{e} = xw \in \theta(e_2)$. This means that $\theta(e_2)$ is not a matching, since $\hat{e}$ and $\tilde{e}$ are adjacent, which contradicts our assumption. $\square$

4. New characterizations of hypercubes

Hypercubes constitute a remarkable class of graphs with very interesting properties, including the $(0,2)$-property. In this section, we show new characterizations of a hypercube as a $(0,2)$-graph. But first, let us recall important results due to Mulder and Laborde and Rao Hebbare that we shall use:

Proposition 4.1 (Mulder [6], Laborde and Rao Hebbare [5])**.** *Let G be a $(0,2)$-graph of degree d, then $|V(G)| \leqslant 2^d$. Furthermore, G is a hypercube of dimension d if and only if $|V(G)| = 2^d$.*

Mulder has also shown the following result:

Proposition 4.2 (Mulder [8])**.** *Let G be a connected graph. G is a hypercube if and only if G is bipartite and interval regular.*

Theorem 4.3. *Every interval monotone rectagraph is interval regular.*

P r o o f. Let G be an interval monotone rectagraph. The proof is by induction on $d(u,v)$ where $u,v \in V(G)$. If $d(u,v) = 2$, then $I(u,v) = \{x,y\}$ and $|N(u) \cap I(u,v)| = |N(u,v)| = 2$. Let $u,v \in V(G)$ such that $d(u,v) = k \geqslant 3$, and let $w \in N(u) \cap I(u,v)$.

By induction hypothesis, we have $|N(w) \cap I(w,v)| = d(w,v) = k-1$. We denote by $t_1, t_2, \ldots, t_{k-1}$, the neighbours of w in $I(w,v)$. Since $d(u,t_i) = 2$, $1 \leqslant i \leqslant k-1$, there are $w_1, w_2, \ldots, w_{k-1} \in V(G)$ with $w_i \neq w$, $1 \leqslant i \leqslant k-1$, such that $N(u,t_i) = \{w, w_i\}$. Hence $d(w_i, v) = d(t_i, v) + 1 = k-1$ and $w_i \in N(u) \cap I(u,v)$. Note that $w_i \neq w_j$ for $i \neq j$, otherwise $N(w,w_i) = N(w,w_j) = \{u, t_i, t_j\}$. Assume now that there is a vertex $x \in N(u) \cap I(u,v)$ such that $x \neq w, w_1, w_2, \ldots, w_{k-1}$. Therefore $u \in N(x,w)$ and there is a unique vertex $y \neq u$ such that $y \in N(x,w)$. Note that $y \neq t_i$, $1 \leqslant i \leqslant k-1$, otherwise $N(u,t_i) = \{x, w, w_i\}$. Since G is interval monotone and triangle free, $y \in I(x,w) \subset I(u,v)$, and consequently, $y \in N(w) \cap I(u,v)$, which contradicts the induction hypothesis. □

Corollary 4.4. *Let G be a graph. G is a hypercube if and only if G is a bipartite interval monotone rectagraph.*

Proof. A hypercube is a bipartite interval monotone rectagraph. Conversely, according to Theorem 4.3, an interval monotone rectagraph G is interval regular. Since G is bipartite, G is a hypercube by Proposition 4.2. □

Theorem 4.5. *Let G be a rectagraph of degree d. G is a hypercube of dimension d if and only if in an edge level decomposition relative to any edge e, we have $|N_0(e)| = |N_m(e)| = 1$, $|N_{i-1}(e) \cap \theta(e_i)| = i$ and $|N_{i+1}(e) \cap \theta(e_i)| = d-1-i$ for any edge $e_i \in N_i(e)$, $1 \leqslant i \leqslant m$.*

Proof. Let Q_d be a hypercube of dimension d, let $e = uw$ be an edge in $E(Q_d)$ and let $N_0(e), N_1(e), \ldots, N_m(e)$ be the subsets of edges in the level decomposition relative to the edge e.

First, we prove that $|N_m(e)| = 1$ and $m = d-1$. Let v be the unique antipode of u in Q_d and t the unique antipode of w, thus $I(u,v) = I(w,t) = V(Q_d)$ and $d(u,v) = d(w,t) = d$. Since $v \in I(w,t)$, we have $d(w,t) = d = d(w,v) + d(v,t)$. On the other hand, $w \in I(u,v)$ implies that $d(u,v) = d = d(u,w) + d(w,v)$. We can easily deduce that $d(u,w) = d(v,t)$, and v, t are adjacent. Since $d(u,t) = d(w,v) = d-1$, the edge $vt \in N_m(e)$ and $m = d-1$. This edge is unique in $N_{d-1}(e)$, otherwise there would be another pair of vertices x and y which are antipodes of u and v, respectively. Hence $|N_m(e)| = 1$.

Now let $e_i = xy \in N_i(e)$. Since $d(u,x) = i$ and Q_d is interval regular, $|N(x) \cap I(u,x)| = i$, thus there are i neighbours $x_1, x_2, \ldots, x_i$ of x in $I(u,x)$. Note that $d(u,x_j) = i-1$ and $x \in N(y,x_j)$, $1 \leqslant j \leqslant i$, which implies that there are i vertices, $y_1, y_2, \ldots, y_i$ such that $y_j \in N(y,x_j)$, $1 \leqslant j \leqslant i$. It follows that $x_j y_j \in \theta(e_i)$, $1 \leqslant j \leqslant i$ and we have necessarily the edges $x_j y_j \in N_{i-1}(e)$, $1 \leqslant j \leqslant i$. Thus $|N_{i-1}(e) \cap \theta(e_i)| = i$. In the same way, let $vt \in N_{d-1}(e)$ be such that $d(u,t) =$

$d(w,v) = d-1$. So $d(x,t) = d-1-i$ and there are $d-1-i$ neighbours of the vertex x (say $\acute{x}_1, \acute{x}_2, \ldots, \acute{x}_{d-1-i}$) in $I(x,t)$. Since $x \in N(y, \acute{x}_j), 1 \leqslant j \leqslant d-1-i$, there are vertices $\acute{y}_1, \acute{y}_2, \ldots, \acute{y}_{d-1-i}$, such that $\acute{y}_j \in N(y, \acute{x}_j)$, $1 \leqslant j \leqslant d-1-i$. Thus $\acute{x}_j\acute{y}_j \in N_{i+1}(e)$, $1 \leqslant j \leqslant d-1-i$ and $|N_{i+1}(e) \cap \theta(e_i)| = d-1-i$.

Conversely, let G be a rectagraph satisfying the hypothesis of Theorem 4.5 and let $e \in E(G)$. Let $N_0(e), N_1(e), \ldots, N_m(e)$ be the subsets of edges in the level decomposition relative to the edge e. Note that for any edge $e_i \in N_i(e)$, every edge of $\theta(e_i)$ is either in $N_{i-1}(e)$ or $N_{i+1}(e)$.

First we prove that $N_i(e)$ is a matching for $1 \leqslant i \leqslant m$. So let us assume the contrary, and choose the smallest k such that $N_k(e)$ is not a matching. So there are at least two adjacent edges in $N_k(e)$, say $e_k = xy$ and $\acute{e}_k = yz$. Since $|N_{k-1}(e) \cap \theta(e_k)| = k$, there is an edge $e_{k-1} = \acute{x}\acute{y}$ parallel to e_k in $N_{k-1}(e)$. Note that $\acute{e}_k \notin \theta(e_{k-1})$, since G is a rectagraph. Therefore, since $y \in N(\acute{y}, z)$, there is necessarily another vertex $\acute{z} \in N(\acute{y}, z)$, thus the edge $\acute{e}_{k-1} = \acute{y}\acute{z} \in \theta(\acute{e}_k)$ and consequently, $\acute{e}_{k-1} \in N_{k-1}(e)$. But edges e_{k-1} and $\acute{e}_{k-1}$ are adjacent, which contradicts the fact that k is the smallest integer such that $N_k(e)$ contains adjacent edges. It follows that $N_i(e)$ is a matching for $1 \leqslant i \leqslant m$.

Now let us prove, by induction on i, that $|N_i(e)| = \binom{d-1}{i}$, $0 \leqslant i \leqslant m$.

For $i = 0$, we have $|N_0(e)| = 1 = \binom{d-1}{0}$. Assume now that for all $k \leqslant i-1$, $|N_k(e)| = \binom{d-1}{k}$. Since each edge $e_{i-1} \in N_{i-1}(e)$ is parallel to $d-i$ edges in $N_i(e)$, the total number of 4-cycles lying between $N_{i-1}(e)$ and $N_i(e)$ equals $\binom{d-1}{i-1}(d-i)$.

On the other hand, each edge $e_i \in N_i(e)$ is parallel to i edges from $N_{i-1}(e)$. Thus, the number of 4-cycles lying between $N_i(e)$ and $N_{i-1}(e)$ equals $|N_i(e)|i$, and it follows that

$$|N_i(e)| = \frac{\binom{d-1}{i-1}(d-i)}{i} = \binom{d-1}{i}.$$

Note that $|N_m(e)| = 1 = \binom{d-1}{m}$ implies $m = d-1$.

By counting the total number of edges in the levels, we have

$$|N_0(e)| + |N_1(e)| + \ldots + |N_{d-1}(e)| = \sum_{i=0}^{d-1} \binom{d-1}{i} = 2^{d-1}.$$

Since each level is a matching, it follows that $|V(G)| = 2 \cdot 2^{d-1} = 2^d$. According to Proposition 4.1, G is a hypercube of dimension d. $\square$

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Authors' addresses: Khadra Bouanane, Department of Mathematics, Kasdi Merbah University, Ave 1er Novembre 1954, 30000 Ouargla, Algeria, and Faculty of Mathematics, University of Science and Technology Houari Boumediene, BP 32 El Alia, 16111 Bab Ezzouar, Algiers, Algeria, e-mail: `bouanane.khadra@univ-ouargla.dz`; Abdelhafid Berrachedi, Faculty of Mathematics, University of Science and Technology Houari Boumediene, BP 32 El Alia, 16111 Bab Ezzouar, Algiers, Algeria, e-mail: `berrachedi.abdelhafid@usthb.dz`.