

# Qualifying Exam Syllabus Proposal

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### Date:

Thursday September 3, 2015

### Time:

11AM-2PM

### Location:

MSB 3106

## 1 Proposed Research Talk

### 1.1 The Catalan numbers and $q$ -analogues.

A lattice path is a sequence of North  $N(0, 1)$  and East  $E(1, 0)$  steps in the first quadrant of the  $xy$ -plane, starting from the origin  $(0, 0)$  and ending at say  $(n, m)$ . We let  $L_{n,m}$  denote the set of all such paths, and  $L_{n,m}^+$  the subset of  $L_{n,m}$  consisting of paths which never go below the line  $y = \frac{m}{n}x$ . A rational Dyck path is an element of  $L_{n,m}^+$  for some  $n, m$ .

Let  $C_{n,m} = \frac{1}{n+m} \binom{n+m}{n}$  denote the rational Catalan number. For coprime  $n$  and  $m$ ,  $C_{n,m}$  also counts the number of elements in  $L_{n,m}^+$ . For the majority of the talk we will only be interested in the special case  $m = n + 1$ , so that  $C_{n,n+1} = C_n = \frac{1}{n+1} \binom{2n}{n}$  is the usual  $n$ th Catalan number.

There is a useful recursive relation between Catalan numbers:

$$C_n = \sum_{k=1}^n C_{k-1} C_{n-k}, \quad n \geq 1. \quad (1)$$

Given  $\pi \in L_{n,m}^+$ , let  $\sigma$  be the 0, 1-string resulting from the following algorithm. First initialize  $\sigma$  to the empty string. Next start at  $(0, 0)$ , move along  $\pi$  and add a 0 to the end of  $\sigma(\pi)$  every time a  $N$  step is encountered, and add a 1 to the end of  $\sigma(\pi)$  every time an  $E$  step is encountered. We call the transformation of  $\pi$  to  $\sigma$  or its inverse the *coding* of  $\pi$  or  $\sigma$ . Denote the major index statistic of the string  $\sigma$  to be

$$\text{maj}(\sigma) = \sum_{i: \sigma_i > \sigma_{i+1}} i.$$

Now let  $a_i(\pi)$  denote the number of complete squares, in the  $i$ th row from the bottom of  $\pi$ , which are to the right of  $\pi$  and to the left of the line  $y = \frac{m}{n}x$ . We set  $\text{area}(\pi) = \sum_i a_i(\pi)$ .

In sections 1.2-1.7, we will be looking at  $q$ - and  $q, t$ - generalizations of the usual Catalan numbers  $C_n$ . First, we define  $q$ - analogues for binomial coefficients. Let

$$[n] = \frac{q^n - 1}{q - 1}, \quad [n]! = [1][2] \dots [n], \quad \begin{bmatrix} n+m \\ m \end{bmatrix} = \frac{[n+m]!}{[n]![m]}.$$

The first natural  $q$ -analogue of  $C_n$  is given by the following theorem:

**Theorem 1.1** (*MacMahon*[*Mac60*])

$$\sum_{\pi \in L_{n,n}^+} q^{\text{maj}(\sigma(\pi))} = \frac{1}{[n+1]} \begin{bmatrix} 2n \\ n \end{bmatrix}.$$

The second natural  $q$ -analogue was studied by Carlitz and Riordan [CR64]. They define

$$C_n(q) = \sum_{\pi \in L_{n,n}^+} q^{\text{area}(\pi)}.$$

**Proposition 1.2**

$$C_n(q) = \sum_{k=1}^n q^{k-1} C_k(q) C_{n-k}(q), \quad n \geq 1.$$

## 1.2 Hilbert and Frobenius series.

Given any subspace  $W \subseteq \mathbb{C}[X_n, Y_n] = \mathbb{C}[x_1, \dots, x_n, y_1, \dots, y_n]$ , we define the bigraded Hilbert series of  $W$  as

$$\mathcal{H}(W; q, t) = \sum_{i,j \geq 0} t^i q^j \dim(W^{(i,j)}),$$

where the subspaces  $W^{(i,j)}$  consist of those elements of  $W$  of bi-homogeneous degree  $i$  in the  $x$  variables and  $j$  in the  $y$  variables. Also, define the diagonal action of  $S_n$  on  $W$  by

$$\sigma f = f(x_{\sigma_1}, \dots, x_{\sigma_n}, y_{\sigma_1}, \dots, y_{\sigma_n}), \quad \sigma \in S_n, \quad f \in W.$$

Irreducible characters of  $S_n$  are in one-to-one correspondence with partitions  $\lambda \in \text{Par}(n)$ . We denote them as  $\chi^\lambda$ .

The diagonal action fixes the subspaces  $W^{(i,j)}$ , so we can define the bigraded Frobenius series of  $W$  as

$$\mathcal{F}(W; q, t) = \sum_{i,j \geq 0} t^i q^j \sum_{\lambda \vdash n} s_\lambda \text{Mult}(\chi^\lambda, W^{(i,j)}).$$

Similarly, let  $W^\varepsilon$  be the subspace of alternating elements in  $W$ , and

$$\mathcal{H}(W^\varepsilon; q, t) = \sum_{i,j \geq 0} t^i q^j \dim(W^{\varepsilon(i,j)}).$$

It's a known fact that

$$\mathcal{H}(W^\varepsilon; q, t) = \langle \mathcal{F}(W; q, t), s_{1^n} \rangle.$$

## 1.3 Partitions.

A partition  $\lambda$  is a nonincreasing finite sequence  $\lambda_1 \geq \lambda_2 \geq \dots$  of positive integers. We call each  $\lambda_i$  a part. Let  $l(\lambda)$  denote the number of parts and  $|\lambda| = \sum_i \lambda_i$  the sum of the parts. If  $\lambda$  is a partition and  $|\lambda| = n$ , we also say  $\lambda \vdash n$  or  $\lambda \in \text{Par}(n)$ . The *Ferrers graph* of  $\lambda$  is an array of unit squares, called cells, with  $\lambda_i$  cells in the  $i$ th row, with the first cell in each row left-justified. We define the conjugate partition,  $\lambda'$  as the partition of those Ferrers graph is obtained from  $\lambda$  by reflecting across the diagonal  $x = y$ . For example,  $(i, j) \in \lambda$  refers to a cell with (*column*, *row*) coordinates  $(i, j)$ , with the lower left-hand-cell of  $\lambda$  having coordinates  $(1, 1)$ . The notation  $x \in \lambda$  means  $x$  is a cell in  $\lambda$ .

Two simple functions on partitions we will often use are

$$n(\lambda) = \sum_i (i-1)\lambda_i = \sum_i \binom{\lambda'_i}{2}, \quad z_\lambda = \prod_i i^{n_i} n_i!,$$

where  $n_i = n_i(\lambda)$  is the number of parts of  $\lambda$  equal to  $i$ .

## 1.4 The space of diagonal harmonics.

Let  $p_{h,k}[X_n, Y_n] = \sum_{i=1}^n x_i^h y_i^k$ ,  $h, k \in \mathbb{Z}_{\geq 0}$  denote the "polarized power sum". It is known that the set  $\{p_{h,k}[X_n, Y_n], h, k \in \mathbb{Z}_{\geq 0}\}$  generate  $\mathbb{C}[X_n, Y_n]^{S_n}$ , the ring of invariants under the diagonal action. We define the quotient ring  $DR_n$  of diagonal covariants by

$$DR_n = \mathbb{C}[X_n, Y_n] / \left\langle \sum_{i=1}^n x_i^h y_i^k, \forall h+k > 0 \right\rangle.$$

We also define the space of diagonal harmonics  $DH_n$  by

$$DH_n = \left\{ f \in \mathbb{C}[X_n, Y_n] : \sum_{i=1}^n \frac{\partial^h}{x_i^h} \frac{\partial^k}{y_i^k} f = 0, \forall h+k > 0 \right\}.$$

The space of diagonal harmonics  $DH_n$  is a finite dimensional vector space which is isomorphic to  $DR_n$  as an  $S_n$  module. The dimension of these spaces turns out to be  $(n+1)^{n-1}$  ([Hai02]).

Given a cell  $x \in \lambda$ , let the arm  $a = a(x)$ , leg  $l = l(x)$ , coarm  $a' = a'(x)$ , and coleg  $l' = l'(x)$  be the number of cells strictly between  $x$  and the border of  $\lambda$  in the  $E, S, W$  and  $N$  directions, respectively.

For  $\mu \vdash n$  define,

$$M = (1-q)(1-t), \quad B_\mu = \sum_{x \in \mu} q^{a'} t^{l'}, \quad \Pi_\mu = \prod_{x \in \mu, x \neq (1,1)} (1 - q^{a'} t^{l'})$$

$$n(\mu) = \sum_i (i-1)\mu_i, \quad T_\mu = t^{n(\mu)} q^{n(\mu')}, \quad w_\mu = \prod_{x \in \mu} (q^a - t^{l+1})(t^l - q^{a+1}).$$

Define  $\tilde{K}_{\lambda,\mu}(q, t) = t^{n(\mu)} K_{\lambda,\mu}(q, 1/t)$ , where  $K_{\lambda,\mu}(q, t)$  are known as the  $q, t$ -Kostka polynomials. Then the "modified Macdonald polynomial"  $\tilde{H}_\mu = \tilde{H}_\mu[X; q, t]$  can be defined as

$$\tilde{H}_\mu = \sum_{\lambda \vdash n} \tilde{K}_{\lambda,\mu}(q, t) s_\lambda.$$

**Theorem 1.3** (Haiman, [Hai02]).

$$\mathcal{F}(DH_n; q, t) = \sum_{\mu \vdash n} \frac{T_\mu M \tilde{H}_\mu \Pi_\mu B_\mu}{w_\mu}.$$

## 1.5 Algebraic definition of $q, t$ -Catalan numbers.

On the space of symmetric functions  $\Lambda[X]$ , define the Hall inner product by

$$\langle p_\lambda, p_\mu \rangle = z_\lambda \chi(\lambda = \mu), \quad \langle s_\lambda, s_\mu \rangle = \chi(\lambda = \mu).$$

Then let

$$C_n(q, t) = \langle \mathcal{F}(DH_n; q, t), s_{1^n} \rangle = \mathcal{H}(DH_n^\varepsilon; q, t).$$

**Open problem 1.4** Find a combinatorial description of the polynomials  $\langle \mathcal{F}(DH_n; q, t), s_\lambda \rangle$  for general  $\lambda$ .

From Theorem 1.4 and the fact that  $\langle \tilde{H}_\mu, s_{1^n} \rangle = T_\mu$ , we have

$$C_n(q, t) = \sum_{\mu \vdash n} \frac{T_\mu^2 M \Pi_\mu B_\mu}{w_\mu}.$$

Garsia and Haiman ([GH96]) proved that

$$C_n(q, 1) = C_n(q) = \sum_{\pi \in L_{n,n}^+} q^{\text{area}(\pi)},$$

$$q^{\binom{n}{2}} C_n(q, 1/q) = \frac{1}{[n+1]} \begin{bmatrix} 2n \\ n \end{bmatrix},$$

which shows that both the Carlitz-Riordan and MacMahon  $q$ -Catalan numbers are special cases of  $C_n(q, t)$ . That is why  $C_n(q, t)$  is referred to as  $q, t$ -Catalan sequence.

## 1.6 Bounce statistic. Combinatorial description of $q, t$ - Catalan numbers.

Given  $\pi \in L_{n,n}^+$ , define the *bounce path* of  $\pi$  to be the path described by the following algorithm. Start at  $(0, 0)$  and travel North along  $\pi$  until you encounter the beginning of an  $E$  step. Then turn East and travel straight until you hit the diagonal  $y = x$ . Then turn North and travel straight until you encounter again the beginning of an  $E$  step of  $\pi$ , then turn East and travel to the diagonal, etc. Continue until you arrive at  $(n, n)$ . Let  $(0, 0), (j_1, j_1), (j_2, j_2), \dots, (j_{b-1}, j_{b-1}), (j_b, j_b) = (n, n)$  are the points where the bouncing path touches the line  $y = x$ . Then define the bounce statistic  $\text{bounce}(\pi)$  to be the sum

$$\text{bounce}(\pi) = \sum_{i=1}^{b-1} n - j_i.$$

Let

$$F_n(q, t) = \sum_{\pi \in L_{n,n}^+} q^{\text{area}(\pi)} t^{\text{bounce}(\pi)}.$$

**Theorem 1.5** (*Garsia, Haglund, [GH01],[GH02]*)

$$C_n(q, t) = F_n(q, t).$$

The proof of Theorem 1.6 is based on a recursive structure underlying  $F_n(q, t)$ . For example, it can be proved combinatorially that

$$F_n(q, t) = \sum_{i=1}^b \sum_{\alpha} t^{\sum_{i=2}^b (i-1)\alpha_i} q^{\sum_{i=1}^b \binom{\alpha_i}{2}} \prod_{i=1}^{b-1} \begin{bmatrix} \alpha_i + \alpha_{i+1} - 1 \\ \alpha_{i+1} \end{bmatrix},$$

where the inner sum is over all compositions  $\alpha$  of  $n$  into  $b$  positive integers.

## 1.7 The symmetry problem and the $\text{dinv}$ statistic.

From it's algebraic definition it's easy to show  $C_n(q, t) = C_n(t, q)$ . Thus we have

**Corollary 1.6**

$$\sum_{\pi \in L_{n,n}^+} q^{\text{area}(\pi)} t^{\text{bounce}(\pi)} = \sum_{\pi \in L_{n,n}^+} q^{\text{bounce}(\pi)} t^{\text{area}(\pi)}.$$

At present there is no other known way to prove this equality other than as a corollary of Theorem 1.6.

**Open problem 1.7** *Prove Corollary 1.7 by exhibiting a bijection on Dyck paths which interchanges area and bounce.*

There is another pair of statistics for the  $q, t$ -Catalan discovered by M.Haiman. It involves pairing area with a different statistic called  $\text{dinv}$ , for "diagonal inversion" or " $d$ -inversion". It is defined, with  $a_i$  the length of the  $i$ th row from the bottom, as follows. For  $\pi \in L_{n,n}^+$ , let

$$\text{dinv}(\pi) = |\{(i, j) : 1 \leq i < j \leq n \quad a_i = a_j\}| + |\{(i, j) : 1 \leq i < j \leq n \quad a_i = a_j + 1\}|.$$

Or, equivalently, let  $\lambda(\pi)$  denote the partition above  $\pi$  but inside the  $n \times n$  square. Then

$$\text{dinv}(\pi) = |\{s \in \lambda(\pi) : \text{leg}(s) \leq \text{arm}(s) \leq \text{leg}(s) + 1\}|.$$

**Theorem 1.8**

$$\sum_{\pi \in L_{n,n}^+} q^{\text{dinv}(\pi)} t^{\text{area}(\pi)} = \sum_{\pi \in L_{n,n}^+} q^{\text{area}(\pi)} t^{\text{bounce}(\pi)}.$$

There's a combinatorial proof of Theorem 1.9 that describes a bijective map  $\zeta : L_{n,n}^+ \rightarrow L_{n,n}^+$  such that

$$\text{dinv}(\pi) = \text{area}(\zeta(\pi)), \quad \text{area}(\pi) = \text{bounce}(\zeta(\pi)).$$

## 1.8 Rational Dyck paths.

Define the hook length of the cell  $x \in \lambda$  as  $hl(x) = \text{arm}(x) + \text{leg}(x) + 1$ . An  $(a, b)$ -core is a partition  $\lambda$  such that for any  $x \in \lambda$ , the hook length of  $x$  is not equal to  $a$  or  $b$ . We define the set of  $(a, b)$ -cores as  $\mathcal{C}_{a,b}$ .

Suppose  $(a, b) = 1$ . Then there is a bijection between  $(a, b)$ -cores and rational Dyck paths from  $L_{a,b}^+$  called Anderson's bijection.

The *hook filling* of the boxes in the square lattice is obtained by filling the box with lower-right lattice point  $(b, 0)$  with the number  $-ab$  and increasing by  $a$  for every one box west and increasing by  $b$  for every one box north. A box is above the main diagonal if and only if the corresponding hook is positive. The *positive hooks* of  $\pi \in L_{a,b}^+$  are the numbers in the hook filling below the path but greater than zero. The number of positive hooks is exactly the area of  $\pi$ . We denote  $c(\pi)$  the  $(a, b)$ -core corresponding to  $\pi$  under Anderson bijection: the hook lengths of the boxes in the first column of  $c(\pi)$ , its *leading hooks*, are precisely the positive hooks of  $\pi$ .

It's often easier to work with  $(a, b)$ -cores instead of rational Dyck paths.

Let  $\kappa$  be an  $a$ -core partition. Consider the hook lengths of the boxes in the first column of  $\kappa$ . Find the largest hook length of each residue modulo  $a$ . The  $a$ -rows of  $\kappa$  are the rows corresponding to these hook lengths. The  $a$ -boundary of  $\kappa$  consists of all boxes in its Young diagram with hook length less than  $a$ .

Let  $\kappa$  be an  $(a, b)$ -core partition. The *skew length* of  $\kappa$ , denoted  $sl(\kappa)$ , is the number of boxes simultaneously located in the  $a$ -rows and the  $b$ -boundary of  $\kappa$ .

An interesting property of  $sl(\kappa)$  is that it is independent of the ordering of  $a$  and  $b$  ([CDH15]).

The *co-skew length* of an  $(a, b)$ -core  $\kappa$  is

$$sl'(\kappa) = \frac{(a-1)(b-1)}{2} - sl(\kappa).$$

The *rank* of  $\pi$ , denoted  $rk(\pi)$  is the number of rows in  $\lambda(\pi)$ .

The analogue of the  $\text{dinv}$  statistic on rational Dyck paths can be defined as

$$\text{dinv}(\pi) = \left| \left\{ s \in \lambda(\pi) : \frac{\text{arm}(s)}{\text{leg}(s)+1} \leq \frac{b}{a} < \frac{\text{arm}(s)+1}{\text{leg}(s)} \right\} \right|.$$

**Open problem 1.9** Find an analogue of the bounce statistic on rational Dyck paths.

**Conjecture 1.10** Let  $a$  and  $b$  relatively prime positive integers. Then

$$\frac{1}{[a+b]} \begin{bmatrix} a+b \\ a \end{bmatrix} = \sum_{\kappa \in \mathcal{C}_{a,b}} q^{sl(\kappa)+rk(\kappa)}.$$

Define the rational  $q, t$ -Catalan numbers as

$$F_{a,b}(q, t) = \sum_{\kappa \in \mathcal{C}_{a,b}} q^{rk(\kappa)} t^{sl'(\kappa)}.$$

**Conjecture 1.11**

$$\sum_{\kappa \in \mathcal{C}_{a,b}} q^{rk(\kappa)} t^{sl'(\kappa)} = \sum_{\kappa \in \mathcal{C}_{a,b}} q^{sl'(\kappa)} t^{rk(\kappa)}.$$

## 1.9 $\zeta$ - map on rational Dyck paths.

For  $\pi \in L_{a,b}^+$ , let  $\nu(\pi) = (\nu_1, \dots, \nu_a)$  be the partition that has parts equal to the number of  $b$ -boundary boxes in the  $a$ -rows of  $c(\pi)$ .

Define  $\zeta(\pi)$  to be the  $(a, b)$ -Dyck path such that  $\lambda(\zeta(\pi)) = \nu(\pi)$ .

**Proposition 1.12**

$$sl'(\pi) = \text{area}(\zeta(\pi)), \quad \text{dinv}(\pi) = \text{area}(\zeta(\pi)).$$

**Corollary 1.13**

$$sl'(\pi) = \text{dinv}(\pi).$$

**Open problem 1.14** Prove that  $\zeta$  is bijective.

## 2 Topics (with references)

### 1. Combinatorics.

- Enumerative Combinatorics. ([EC1], [AKS13])
  - Cycles and inversions. Descents. Partitions and  $q$ -binomial coefficients. Partition identities. The twelvefold way.
  - Inclusion-exclusion formula. Permutations with restricted position. Involutions.
  - Posets. Lattices. Distributive lattices. Incidence algebras. Moebius inversion formula. Promotion and evacuation.
  - Markov chains on linear extensions.
- Symmetric Functions. ([EC2], Ch.7)
  - Monomial, elementary, complete homogeneous, power sum symmetric functions. An involution. A scalar product.
  - Schur functions: combinatorial definition, classical definition.
  - Semi-standard Young tableaux. The RSK algorithm.
  - The Jacobi-Trudi identity. The Murnaghan-Nakayama rule. The Littlewood-Richardson Rule.
- Algebraic Combinatorics. ([EC2], [Hag08])
  - The characters of the Symmetric group.
  - Hilbert series, Frobenius series.
  - Macdonald Polynomials and the Space of Diagonal harmonics.
- $q, t$ - Catalan numbers. ([Hag08], Ch.2,3)
  - Statistics on Dyck paths: Bounce statistic, Dinv statistic. The Zeta map on rational Dyck paths.
  - Definition of  $q, t$ - Catalan numbers.
  - Special values  $t = 1$  and  $t = 1/q$ .
  - The Symmetry Problem.
- Enumeration of Integer Points in Polyhedra. ([Ba08])
  - The algebra of polyhedra. Linear transformations. Polarity. Tangent cones and decompositions modulo polyhedra with lines. Open polyhedra.
  - The exponential valuation. Lattices, bases and parallelepipeds. The Minkowski Convex Body theorem.
  - Exponential sums and generating functions. Totally unimodular polytopes. Decomposing a rational cone into unimodular cones. Efficient counting of integer points in rational polytopes.
  - The polynomial behavior of the number of integer points in polytopes. A valuation on rational cones.

### 2. Algebra and Representation Theory. ([DF04], [Bur65])

- Introduction to Group Theory. ([DF04], Ch.1-6)
  - Basic Groups. Subgroups. Quotient groups and Homomorphisms.
  - Group actions. Sylow's theorem.
  - Direct and semidirect products. The fundamental theorem of finitely generated Abelian groups.
  - $p$ -Groups, nilpotent groups and solvable groups.
- Representation Theory of Rings with Identity. ([DF04], [Bur65])

- Rings, Modules, Vector Spaces. Ring homomorphisms, quotient rings and ideals. Module homomorphisms and quotient modules. The matrix of linear transformation. Direct sum.
- Representation modules. The regular representation.
- The principle indecomposable representations. The radical of a ring. Semisimple rings. The Wedderburn structure theorems for semisimple rings.
- Intertwining numbers. Multiplicities of the indecomposable components in the regular representation.
- Representation Theory of Finite Groups and Theory of Characters. ([Bur65])
  - The group algebra. Semisimplicity of the group algebra. The center of the group algebra. The number of inequivalent irreducible representations.
  - Orthogonal relations on the irreducible characters of the group. Module of characters over the integers, symmetric bilinear form on characters.
  - The Kronecker product of two representations. Induced representations and induced characters.
  - Normal subgroups and the character table. Representations of cyclic groups and abelian groups.

### 3. Complex Analysis. ([SS03])

- Cauchy's Theorem and Applications.
- Meromorphic Functions and the Logarithm.
- The Fourier Transform.
- Entire Functions.
- The Gamma and Zeta Functions.

### 4. Probability Theory. ([Dur05])

- Laws of Large Numbers.
- Central Limit Theorems.
- Random Walks.
- Martingales.
- Markov Chains.
- Brownian Motion.

### 5. Real Analysis. ([HN01])

- Banach Spaces.
- Hilbert Spaces.
- Fourier Series.
- Distributions and the Fourier Transform.
- Measure Theory and Function Spaces.

## 3 References

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