CAYLEY-BACHARACH AND EVALUATION CODES ON COMPLETE INTERSECTIONS

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Abstract. In [8], J. Hansen uses cohomological methods to find a lower bound for the minimum distance of an evaluation code determined by a reduced complete intersection in $\mathbb{P}^2$. In this paper, we generalize Hansen’s results from $\mathbb{P}^2$ to $\mathbb{P}^m$; we also show that the hypotheses of [8] may be weakened. The proof is succinct and follows by combining the Cayley-Bacharach Theorem and the bounds on evaluation codes obtained in [7].

1. Introduction

In [3], Duursma, Rentería, and Tapia-Recillas compute the block length and dimension of the Reed-Muller (or evaluation) code determined by a zero-dimensional complete intersection $\Gamma \subset \mathbb{P}^m$. The words of the code $C(\Gamma)_a$ are obtained by evaluating homogeneous polynomials of degree $a$ at the points of $\Gamma$. When $\Gamma$ is determined by two polynomials of degrees $d_1, d_2$ in $R = \mathbb{K}[x, y, z]$, Hansen [8] obtains a lower bound for the minimum distance of the code. In particular, if $d_i \geq 3$ and

$$\max\{d_1 - 2, d_2 - 2\} \leq a \leq d_1 + d_2 - 3,$$

then the code $C(\Gamma)_a$ has minimum distance $d \geq d_1 + d_2 - a - 1$. The key point is the observation that when one evaluates polynomials of degree $a$ with $a \leq d_1 + d_2 - 3$, then the resulting evaluation vectors will be linearly dependent. In algebraic-geometric terms, this reflects the fact that the points of $\Gamma$ fail to impose independent conditions on polynomials of degree $a$. It turns out that this failure gives one some room to correct transmission errors.

The main theme of this paper is that using the modern Cayley-Bacharach Theorem due to Davis, Geramita, and Orecchia [2] streamlines the proof in [8] substantially, and makes it easy to generalize the

2000 Mathematics Subject Classification. Primary 14G50; Secondary 94B27.
Key words and phrases. Cayley-Bacharach, complete intersection, coding theory.
Gold is partially supported by an NSF-VIGRE postdoctoral fellowship.
Schenck is partially supported by NSF Grant DMS 03–11142.
results from $\mathbb{P}^2$ to $\mathbb{P}^m$. In the $m = 2$ case the Cayley-Bacharach Theorem also allows us to drop the hypotheses $\max\{d_1 - 2, d_2 - 2\} \leq a$ and $d_i \geq 3$ of \[\text{E}\], so, in particular, our result applies to Reed-Solomon codes. We start off with a quick review of evaluation codes, and a discussion of residual schemes and the Cayley-Bacharach Theorem.

1.1. Background on evaluation codes. Let $V$ be a variety in $\mathbb{P}^m$ defined over the finite field $\mathbb{F}_q$, with $\Gamma = \{p_1, \ldots, p_n\}$ a set of $\mathbb{F}_q$-rational points on $V$. Let $R = \mathbb{F}_q[x_0, \ldots, x_m]$, and let $R_a$ denote the vector space of homogeneous polynomials of degree $a$. Choose a degree $a$ and $f_0 \in R_a$ such that $f_0(p_i) \neq 0$ for all $i \in \{1, \ldots, n\}$. The evaluation map $e_a(\Gamma)$ is defined to be the linear map

$$e_a(\Gamma) : R_a \rightarrow \mathbb{F}_q^n$$

$$f \mapsto \left(\frac{f(p_1)}{f_0(p_1)}, \ldots, \frac{f(p_n)}{f_0(p_n)}\right)$$

The image of $e_a(\Gamma)$ is a linear code of block length $n$, which we will denote $C(\Gamma)_a$. The codes $C(\Gamma)_a$ are called evaluation codes associated to $\Gamma$. The minimum distance of $C(\Gamma)_a$ is

$$d = d(C(\Gamma)_a) = \min_{w_1 \neq w_2 \in C(\Gamma)_a} |w_1 - w_2|,$$

where $| \cdot |$ denotes the norm corresponding to the Hamming distance, that is, the number of nonzero entries in a word. Since $C(\Gamma)_a$ is closed under sums, the minimum distance is also equal to the minimum over all nonzero codewords of the number of nonzero entries, or equivalently, the length of the words minus the largest number of zero entries in any nonzero codeword.

The Singleton bound implies that the minimum distance $d$, the block length $n$, and the dimension $k$ of a linear code satisfy $d \leq n - k + 1$. Codes for which the upper bound are achieved are known as maximum distance separable, or MDS, codes.

1.2. Background on the Cayley-Bacharach Theorem. Let $\mathbb{K}$ be a field and suppose $\Gamma = \{p_1, \ldots, p_n\}$ is a set of distinct points in $\mathbb{P}^m_\mathbb{K}$. As above, let $e_a$ be the evaluation map from the vector space $R_a$ of homogeneous polynomials of degree $a$ to $\mathbb{K}^n$. The kernel of this map consists of polynomials of degree $a$ which vanish on $\Gamma$, so the kernel is simply the degree $a$ piece of the ideal $I_\Gamma$. Hence we have an exact sequence of vector spaces

$$0 \rightarrow (I_\Gamma)_a \rightarrow R_a \xrightarrow{e_a} \mathbb{K}^n \rightarrow \ker(e_a) \rightarrow 0.$$
Using sheaf cohomology and writing $\mathcal{I}_\Gamma$ for the sheaf of ideals corresponding to $I_\Gamma$, we can identify $\text{coker}(e_a) \cong H^1(I_\Gamma(a))$. Similarly, the kernel of $e_a$ can be identified with $H^0(I_\Gamma(a))$. We will write $h^0(I_\Gamma(a))$ to denote the dimension of the kernel of $e_a$ as a vector space over $\mathbb{K}$. In similar fashion, the dimension of the vector space $H^1(I_\Gamma(a))$ will be denoted by $h^1(I_\Gamma(a))$. The set of points $\Gamma$ is said to impose independent conditions on polynomials of degree $a$ if the rank of $e_a$ is $n$, that is, if $\dim \text{coker}(e_a) = h^1(I_\Gamma(a)) = 0$.

The classical Cayley-Bacharach Theorem deals with the following situation. Suppose that $Y_1, Y_2 \subset \mathbb{P}^2$ are plane curves of degree $d_1$ and $d_2$ which intersect in a set $\Gamma$ of $d_1 d_2$ distinct points. Write $\Gamma = \Gamma' \cup \Gamma''$ with $\Gamma'$ and $\Gamma''$ disjoint. If $a \leq d_1 + d_2 - 3$ is a nonnegative integer, then the classical Cayley-Bacharach Theorem asserts that the dimension of the vector space $(I_{\Gamma'})_a/(I_\Gamma)_a$ is equal to $h^1(I_{\Gamma''}(d_1 + d_2 - 3 - a))$, a measure of the failure of $\Gamma''$ to impose independent conditions in degree $d_1 + d_2 - 3 - a$. For instance, if $d_1 = d_2 = 3$, $a = 3$, and $\Gamma = \Gamma' \cup \Gamma''$, with $\deg(\Gamma') = 8$ and $\deg(\Gamma'') = 1$, then the classical Cayley-Bacharach Theorem says that $\dim (I_{\Gamma'})_a/(I_\Gamma)_a = h^1(I_{\Gamma''}(0))$. Since $h^1(I_{\Gamma''}(0)) = 0$, every cubic that vanishes at the 8 points in $\Gamma'$ also vanishes at the point in $\Gamma''$.

To formulate the modern version of the Cayley-Bacharach Theorem, we need to use the language of schemes. For background on schemes we refer the reader to [5], and for a thorough discussion of the Cayley-Bacharach Theorem we recommend [4].

**Definition 1.1** (Residual schemes [4]). Let $\Gamma$ be a zero-dimensional scheme with coordinate ring $A(\Gamma)$. Let $\Gamma' \subset \Gamma$ be a closed subscheme and $I_{\Gamma'} \subset A(\Gamma)$ be its ideal. The subscheme of $\Gamma$ residual to $\Gamma'$ is the subscheme defined by the ideal

$$I_{\Gamma''} = \text{Ann}(I_{\Gamma'}/I_\Gamma).$$

When $\Gamma$ is a complete intersection, $\Gamma'$ is residual to $\Gamma''$ in $\Gamma$ iff $\Gamma''$ is residual to $\Gamma'$ in $\Gamma$ (this need not be the case in general). We are now ready to state the version of the Cayley-Bacharach Theorem that we will use to extend the minimum distance bound.

**Theorem 1.2** (Davis-Geramita-Orecchia, [2]). Let $\Gamma \subset \mathbb{P}^m$ be a complete intersection of hypersurfaces $X_1, X_2, \ldots, X_m$ of degrees $d_1, d_2, \ldots, d_m$ respectively, and let $\Gamma', \Gamma'' \subset \Gamma$ be closed subschemes residual to one another. Set

$$s = \left( \sum_{i=1}^{m} d_i \right) - m - 1.$$
Then, for any $a \geq 0$, we have

$$h^0(\mathcal{I}_\Gamma(a)) - h^0(\mathcal{I}_\Gamma(a)) = h^1(\mathcal{I}_{\Gamma'}(s-a)).$$

In [2], this theorem is proved with the assumption that the ground field is infinite. When $\Gamma$ is composed of $F_q$-rational points, the statement holds by interpreting the dimensions over $\overline{F_q}$. If we use the monomial basis for $R_a$, then it is easy to see that the matrix of the evaluation map $e_a : R_a \to \overline{F_q}$ has entries in $\overline{F_q}$, so the dimensions of the kernel and cokernel will be the same whether we work over the infinite field $\overline{F_q}$ or the finite field $F_q$.

2. Review of $\mathbb{P}^2$ result

Let $\Gamma \subset \mathbb{P}^2$ be a reduced complete intersection of two curves of degrees $d_1, d_2$ defined over $F_q$. Theorem 4.4 of [8] tells us that if $d_i \geq 3$ and $\max\{d_i - 2\} \leq a \leq d_1 + d_2 - 3$, then the evaluation code $C(\Gamma)_a$ has minimum distance $d \geq d_1 + d_2 - a - 1$. The proof in [8] uses Serre duality to compute the dimension of a certain cohomology group, which is why the hypothesis $a \geq \max\{d_i - 2\}$ is needed; also useful is the following lemma (2.6 of [8]):

**Lemma 2.1.** Let $\Gamma$ be a finite set of points in $\mathbb{P}^m$, with $|\Gamma| = \deg \Gamma$. Then for $j \geq |\Gamma| - 1$, $h^1(\mathcal{I}_\Gamma(j)) = 0$.

What Hansen actually shows in the proof of Theorem 4.4 in [8] is that if $\Gamma \subset \mathbb{P}^2$ is a $(d_1, d_2)$ complete intersection, and $\Gamma' \subset \Gamma$ satisfies

$$|\Gamma'| \geq d_1 d_2 - d_1 - d_2 + a + 4,$$

then the projection map $\pi : C(\Gamma)_a \to C(\Gamma')_a$, obtained by deleting the components of the codewords of $C(\Gamma)_a$ corresponding to the points in $\Gamma''$, is injective. We warm up by using the Cayley-Bacharach Theorem to give a slight improvement.

**Lemma 2.2.** If $\Gamma' \subset \Gamma$ satisfies

$$|\Gamma'| \geq d_1 d_2 - d_1 - d_2 + a + 2,$$

then the projection map $\pi : C(\Gamma)_a \to C(\Gamma')_a$, obtained by deleting the components of the codewords of $C(\Gamma)_a$ corresponding to the points in $\Gamma''$, is injective.

**Proof.** Since $\Gamma$ is reduced, $|\Gamma| = d_1 d_2$. Let $s = d_1 + d_2 - 3$ and let $\Gamma'$ be any subset of the points of $\Gamma$ such that $|\Gamma'| \geq d_1 d_2 - s + a - 1$. Then letting $\Gamma'' = \Gamma \setminus \Gamma'$ be the subscheme residual to $\Gamma'$ we have

$$|\Gamma''| \leq d_1 d_2 - (d_1 d_2 - s + a - 1) = s - a + 1.$$
Since \( s - a \geq |\Gamma''| - 1 \), Lemma 2.1 tells us that \( \Gamma'' \) imposes independent conditions in degree \( s - a \), so \( h^1(\mathcal{I}_{\Gamma''}(s - a)) = 0 \). On the other hand, \( \Gamma' \) and \( \Gamma'' \) are closed subschemes of \( \Gamma \) residual to one another, so by Theorem 1.2 we know that for any \( a \geq 0 \),

\[
h^0(\mathcal{I}_{\Gamma''}(a)) - h^0(\mathcal{I}_{\Gamma}(a)) = h^1(\mathcal{I}_{\Gamma''}(s - a)).
\]

The right hand side is zero, so \( h^0(\mathcal{I}_{\Gamma''}(a)) = h^0(\mathcal{I}_{\Gamma}(a)) \). In other words, \( H^0(\mathcal{I}_{\Gamma''}(a)) \simeq H^0(\mathcal{I}_{\Gamma}(a)) \), that is, \((I_{\Gamma''})_a = (I_{\Gamma})_a\). Hence the projection map \( C(\Gamma)_a \xrightarrow{\pi} C(\Gamma')_a \) is injective. Moreover, the map is injective for all ways of splitting \( \Gamma \) as a union of \( \Gamma' \) and \( \Gamma'' \) with the same cardinality as above. \( \square \)

We claim that the result \( d \geq s - a + 2 \) on the minimum distance now follows. To see this, consider the case \( |\Gamma'| = d_1d_2 - s + a - 1 \) and \( |\Gamma''| = s - a + 1 \). Let \( 0 \neq f \in R_\alpha \). If \( f \) is nonzero at \( s - a + 2 \) or more points in \( \Gamma' \), then we are done, so we assume that \( f \) is only nonzero at \( t \) points in \( \Gamma' \) with \( 1 \leq t \leq s - a + 1 \).

It suffices to see that \( f \) must be nonzero at \( \geq s - a + 2 - t \) points in \( \Gamma'' \). If not, then \( f \) is nonzero at \( \leq s - a + 1 - t \) points in \( \Gamma'' \), so \( f \) vanishes at \( \geq |\Gamma''| - (s - a + 1 - t) = t \) points of \( \Gamma'' \). Then we can subdivide \( \Gamma \) into two new 0-cycles \( \Gamma' \) and \( \Gamma'' \) by exchanging \( t \) points from \( \Gamma'' \) where \( f \) vanishes with \( t \) points from \( \Gamma' \) where \( f \) is nonzero. We obtain a new decomposition \( \Gamma = \Gamma' \cup \Gamma'' \) such that \( f \) vanishes at all the points in \( \Gamma' \). From the previous proof, we know that \( C(\Gamma)_a \xrightarrow{\pi} C(\Gamma')_a \) is injective, so \( f \) must vanish on all of \( \Gamma \). It follows that \( d \geq s - a + 2 \). If \( |\Gamma'| > d_1d_2 - s + a - 1 \), then we can apply the same argument to any subset of \( \Gamma' \) of size \( d_1d_2 - s + a - 1 \) to obtain the bound.

### 3. Main theorem

We are now ready to prove the main result of this paper: Hansen’s bound generalizes to reduced complete intersections in \( \mathbb{P}^m \). This can be proved along the lines just sketched for the \( \mathbb{P}^2 \) case. However, the proof is shorter if we utilize the criteria of [7] (Proposition 6 and Theorem 8). In the language of this paper, the result is:

**Proposition 3.1.** Let \( \Gamma \) be a subset of points in \( \mathbb{P}^m \), and let \( C(\Gamma)_a \) be the evaluation code defined in \( \S \)1. For \( i \geq 1 \), \( d(C(\Gamma)_a) \geq \deg(\Gamma) - i + 1 \) iff \( h^0(\mathcal{I}_{\Gamma}(a)) = h^0(\mathcal{I}_{\Gamma'}(a)) \) for all \( \Gamma' \subset \Gamma \) with \( |\Gamma'| = i \). Furthermore, \( C(\Gamma)_a \) is an MDS code iff \( h^0(\mathcal{I}_{\Gamma}(a)) = h^0(\mathcal{I}_{\Gamma'}(a)) \) for all \( \Gamma' \subset \Gamma \) such that \( |\Gamma'| = |\Gamma| - h^1(\mathcal{I}_{\Gamma}(a)) \).
Combining the Cayley-Bacharach Theorem, Proposition 3.1 and Lemma 2.4 yields our main result:

**Theorem 3.2.** Let \( \Gamma \subset \mathbb{P}^m \) be a reduced complete intersection of hypersurfaces of degrees \( d_1, d_2, \ldots, d_m \), and let \( s = (\sum_{i=1}^{m} d_i) - m - 1 \) as in Theorem 1.2. If \( 1 \leq a \leq s \), then the evaluation code \( C(\Gamma)_a \) has minimum distance \( d \geq (\sum_{i=1}^{m} d_i) - a - (m - 1) = s + a + 2 \).

**Proof.** Put \( \deg(\Gamma) - i + 1 = s - a + 2 \), so that \( i = \deg(\Gamma) - (s - a + 1) \). Applying Proposition 3.1 we see that the theorem is true iff \( h^0(\mathcal{I}_{\Gamma'}(a)) - h^0(\mathcal{I}_{\Gamma}(a)) = 0 \) for all subsets \( \Gamma' \) with \( \deg(\Gamma') = \deg(\Gamma) - (s - a + 1) \). The modern Cayley-Bacharach Theorem tells us that

\[
h^0(\mathcal{I}_{\Gamma'}(a)) - h^0(\mathcal{I}_{\Gamma}(a)) = h^1(\mathcal{I}_{\Gamma'}(s - a)).
\]

But for any subset \( \Gamma'' \subset \Gamma \) of \( s + 1 - a \) points, Lemma 2.4 implies that \( h^1(\mathcal{I}_{\Gamma''}(s - a)) = 0 \). \( \Box \)

**Corollary 3.3.** An evaluation code \( C(\Gamma)_a \) obtained from a reduced complete intersection \( \Gamma \) is MDS iff

\[
h^1(\mathcal{I}_{\Gamma''}(s - a)) = 0 \text{ for all } \Gamma'' \text{ such that } |\Gamma''| = h^1(\mathcal{I}_{\Gamma}(a)).
\]

**Proof.** By Proposition 3.1 \( C(\Gamma)_a \) is an MDS code iff \( h^0(\mathcal{I}_{\Gamma}(a)) = h^0(\mathcal{I}_{\Gamma'}(a)) \) for all \( \Gamma' \subset \Gamma \) such that \( |\Gamma'| = |\Gamma| - h^1(\mathcal{I}_{\Gamma}(a)) \). By Cayley-Bacharach, \( h^0(\mathcal{I}_{\Gamma}(a)) = h^0(\mathcal{I}_{\Gamma'}(a)) \) for all subsets \( \Gamma' \) of cardinality \( i \) iff \( h^1(\mathcal{I}_{\Gamma''}(s - a)) = 0 \) for all subsets \( \Gamma' \) of cardinality \( i \). Hence, \( C(\Gamma)_a \) is MDS iff \( h^1(\mathcal{I}_{\Gamma''}(s - a)) = 0 \) for all subsets \( \Gamma'' \) with \( |\Gamma''| = |\Gamma| - (|\Gamma| - h^1(\mathcal{I}_{\Gamma}(a))) \). \( \Box \)

Write \( \sigma_\Gamma \) for the largest \( i \) such that \( h^1(\mathcal{I}_{\Gamma}(i)) \neq 0 \). A zero-dimensional scheme \( \Gamma' \) such that \( h^0(\mathcal{I}_{\Gamma}(\sigma_\Gamma)) = h^0(\mathcal{I}_{\Gamma'}(\sigma_\Gamma)) \) for all \( \Gamma' \subset \Gamma \) with \( |\Gamma'| = |\Gamma| - 1 \) is called a Cayley-Bacharach scheme. In [7], Hansen showed that if \( \Gamma \) is a Cayley-Bacharach scheme, then \( C(\Gamma)_{\sigma_\Gamma} \) is an MDS code. Of course, a complete intersection is a Cayley-Bacharach scheme, with \( s = \sigma_\Gamma \), so the complete intersection codes \( C(\Gamma)_s \) are MDS. Are there other complete intersection codes which are MDS? We know that \( h^1(\mathcal{I}_{\Gamma''}(s - a)) = 0 \) if \( s - a \geq |\Gamma''| - 1 \); so we see that a sufficient condition for the MDS property is

\[
s - a \geq h^1(\mathcal{I}_{\Gamma}(a)) - 1.
\]

**Lemma 3.4.** If \( \Gamma \) is a complete intersection, then

\[
h^1(\mathcal{I}_{\Gamma}(a)) = |\Gamma| - h^1(\mathcal{I}_{\Gamma}(s - a)).
\]

**Proof.** From the four term exact sequence of Section 1.2, it follows that \( h^1(\mathcal{I}_{\Gamma}(a)) = |\Gamma| - \dim_K(R/I_{\Gamma})_a \). Thus, it suffices to show

\[
\dim_K(R/I_{\Gamma})_a + \dim_K(R/I_{\Gamma})_{s-a} = |\Gamma|
\]
Let $L \in R_1$ be a non-zero divisor on $R/I_{\Gamma}$ (such an $L$ exists since $R/I_{\Gamma}$ is Cohen-Macaulay). We pass to the Artinian reduction $R/(I_{\Gamma} + \langle L \rangle)$. It is easy to see that

$$\sum_{i=0}^{s+1} \dim_K (R/(I_{\Gamma} + \langle L \rangle))_i = |\Gamma|.$$  

Since $L$ is not a zero divisor, there is an exact sequence

$$0 \longrightarrow (R/I_{\Gamma})(-1) \overset{L}{\longrightarrow} R/I_{\Gamma} \longrightarrow R/(I_{\Gamma} + \langle L \rangle) \longrightarrow 0.$$  

From the exact sequence, it follows that

$$\dim_K (R/I_{\Gamma})_a = \sum_{i=0}^{a} \dim_K (R/(I_{\Gamma} + \langle L \rangle))_i.$$  

Similarly, we have

$$\dim_K (R/I_{\Gamma})_{s-a} = \sum_{i=0}^{s-a} \dim_K (R/(I_{\Gamma} + \langle L \rangle))_i.$$  

Now, since $\Gamma$ is a complete intersection, the Hilbert function of the Artinian reduction is symmetric. So

$$\sum_{i=0}^{s-a} \dim_K (R/(I_{\Gamma} + \langle L \rangle))_i = \sum_{i=a+1}^{s+1} \dim_K (R/(I_{\Gamma} + \langle L \rangle))_i,$$

yielding the result.

Thus, a sufficient condition for the MDS property is that $s - a + 1 \geq \deg(\Gamma) - h^1(I_{\Gamma}(s-a))$ = $\dim_K (R/I_{\Gamma})_{s-a}$. If $\Gamma$ is a set of collinear points, then $\dim_K (R/I_{\Gamma})_m = \min\{m+1, |\Gamma|\}$, so a set of collinear points always gives an MDS code.

4. Examples

We now give several examples to illustrate our results. First, we quickly review the notation from the previous sections. We consider codes $C(\Gamma)_a$ constructed by evaluating the homogeneous polynomials of degree $a$ at the points of a complete intersection $\Gamma = X_1 \cap \cdots X_m$, where $X_i$ has degree $d_i$. As in Theorem 3.2, we write $s = (\sum_{i=1}^{m} d_i) - m - 1$. Then the result of that theorem says that if $1 \leq a \leq s$, then the minimum distance $d$ of the evaluation code satisfies $d \geq s - a + 2$.

**Example 4.1.** Let $x_j$, $0 \leq j \leq m$ be the homogeneous coordinates on $\mathbb{P}^m$, and let $X_1, \ldots, X_{m-1}$ be the hyperplanes $X_j = V(x_j)$ for $1 \leq j \leq m-1$. Let $X_m$ be the hypersurface $V(x_m^a - x_0^a - 1 x_m)$. Then the intersection of the $X_i$ is a complete intersection $\Gamma$, consisting of
the set of affine $\mathbb{F}_q$-rational points (i.e. points with $x_0 \neq 0$) on the line $L = X_1 \cap \cdots \cap X_{m-1}$. The evaluation codes in this case are just the usual extended Reed-Solomon codes, and Theorem 3.2 yields the following. We have $s = m - 1 + q - m - 1 = q - 2$. If $a \leq s$, then we get that the minimum distance satisfies

$$d \geq q - 2 - a + 2 = q - a = n - k + 1,$$

since the block length $n$ is $q$, and the dimension $k$ is $a + 1$. Thus we have recovered the well-known fact that the extended Reed-Solomon codes are MDS codes.

**Example 4.2.** Second, consider the usual Reed-Muller evaluation codes as in Example 4.5 of [8], where the case $m = 2$ is studied. The set of all affine $\mathbb{F}_q$-rational points in $\mathbb{A}^m$ is the projective complete intersection

$$\Gamma = V(x^q - x_0^{-1} x_j : j = 1, \ldots, m).$$

Hence we have $s = mq - m - 1 = m(q - 1) - 1$. Our Theorem 3.2 implies that for the $C(\Gamma)_a$ code with $a \leq s$, the minimum distance is bounded below by

$$d \geq s - a + 2 = m(q - 1) - a + 1.$$

We note that this example shows the type of bound we are considering here is likely to be of interest in general only when $a$ is relatively large compared to $s$. For instance, it is known that if $a = \alpha(q - 1) + \beta$, where $0 \leq \beta \leq q - 2$, then the exact minimum distance of the Reed-Muller code is $d = (q - \beta)q^{m-1-\alpha}$ (see [1], Corollary 5.5.4, for instance). If $\alpha < m - 1$, then our lower bound will be considerably smaller than the actual minimum distance. On the other hand, if, for example, $a = (m - 1)(q - 1)$, so $\alpha = m - 1$ and $\beta = 0$, the actual minimum distance is $d = q$, while our bound also gives $d \geq m(q - 1) + 1 - (m - 1)(q - 1) = q$.

**Example 4.3.** For our final example, we consider codes related to Hermitian codes. The evaluation geometric Goppa codes over $\mathbb{F}_{q^2}$ are defined using the Hermitian curves $X_q = V(x_1^{q+1} - x_2^q x_0 - x_3 x_0^q) \subset \mathbb{P}^2$ and the divisors $G = uQ$ where $Q = [0,0,1]$ is the unique point at infinity on $X_q$. There are precisely $q^3$ affine $\mathbb{F}_{q^2}$-rational points on $X_q$. However the $\Gamma$ consisting of all of them is not a projective complete intersection. To construct codes for which our main results apply, we let

$$F(x_0, x_1, x_2) = \prod_{\alpha \in \mathbb{F}_{q^2}, \alpha^q + \alpha \neq 0} (x_2 - \alpha x_0).$$

Then $\Gamma = X_q \cap V(F)$ consists of the $q^3 - q$ $\mathbb{F}_{q^2}$-rational points on $X_q$ with $x_1 \neq 0$ (all in the affine part of the plane). In a very precise
sense (see [9]), the evaluation codes $C(\Gamma)_a$ are related to the usual Hermitian codes constructed using the divisor $D$ consisting of all $\mathbb{F}_{q^2}$-rational points in the same way that Reed-Solomon codes are related to the extended Reed-Solomon codes.

As in the Reed-Muller case, our bound only gives sharp results when the degree $a$ is large relative to $s$. Since the equations defining $\Gamma$ have degrees $d_1 = q + 1$ and $d_2 = q^2 - q$, we have $s = q^2 - 2$. For example, with $a = q^2 - q$, our Theorem 3.2 yields $d \geq s + 2 - a = q$. By way of comparison, the usual Hermitian evaluation code constructed using $L(uQ)$ for $u = a(q + 1) = q^3 - q$ (the maximum pole order at $Q$ of the functions corresponding to the elements of $R_a$) also has $d = q^3 - (q^3 - q) = q$ by [10], Proposition VII.4.3. Note that our code has block length $n = q^3 - q$ rather than $q^3$, and the dimension is also one less than the dimension of the corresponding usual Hermitian code because the polynomial $F$ has degree $a = q^2 - q$.

There is an extension of the notion of a residual scheme from the case when $\Gamma$ is a complete intersection to the case when $\Gamma$ is arithmetically Gorenstein. It seems reasonable to expect that similar methods would yield bounds on the minimum distance in this case; we hope to study this question in a future paper. We note that in [6], Eisenbud and Popescu use the (local) Gorenstein property to give a proof of Goppa Duality.

Acknowledgment This collaboration began while the authors were members of MSRI; we also thank the Institute for Scientific Computation at Texas A&M for providing logistical support.

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