Some exact results for generalized Turán problems

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Abstract

Fix a $k$-chromatic graph $F$. In this paper we consider the question to determine for which graphs $H$ does the Turán graph $T_{k-1}(n)$ have the maximum number of copies of $H$ among all $n$-vertex $F$-free graphs (for $n$ large enough). We say that such a graph $H$ is $F$-Turán-good. In addition to some general results, we give (among others) the following concrete results:

(i) For every complete multipartite graph $H$, there is $k$ large enough such that $H$ is $K_k$-Turán-good.

(ii) The path $P_3$ is $F$-Turán-good for $F$ with $\chi(F) \geq 4$.

(iii) The path $P_4$ and cycle $C_4$ are $C_5$-Turán-good.

(iv) The cycle $C_4$ is $F_2$-Turán-good where $F_2$ is the graph of two triangles sharing exactly one vertex.

1 Introduction

Fix a graph $F$. We say that a graph $G$ is $F$-free if it does not contain $F$ as a subgraph. A cornerstone of extremal graph theory is Turán’s theorem [25], which determines the maximum number of edges in an $n$-vertex $K_k$-free graph. The extremal construction is a complete $(k-1)$-partite graph on $n$ vertices such that each class has cardinality either $\lceil n/(k-1) \rceil$ or $\lfloor n/(k-1) \rfloor$. Such a graph is called a Turán graph and is denoted $T_{k-1}(n)$.

Turán’s theorem is the starting point of many avenues of research. The Turán function $\text{ex}(n, F)$ is the maximum number of edges in an $n$-vertex $F$-free graph. In this notation, Turán’s theorem states $\text{ex}(n, K_k) = |E(T_{k-1}(n))|$. We call an $n$-vertex $F$-free graph with $\text{ex}(n, F)$ edges an extremal graph for $F$. Thus, the Turán graph $T_{k-1}(n)$ is the extremal

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graph for $K_k$. The fundamental Erdős-Stone-Simonovits theorem \cite{7, 6} states that if the chromatic number of $F$ is $k \geq 2$, then

$$\text{ex}(n, F) = (1 + o(1))|E(T_{k-1}(n))| = \left(1 - \frac{1}{k-1} + o(1)\right)\left(\frac{n}{2}\right).$$

Simonovits \cite{24} characterized those graphs $F$ that have the Turán graph as their unique extremal graph. We say that an edge $e$ of a graph $F$ is color-critical if deleting $e$ from $F$ results in a graph with smaller chromatic number.

**Theorem 1** (Color-critical edge theorem, Simonovits \cite{24}). Let $F$ be a $k$-chromatic graph. For $n$ large enough, the unique extremal graph for $F$ is the Turán graph $T_{k-1}(n)$ if and only if $F$ has a color-critical edge.

Here we consider a generalization of the results described above. Fix graphs $H$ and $G$. Denote the number of copies of $H$ in $G$ by $\mathcal{N}(H, G)$. Now fix graphs $F$ and $H$. Define

$$\text{ex}(n, H, F) := \max\{\mathcal{N}(H, G) : G \text{ is an } n\text{-vertex } F\text{-free graph}\},$$

i.e., $\text{ex}(n, H, F)$ is the maximum number of copies of the graph $H$ in an $n$-vertex $F$-free graph. An early result of Zykov \cite{26} (see also Erdős \cite{4}) determines the maximum number of copies of $K_r$ in a $K_k$-free graph.

**Theorem 2** (Zykov \cite{26}). The Turán graph $T_{k-1}(n)$ is the unique $n$-vertex $K_k$-free graph with the maximum number of copies of $K_r$. Thus,

$$\text{ex}(n, K_r, K_k) = \mathcal{N}(K_r, T_{k-1}(n)) \leq \left(\frac{k-1}{r}\right)\left\lfloor\frac{n}{k-1}\right\rfloor^r.$$

After several other sporadic results (see, e.g., \cite{2, 14, 16, 17, 18, 20}), the general investigation of this function was initiated by Alon and Shikhelman \cite{1}. For several further recent results see, e.g., \cite{8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14}. Despite these investigations, there are only few cases when $\text{ex}(n, H, F)$ is determined exactly. One difficulty in determining $\text{ex}(n, H, F)$ exactly is that there are few $F$-free graphs that are good candidates for being extremal constructions for maximizing copies of a graph $H$. Our understanding of $F$-free graphs is not deep enough to describe those graphs that are “largest” in some sense. An exception is the Turán graph. In this paper we examine when the Turán graph is the extremal construction for these so-called generalized Turán problems.

**Definition 3.** Fix a $k$-chromatic graph $F$ and a graph $H$ that does not contain $F$ as a subgraph. We say that $H$ is $F$-Turán-good if $\text{ex}(n, H, F) = \mathcal{N}(H, T_{k-1}(n))$ for every $n$ large enough. If $F = K_k$, we use the briefer term $k$-Turán-good.

\footnote{We include the condition on $H$ to avoid the degenerate case that $\text{ex}(n, H, F) = \mathcal{N}(H, T_{k-1}(n)) = 0$ which would allow that $H$ is $F$-Turán-good.}
Using this notation, Turán’s theorem states that $K_2$ is $k$-Turán-good for every $k > 2$, Theorem 1 states that $K_2$ is $F$-Turán-good for any $F$ with a color-critical edge and Theorem 2 states that $K_r$ is $k$-Turán-good for $r < k$.

Győri, Pach and Simonovits [18] considered the problem to determine which graphs $H$ are $k$-Turán-good. In particular, they showed that a bipartite graph $H$ on $m \geq 3$ vertices containing $\lfloor m/2 \rfloor$ independent edges is 3-Turán-good. This implies that the path $P_k$, the even cycle $C_{2l}$ and the Turán graph $T_2(m)$ are all 3-Turán-good. They also gave the following general theorem.

**Theorem 4** (Győri, Pach and Simonovits [18]). Let $r \geq 3$ and let $H$ be a $(k - 1)$-partite graph with $m > k - 1$ vertices containing $\lceil m/(k - 1) \rceil$ vertex disjoint copies of $K_{k-1}$. Suppose further that for any two vertices $u$ and $v$ in the same component of $H$, there is a sequence $A_1, \ldots, A_s$ of $(k - 1)$-cliques in $H$ such that $u \in A_1$, $v \in A_s$, and for any $i < s$, $A_i$ and $A_{i+1}$ share $k - 2$ vertices. Then $H$ is $k$-Turán-good.

They mention that this theorem implies that $T_{k-1}(m)$ is $k$-Turán-good and again that paths and even cycles are 3-Turán-good. When $H$ is a complete multipartite graph they gave the following theorem.

**Theorem 5** (Győri, Pach and Simonovits [18]). Let $H$ be a complete $r$-partite graph and let $n$ be large enough. If $G$ is an $n$-vertex $K_k$-free graph with the maximum number of copies of $H$, then $G$ is a complete $(k - 1)$-partite graph.

In [18], the authors remark that a graph $G$ in the above theorem need not be a Turán graph and give an example where the ratio of the sizes of the largest and smallest class of $G$ is not even bounded. They also gave an optimization argument to show that $C_4$ is $k$-Turán-good for any $k$. They state the same for $K_{2,3}$, but omit the details.

Less is known in the case when the forbidden graph $F$ is not a clique. Ma and Qiu [21] proved that a $(k - 1)$-partite graph $H$ is $k$-Turán-good if it has $k - 2$ classes of size $s$ and one class of size $t$ with $s \leq t < s + 1/2 + \sqrt{2s + 1/4}$. They also proved a common generalization of Theorems 1 and 2.

**Theorem 6** (Ma and Qiu [21]). Let $F$ be graph with $\chi(F) = k > r$ and a color-critical edge. Then $K_r$ is $F$-Turán-good. Moreover, for $n$ large enough, $T_{k-1}(n)$ is the unique $n$-vertex $F$-free graph with the maximum number of copies of $H$.

Let us discuss some simple conditions that force $H$ to not be $F$-Turán-good. When $\chi(H) \geq \chi(F) = k$, then the Turán graph $T_{k-1}(n)$ contains no copies of $H$, so $H$ cannot be $F$-Turán-good. Observe that if the sizes of color classes of $H$ are very unbalanced, then it is possible that among the complete $(\chi(F) - 1)$-partite graphs on $n$ vertices, the Turán graph does not have the maximum number of copies of $H$. When $H$ is a complete multipartite graph, a straightforward optimization can determine which complete $(\chi(F) - 1)$-partite graphs contain the maximum number of copies of $H$. Some calculations of this type were performed in [18 21 3]. If $F$ is a $k$-chromatic graph with no color-critical edge, then we can add an edge $e$ to the Turán graph $T_{k-1}(n)$ and still have no copy of $F$. If $\chi(H) \leq \chi(F) - 2$,
then it is easy to see that in the resulting graph (for \( n \) large enough) there are copies of \( H \) that contain \( e \). Therefore, in this case, \( H \) is not \( F \)-Turán-good. Thus, when \( F \) has no color-critical edge we can restrict our attention to the case when \( \chi(H) = \chi(F) - 1 \).

The rest of this paper is organized as follows. In Section 2 we consider \( k \)-Turán-good graphs and prove a theorem that is of a similar flavor to Theorem 4. We also show that for any complete multipartite graph \( H \), there is a \( k_0 \) large enough such that if \( k \geq k_0 \), then \( H \) is \( k \)-Turán-good. In Section 3 we consider the case when \( F \) is not a clique. Among others, we prove that \( P_3 \) is \( F \)-Turán-good for \( F \) with \( \chi(F) \geq 4 \), that \( P_4 \) and \( C_4 \) are \( C_5 \)-Turán-good, and that \( C_4 \) is \( F_2 \)-Turán-good where \( F_2 \) is the graph of two triangles sharing exactly one vertex. We finish the paper with some concluding remarks and conjectures in Section 4.

2 Forbidding cliques

The main theorem of this section describes a method to construct \( k \)-Turán-good graphs.

**Theorem 7.** Let \( H \) be a \( k \)-Turán-good graph. Let \( H' \) be any graph constructed from \( H \) in the following way. Choose a complete subgraph of \( H \) with vertex set \( X \), add a vertex-disjoint copy of \( K_{k-1} \) to \( H \) and join the vertices in \( X \) to the vertices of \( K_{k-1} \) by edges arbitrarily. Then \( H' \) is \( k \)-Turán-good.

**Proof.** By Theorem 2, the maximum number of copies of \( K_{k-1} \) in a \( K_k \)-free graph is achieved by the Turán graph \( T_{k-1}(n) \). Since \( H \) is \( k \)-Turán-good, the Turán graph \( T_{k-1}(n-k+1) \) has the maximum number of copies of \( H \) among \( K_k \)-free graphs on \( n-k+1 \) vertices. We will show that \( T_{k-1}(n) \) has the maximum number of copies of \( H' \).

Let \( G \) be a \( K_k \)-free graph on \( n \) vertices with the maximum number of copies of \( H' \). Since \( H' \) contains a copy of \( K_{k-1} \), the graph \( G \) must contain a copy of \( K_{k-1} \). Let \( K \) be a copy of \( K_{k-1} \) in \( G \). Every other vertex of \( G \) is adjacent to at most \( k-2 \) vertices of \( K \). Let \( Y \) be a complete graph that is disjoint from \( K \).

Consider an auxiliary bipartite graph with classes formed by the vertices of \( Y \) and \( K \) and join two vertices by an edge if they are non-adjacent in \( G \).

Suppose this bipartite graph does not have a matching saturating the class \( Y \), i.e., a matching that uses every vertex of \( Y \). Then, by Hall’s theorem, there exists a non-empty subset \( Y' \) of \( Y \) whose neighborhood in \( K \) has size less than \( |Y'| \). In the original graph \( G \) this means that all of the vertices in \( Y' \) are connected to a fixed set of more than \( |K| - |Y'| \) vertices in \( K \). As \( Y' \) and \( K \) are complete graphs, this gives a copy of \( K_{k-1} \) in \( G \), a contradiction. Therefore, this auxiliary bipartite graph has a matching saturating \( Y \) which implies that in \( G \) the edges between \( Y \) and \( K \) are a subgraph of a complete bipartite graph minus a matching saturating \( Y \).

On the other hand, in a \((k-1)\)-partite Turán graph the edges between \( K_{k-1} \) and a clique of size \( |Y| \) form a complete bipartite graph minus a matching saturating the clique of size \( |Y| \). This implies that there are at least as many ways to join the vertices of a copy of \( H \) with a copy of \( K_{k-1} \) in a Turán graph as in \( G \).
The number of copies of \(H'\) is the product of the number of copies of \(K_{k-1}\), the number of copies of \(H\) on the remaining \(n-k+1\) vertices and the number of ways to join the vertices of \(K_{k-1}\) and \(H\) all divided by the number of times a copy of \(H'\) was counted. The first three quantities are maximized by the Turán graph, while the last quantity depends only on \(H'\). This implies that the number of copies of \(H'\) is maximized by \(T_{k-1}(n)\).

We remark that Theorem 7 implies the same results mentioned after Theorem 4. However, neither Theorem 7 nor Theorem 4 imply the other. They both use copies of \(K_{k-1}\) as building blocks and connect them with additional edges, but Theorem 4 allows adding many edges. For example, when \(k = 3\) the only assumptions on \(H\) are that \(H\) is bipartite and has a matching of size \(\lfloor |V(H)|/2 \rfloor\). In Theorem 7, when \(k = 3\), if we build \(H\) starting from a single edge, there is always an edge (the one added last) such that its vertices are incident to at most two other vertices. On the other hand, in Theorem 7 we do not need a sequence of \((k-1)\)-cliques connecting any two vertices. For example we can take two copies of \(K_{k-1}\) and connect them with a single edge. The resulting graph is \(k\)-Turán-good because of Theorem 7.

Nonetheless, both Theorem 4 and Theorem 7 require copies of \(K_{k-1}\) as building blocks. For example, we know that \(P_l\) is \(3\)-Turán-good, and Theorem 5 implies that \(P_3\) is \(k\)-Turán-good, but for longer paths neither Theorem 4 nor Theorem 7 can be applied. We conjecture that paths are \(k\)-Turán good (see Conjecture 19 in Section 4). Here we are able to show that the maximum number of copies of \(P_l\) in \(K_k\)-free graphs is asymptotic to the number of copies in the Turán graph. In fact, we can replace \(K_k\) with any \(k\)-chromatic graph \(F\).

**Proposition 8.** If \(F\) is \(k\)-chromatic with \(k > 2\), then 
\[
\text{ex}(n, P_l, F) = (1+o(1))N(P_l, T_{k-1}(n)).
\]

*Proof.* We will use spectral methods as they were used in [19] and [10]. We use the following simple facts: every path is a walk and a path with more than 2 vertices corresponds to two walks (one starting from each end-vertex of the path). Therefore, the number of walks of length \(l - 1\) (i.e. having \(l - 1\) edges) is at least twice the number of paths of length \(l - 1\).

For a matrix \(M\) let \(\mu(M)\) denote the largest eigenvalue of \(M\). Now let \(A(G)\) be the adjacency matrix of \(G\). The number of walks of length \(l - 1\) in \(G\) is at most \(\mu(A(G))^{l-1}/n\). (This is well-known, see [19] and [10] for simple proofs.)

The largest eigenvalue of the adjacency matrix of graph is well-studied. Babai and Guidulli [15] and independently Nikiforov [22] proved that if \(F\) has chromatic number \(k\) and \(G\) is an \(n\)-vertex \(F\)-free graph, then \(\mu(A(F)) = (1-1/k-1+o(1))n\). Therefore, we obtain that

\[
\text{ex}(n, P_l, F) \leq \frac{1}{2} \left(1 - \frac{1}{k-1} + o(1)\right)^{l-1} n^l.
\]

Now let us count the number of copies of \(P_l\) in the Turán graph \(T_{k-1}(n)\). Counting greedily we have \(n\) choices for the first vertex. Each subsequent vertex must be in a different class of \(T_{k-1}(n)\) from its predecessor and must be different from the previous vertices. Therefore, at each step (after the first) the number of choices for a vertex is at least

\[
n - \left\lfloor \frac{n}{k-1} \right\rfloor - l + 1 = \left(1 - \frac{1}{k-1} - o(1)\right)n.
\]
In this way, every path is counted twice. Therefore, the number of paths in \( T_{k-1}(n) \) is

\[
N(P_l, T_{k-1}(n)) = \frac{1}{2} \left( 1 - \frac{1}{k-1} - o(1) \right)^{l-1} n^l.
\]

\[\square\]

We now turn our attention to the case when \( H \) is a complete multipartite graph. We begin with a lemma.

**Lemma 9.** For any graph \( H \) there are integers \( k_0 \) and \( n_0 \) such that if \( k \geq k_0 \) and \( n \geq n_0 \), then for any complete \((k-1)\)-partite \( n\)-vertex graph \( G \) we have \( N(H, G) \leq N(H, T_{k-1}(n)) \).

**Proof.** Suppose \( G \) contains the maximum number of copies of \( H \) among all complete \((k-1)\)-partite graphs on \( n \) vertices. Suppose, for the sake of a contradiction, that \( G \) is not the Turán graph \( T_{k-1}(n) \).

Observe first that we can assume \( H \) is a complete multipartite graph. Indeed, if \( H \) has chromatic number \( r \), then there is a constant number of ways to add edges to \( H \) to create a complete \( r \)-partite graph with \( |V(H)| \) vertices. Each copy of \( H \) in \( G \) is contained in such a complete \( r \)-partite graph in \( G \). Given such a complete \( r \)-partite graph, we can count the number of copies of \( H \) it contains. Therefore, if the number of copies of each such complete \( r \)-partite graph is maximized by the Turán graph \( T_{k-1}(n) \), then the same holds for \( H \).

We distinguish two cases.

**Case 1:** There are two vertex partition classes \( A \) and \( B \) of \( G \) such that \( |A| \geq |V(H)||B| \).

In this case we will move a vertex from \( A \) to \( B \) to create a new complete \((k-1)\)-partite graph. We will show that this new graph contains more copies of \( H \) than \( G \). Observe that \( H \) intersects \( A \) and \( B \) in a bipartite graph \( H' \). The number of ways to extend \( H' \) to \( H \) using other classes of \( G \) does not change when moving a vertex from \( A \) to \( B \). Therefore, if the number of copies of each possible \( H' \) does not decrease by this change, then the number of copies of \( H \) does not decrease either. Moreover, if the number of copies of some \( H' \) increases, then the number of copies of \( H \) increases, which is a contradiction.

To show that the number of copies of \( H' \) increases, assume first that \( H' \) is connected. As \( H \) is complete multipartite, this implies that \( H' \) is a complete bipartite graph \( K_{a,b} \) for some \( a, b \) with \( a + b \leq |V(H)| \). We have \( \binom{|A|}{a} \binom{|B|}{b} + \binom{|A|}{b} \binom{|B|}{a} \) copies of \( H' \) between \( A \) and \( B \). It is easy to see that this number increases when we move a vertex from \( A \) to \( B \).

If \( H' \) is disconnected, there may be multiple ways to embed it to the classes \( A \) and \( B \). However, for every such embedding with \( a' \) and \( b' \) vertices in \( A \) and \( B \), the same argument as above shows that the number of such embeddings increases when we move a vertex from \( A \) to \( B \), thus the number of copies of \( H' \) increases.

**Case 2:** For every pair of partition classes \( A \) and \( B \) in \( G \), we have \( |A| < |V(H)||B| \).

Let us fix \( \epsilon > 0 \) and choose \( k_0 \) such that \( k_0 - 1 > |V(H)|/\epsilon \). Now assume that \( k \geq k_0 \). Then the average size of the classes in \( G \) is

\[
\frac{n}{k-1} \leq \frac{n}{k_0 - 1} < \frac{\epsilon n}{|V(H)|}.
\]
Therefore, the size of each class $X$ of $G$ satisfies
\[
\frac{1}{(k-1)|V(H)|}n \leq |X| \leq \frac{|V(H)|}{k-1}n < \epsilon n.
\]
The graph $G$ is not a Turán graph, so it has classes $A$ and $B$ such that $|A| > |B| + 1$. Let us move a vertex from $A$ to $B$ to create a new complete $(k-1)$-partite graph $G'$. Let us count the number of copies of $H$ destroyed and created when moving a vertex from $A$ to $B$. It is well-known and easy to see that $G$ has more edges than $G'$.

Those copies of $H$ in $G$ that do not have any edge from $A$ to $B$ remain in the graph. For each edge $uv$ between $A$ and $B$ consider the copies of $H$ where $u$ and $v$ are the only vertices of $H$ in $A \cup B$. Observe that their number does not depend which vertices $u$ and $v$ we choose from $A$ and $B$. We can greedily pick a vertex from each of the other $|V(H)| - 2$ distinct classes to extend $uv$ to a unique such copy of $H$. At each step we can choose from at least $n - |V(H)|\epsilon n$ vertices. Therefore, the number of such copies of $H$ is at least
\[
((1 - |V(H)|\epsilon n)^{|V(H)| - 2}.
\]
As there are more edges between $A$ and $B$ in $G'$ than in $G$, we have created at least $((1 - |V(H)|\epsilon n)^{|V(H)| - 2}$ new copies of $H$.

Now consider a copy of $H$ that has at least two edges between $A$ and $B$. Such copy of $H$ has $p \geq 3$ vertices in $A \cup B$. These $p$ vertices can be extended to a copy of $H$ in at most $n^{V(H)|-p}$ ways. Now pick an arbitrary bipartite subgraph $H'$ of $H$ with $p \geq 3$ vertices. We claim that the number of copies of $H'$ in $A \cup B$ decreases by at most $\epsilon cn^{b-2}$ when we move a vertex $v$ from $A$ to $B$ for some constant $c$ that depends only on $H$.

Indeed, consider a proper 2-coloring of $H'$ with $a$ vertices of color red and $b$ vertices of color blue. We may suppose that $v$ is in our copy of $H'$ otherwise $H'$ is unchanged. Then we have to pick $a-1$ vertices from $A$ and $b$ vertices from $B$ (or vice versa) to form a copy of $H'$. Therefore, we start with \( \binom{|A|}{a-1}\binom{|B|}{b} + \binom{|A|}{a}\binom{|B|+1}{b} \) copies of $H'$ and, after moving $v$, we end up with \( \binom{|A|}{a-1}\binom{|B|+1}{b} + \binom{|A|}{a-1}\binom{|B|+1}{b} \) copies of $H'$. Recall that only $|A|$ and $|B|$ depend on $n$ and $\epsilon$. Simple expansion gives
\[
\binom{|A|}{a-1}\binom{|B|+1}{b} = \frac{|A| - a + 1}{|A|(|B|+1-b)} \binom{|A|}{a-1}\binom{|B|}{b}.
\]
Therefore, the difference between the first terms of these counts of $H'$ is
\[
\frac{|A| - a + 1(|B|+1 - |A|(|B|+1-b))}{|A|(|B|+1-b)} \binom{|A|}{a-1}\binom{|B|}{b} \leq \frac{|A| - 1 - |B|(|a-1)|B|}{|A|(|B|+1-b)} \binom{|A|}{a-1}\binom{|B|}{b} \leq \frac{|A| - 1 - |B|(|a-1)|B|}{|B|+1-b} (\epsilon n)^{a+b-2} = c_0(\epsilon n)^{a+b-2},
\]
where $c_0 \leq |V(H)|^2(b+1)$. A similar bound can be obtained for the difference of the second terms, proving our claim.

This shows that the number of copies of $H$ that have more than one edge between $A$ and $B$ decreases by at most $\epsilon cn^{V(H)|-2}$, thus the total number of copies of $H$ increases, a contradiction. \qed
When \( H \) is a star \( S_t \), Cutler, Nir and Radcliffe [3] state that numerical evidence suggests for small \( t \) (i.e., large \( k \)) that \( S_t \) is \( k \)-Turán-good. We can confirm this statement for every multipartite \( H \). Indeed, Theorem 5 and Lemma 9 together imply the following theorem.

**Theorem 10.** For every complete multipartite graph \( H \) there is an integer \( k_0 \) such that if \( k \geq k_0 \), then \( H \) is \( k \)-Turán-good.

We believe that Theorem 10 should hold for any graph \( H \). See Conjecture 20 in Section 4 for details.

### 3 Forbidding non-cliques

We begin this section with a simple proposition.

**Proposition 11.** If \( F \) is a graph with chromatic number \( \chi(F) = k \geq 4 \) and a color-critical edge, then \( P_3 \) is \( F \)-Turán-good.

**Proof.** Fix an \( F \)-free \( n \)-vertex graph \( G \) and let \( p(G) \) be the number of induced copies of \( P_3 \). Let us count the number of pairs \((uv, w)\) where \( uv \) is an edge in \( G \) and \( w \) is a vertex in \( G \) that is distinct from \( u \) and \( v \). Clearly, there are \( |E(G)|(n - 2) \) such pairs. On the other hand, on any three vertices there is at most one triangle or one induced \( P_3 \). Moreover, each triangle consists of three such pairs \((uv, w)\) and every induced \( P_3 \) consists of two such pairs \((uv, w)\). Thus

\[
2p(G) + 3N(K_3, G) \leq |E(G)|(n - 2).
\]

For the graph \( G = T_{k-1}(n) \) we have equality in (1). By Theorems 4 and 6 we have that \( |E(G)| \leq |E(T_{k-1}(n))| \) and \( N(K_3, G) \leq N(K_3, T_{k-1}(n)) \). Counting copies of \( P_3 \) in \( G \) gives

\[
\text{ex}(n, P_3, F) = N(P_3, G) = p(G) + 3N(K_3, G) = (p(G) + \frac{3}{2}N(K_3, G)) + \frac{3}{2}N(K_3, G)
\]

\[
\leq (p(G) + \frac{3}{2}N(K_3, G)) + \frac{3}{2}N(K_3, T_{k-1}(n))
\]

\[
\leq \frac{1}{2}|E(G)|(n - 2) + \frac{3}{2}N(K_3, T_{k-1}(n))
\]

\[
\leq \frac{1}{2}|E(T_{k-1}(n))|(n - 2) + \frac{3}{2}N(K_3, T_{k-1}(n)) = N(P_3, T_{k-1}(n)).
\]

We believe that the condition on the chromatic number of \( F \) can be reduced to 3 in Proposition 11.
### 3.1 Forbidding a book

Recall that a book $B_k$ is the graph of $k$ triangles all sharing exactly one common edge. Note that book $B_2$ is simply the graph resulting from removing an edge from $K_4$. We will show that both $C_4$ and $P_4$ are $B_2$-Turán-good.

Let $M_k$ be the complement of the graph of $k$ independent edges, i.e., $M_k$ is a clique on $2k$ vertices with the edges of a perfect matching removed. Let $M_k^+$ be the graph resulting from adding an edge to $M_k$, i.e., $M_k^+$ is the graph of a clique on $2k$ vertices with all but one of the edges of a perfect matching removed. Note that $M_k$ and $M_k^+$ differ by a single edge and that $\chi(M_k) = k$ and $\chi(M_k^+) = k + 1$, i.e., the graph $M_k^+$ has a color-critical edge. Also note that when $k = 2$, we have that $M_k$ is the cycle $C_4$ and $M_k^+$ is the book $B_2$ (i.e., $K_4$ minus an edge).

**Lemma 12.** Let $H$ be a $2k$-vertex graph consisting of two vertex-disjoint copies of $K_k$ joined together with edges arbitrarily. If $M_k$ has the maximum number of copies of $H$ among all $2k$-vertex $M_k$-free graphs, then $H$ is $M_k^+$-Turán-good. In particular, $M_k$ is $M_k^+$-Turán-good.

**Proof.** We can count the copies of $M_k$ by counting the number of ways to choose a pair of disjoint copies of $K_k$ and then counting the number of copies of $M_k$ spanned by these two copies of $K_k$. We show that each of these quantities is maximized among $n$-vertex $M_k^+$-free graphs by the Turán graph $T_k(n)$.

By Theorem 6 for $n$ large enough, the Turán graphs $T_k(n)$ and $T_k(n - k)$ contain the maximum number of copies of $K_k$ among all $n$-vertex and $(n - k)$-vertex $M_k^+$-free graphs. Therefore, $T_k(n)$ maximizes the number of pairs of disjoint copies of $K_k$. In an $M_k^+$-free graph, if two disjoint copies of $K_k$ span a copy of $M_k$, then there can be no further edges between them as otherwise we have a copy of $M_k^+$. Thus, any two disjoint copies of $K_k$ span at most one copy of $M_k$. Observe that in $T_k(n)$ any pair of disjoint copies of $K_k$ span exactly one copy of $M_k$. As the number of copies of $H$ on $2k$-vertices is maximized by $M_k$, we have that the number of copies of $H$ on $2k$-vertices is maximized in $T_k(n)$.

When $k = 4$ the graphs $P_4$ and $C_4$ are both candidates for the graph $H$ in Lemma 12. This gives the following proposition.

**Proposition 13.** The cycle $C_4$ and path $P_4$ are $B_2$-Turán-good.

We remark that one can also obtain that $C_4$ is $B_2$-Turán-good from a result of Pippenger and Golumbic [23]. They showed that $T_2(n)$ contains the largest number of induced copies of $C_4$ among $n$-vertex graphs. As every copy of a $C_4$ is induced in a $B_2$-free graph, this implies that $C_4$ is $B_2$-Turán-good.
3.2 Forbidding odd cycles

Gerbner, Győri, Methuku and Vizer [10] counted paths and even cycles when forbidding an odd cycle. In particular, they proved that for any \( k \geq 1 \) and \( l \geq 2 \),

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ex}(n, P_1, C_{2k+1}) &= (1 + o(1)) \left( \frac{n}{2} \right)^l = (1 + o(1))\mathcal{N}(P_1, T_2(n)) \\
\text{ex}(n, C_{2l}, C_{2k+1}) &= (1 + o(1)) \frac{1}{2l} \left( \frac{n^2}{4} \right)^l = (1 + o(1))\mathcal{N}(C_{2l}, T_2(n)).
\end{align*}
\]

In this subsection we show that both \( P_4 \) and \( C_4 \) are \( C_5 \)-Turán-good, i.e., the results above are exact for \( k = 2 \) and \( P_4 \) and \( C_4 \), respectively. In the case of \( P_4 \) we also obtain a stability result.

**Theorem 14.** The path \( P_4 \) is \( C_5 \)-Turán-good. Moreover, if \( G \) is a \( C_5 \)-free graph on \( n \) vertices and \( G \) has \( \alpha \) edges contained in triangles, then the number of copies of \( P_4 \) in \( G \) is at most

\[
\mathcal{N}(P_4, T_2(n)) - (1 + o(1))\alpha \frac{n^2}{12}.
\]

**Proof.** Let \( G \) be an \( n \)-vertex \( C_5 \)-free graph. We will show that every edge of \( G \) is contained in at most \( 3|n/2 - 1| |n/2 - 1| \) copies of \( P_4 \). As the number of edges is maximized in the Turán graph \( T_2(n) \) and in the Turán graph every edge is contained in \( 3|n/2 - 1| |n/2 - 1| \) copies of \( P_4 \), this will show that \( P_4 \) is \( C_5 \)-Turán-good. In order to prove the second part of the theorem we will examine the number of copies of \( P_4 \) containing a fixed edge \( e \) where \( e \) is contained in a triangle in \( G \).

Consider an edge \( uv \) and let \( G' \) be obtained from \( G \) by deleting \( u \) and \( v \). As \( G' \) is a \( C_5 \)-free graph on \( n - 2 \) vertices and \( n - 2 \) is large enough, Theorem 11 implies that \( G' \) satisfies

\[
|E(G')| \leq |E(T_2(n - 2))| = |n/2 - 1| |n/2 - 1|.
\]

Now partition \( V(G') \) into a set \( A \) of vertices adjacent to both \( u \) and \( v \), a set \( B \) of vertices adjacent to \( u \) but not \( v \), a set \( C \) of vertices adjacent to \( v \) but not \( u \), and a set \( D \) of the remaining vertices (not adjacent to \( u \) nor \( v \)). As \( G \) is \( C_5 \)-free, no vertex in \( V(G') \) is adjacent to a vertex in \( A \cup B \) and a distinct vertex in \( A \cup C \).

Observe that if \( |A| \geq 1 \), then there is no edge between \( B \) and \( C \). If \( |A| \geq 2 \), then there is no edge between \( A \) and \( B \cup C \). If \( |A| \geq 3 \), then there is no edge in \( A \).

Consider two vertices \( x \) and \( y \) of \( G' \) (necessarily distinct from \( u \) and \( v \)). Let \( f(x, y) \) denote the number of copies of \( P_4 \) in \( G \) containing the edge \( uv \) and vertices \( x \) and \( y \). If \( x, y \in A \) and \( xy \) is an edge, then \( f(x, y) = 6 \) and if \( xy \) is not an edge, then \( f(x, y) = 2 \). If \( x \in A \) and \( y \in B \cup C \) and \( xy \) is an edge, then \( f(x, y) = 4 \) and if \( xy \) is not an edge, then \( f(x, y) = 1 \). If \( x \in B \) and \( y \in C \) and \( xy \) is an edge, then \( f(x, y) = 3 \) and if \( xy \) is not an edge, then \( f(x, y) = 1 \). If \( x, y \in B \) and \( xy \) is an edge, then \( f(x, y) = 2 \) and if \( xy \) is not an edge, then \( f(x, y) = 0 \). The same argument holds when \( x, y \in C \). If \( x \in D \) is not adjacent
to $y$, then $f(x, y) = 0$. If $x$ is adjacent to $y$ and $y \in A$, then $f(x, y) = 2$ and if $y \in B \cup C$ then $f(x, y) = 1$ and if $y \in D$, then $f(x, y) = 0$. Let

$$q(u, v) := \sum_{x,y \in V(G')} f(x, y),$$

i.e., $q(u, v)$ is the number of copies of $P_4$ containing the edge $uv$. We determine an upper-bound on $q(u, v)$ in four cases based on the size of $A$.

**Case 1:** $A = \emptyset$, i.e., $uv$ is not contained in any triangles.

For every pair $x, y$ of vertices, $f(x, y)$ depends on which of the three sets $B$, $C$ and $D$ they belong to and whether $x$ and $y$ are adjacent in $G'$. Observe that when $x \in B$ and $y \in C$, then $f(x, y) \leq 3$ if $xy$ is an edge and $f(x, y) \leq 1$ otherwise. In all other cases $f(x, y) \leq 2$ if $xy$ is an edge and $f(x, y) \leq 0$ otherwise. Therefore, $q(u, v) \leq 2|E(G')| + |C||B|$. Both terms of this sum are maximized by the Turán graph, $T_2(n - 2)$, so $q(u, v) \leq 3[n/2 - 1][n/2 - 1]$.

**Case 2:** $A = \{w\}$.

Then $\sum_{y \in V(G')} f(w, y) \leq 4(n - 3)$. If $x \neq w \neq y$, then $f(x, y) \leq 2$. Indeed, if $x$ and $y$ are adjacent, then it is impossible that one of them is in $B$ and the other is in $C$. Moreover, if $x$ and $y$ are not adjacent, then $f(x, y) = 0$. Therefore, we have $q(u, v) \leq 4(n - 3) + 2|E(G')| \leq (1 + o(1))n^2/2$.

**Case 3:** $A = \{w, w'\}$.

If $\{x, y\} = \{w, w'\}$, then $f(x, y) \leq 6$. By the same reasoning as in Case 2, if $|\{x, y\} \cap \{w, w'\}| = 1$, then $f(x, y) \leq 4$, and if $|\{x, y\} \cap \{w, w'\}| = 0$, then $f(x, y) \leq 2$. Moreover, in this latter case, if $x$ and $y$ are not adjacent, then $f(x, y) = 0$. Therefore, we obtain $q(u, v) \leq 6 + 8(n - 3) + 2|E(G')| \leq (1 + o(1))n^2/2$.

**Case 4:** $|A| = m \geq 3$.

Then we know $f(x, y) \leq 2$ if $x, y \in A$, since $xy$ is not an edge of $G'$. Furthermore, the only other case when $f(x, y) \geq 2$ is when $x \in A$ and $y \in D$ are adjacent and we have $f(x, y) = 2$. Observe that $y \in D$ can be adjacent to at most one $x \in A$. Therefore this situation can occur at most once for each element of $D$, i.e., at most $n - m - 2$ total times. All other pairs $x, y$ have $f(x, y) \leq 1$ and therefore $q(u, v) \leq \binom{n}{2} + \binom{m}{2} + n - m - 2$.

Let us call a subgraph of $G$ a **large book** if it consists of the book spanned by the edge $uv$ and all the $m \geq 3$ common neighbors $w_1, \ldots, w_m$ of $u$ and $v$. Observe that each edge of the form $uw_i$ or $vw_i$ in $G$ is contained in the single triangle $uvw_i$ as otherwise we can form a $C_5$ with $w_j$ for some $j \neq i$ (as $m \geq 3$), a contradiction.

This implies that large books are pairwise edge-disjoint. Therefore, we can calculate the sum of $q(u, v)$ for all edges $uv$ contained in a large book by summing them for each large book. In a large book $H$ with $m + 2$ vertices, we have $2m$ edges each contained in exactly one triangle (thus we can use Case 2) and one edge contained in exactly $m$ triangles (where we use Case 4). Therefore,

$$\sum_{uv \in E(H)} q(u, v) \leq 2m(1 + o(1))n^2/2 + \binom{n}{2} + \binom{m}{2} + n - m - 2 \leq (2m + 1)(1 + o(1))n^2/2 + \binom{m}{2}.$$
This implies that for edges in large books, the average of \( q(u, v) \) is

\[
\frac{1}{2m+1} \sum_{uv \in E(H)} q(u, v) \leq \left(1 + o(1)\right)n^2/2 + \frac{1}{2m+1} \binom{m}{2} = \left(1 + o(1)\right)n^2/2.
\]

For the at most \( \left\lfloor n^2/4 \right\rfloor - \alpha \) edges not in triangles, we have \( q(u, v) \leq 3 \cdot \left\lfloor n/2 - 1 \right\rfloor \cdot \left\lceil n/2 - 1 \right\rceil \cdot (\left\lfloor n^2/4 \right\rfloor - \alpha) + (1 + o(1))\alpha n^2/2 =\]

\[
3N(P_4, G) = \sum_{uv \in E(G)} q(u, v) \leq 3 \cdot \left\lfloor n/2 - 1 \right\rfloor \cdot \left\lceil n/2 - 1 \right\rceil \cdot (\left\lfloor n^2/4 \right\rfloor - \alpha) + (1 + o(1))\alpha n^2/2 = 3N(P_4, T_2(n)) - (1 + o(1))\alpha n^2/4,
\]

completing the proof.

**Lemma 15.** Fix a graph \( F \) and let \( G_0 \) be a complete bipartite graph with \( N(P_{2k}, G_0) = \text{ex}(n, P_{2k}, F) \). Then \( G_0 \) satisfies \( N(C_{2k}, G_0) = \text{ex}(n, C_{2k}, F) \).

**Proof.** Let \( G \) be an \( n \)-vertex \( F \)-free graph with \( \text{ex}(n, C_{2k}, F) \) copies of \( C_{2k} \). Observe that \( N(P_{2k}, G) \leq \text{ex}(n, P_{2k}, F) \). Every copy of \( C_{2k} \) contains \( 2k \) copies of \( P_{2k} \) and each copy of \( P_{2k} \) is contained in at most one \( C_{2k} \). Thus,

\[
2k \cdot N(C_{2k}, G) \leq N(P_{2k}, G).
\]

Note that copies of \( P_{2k} \) not contained in a \( C_{2k} \) are not counted here. As \( G_0 \) is a complete bipartite graph, every copy of \( P_{2k} \) in \( G_0 \) is contained in a \( C_{2k} \). Therefore,

\[
2k \cdot N(C_{2k}, G_0) = N(P_{2k}, G_0).
\]

Thus,

\[
\text{ex}(n, C_{2k}, F) = N(C_{2k}, G) \leq N(P_{2k}, G)/2k \leq \text{ex}(n, P_{2k}, F)/2k = N(P_{2k}, G_0)/2k = N(C_{2k}, G_0).
\]

**Theorem 14** and **Lemma 15** imply the following corollary.

**Corollary 16.** Let \( F \) be a 3-chromatic graph. If \( P_{2k} \) is \( F \)-Turán-good, then \( C_{2k} \) is \( F \)-Turán-good. In particular, \( C_4 \) is \( C_5 \)-Turán-good.
3.3 Forbidding fans

Until this point we only considered forbidden graphs that have a color-critical edge. By Theorem \[1\] an extremal graph for a \(k\)-chromatic graph \(F\) without a color-critical edge has more edges than \(T_{k-1}(n)\). This suggests that there may not be graphs \(H\) that are \(F\)-Turán-good in this case. Proposition \[18\] below shows that this is false in general.

For \(k \geq 2\), the \(k\)-fan \(F_k\) is the graph of \(k\) triangles all sharing exactly one common vertex. Note that the fan \(F_k\) does not contain a color-critical edge. Erdős, Füredi, Gould and Gunderson \[5\] determined the exact Turán number of \(F\) of \(F_k\) for \(n\) large enough.

**Theorem 17** (Erdős, Füredi, Gould and Gunderson \[5\]). Let \(F_2\) be the graph of two triangles sharing exactly one vertex. Then, for \(n\) large enough, the unique extremal graph for \(F_2\) is the graph resulting from adding a single edge to one class of the Turán graph \(T_2(n)\). Thus, for \(n\) large enough,

\[
\text{ex}(n, F_2) = \left\lfloor \frac{n^2}{4} \right\rfloor + 1.
\]

We use Theorem \[17\] to show that \(C_4\) is \(F_2\)-Turán-good.

**Proposition 18.** The cycle \(C_4\) is \(F_2\)-Turán-good.

**Proof.** Let \(n\) be large enough and \(G\) be an \(n\)-vertex \(F_2\)-free graph. If \(G\) has more than \(\lfloor n^2/4 \rfloor\) edges, then Theorem \[17\] gives the exact structure of \(G\). In particular, \(G\) has \(N(C_4, T_2(n))\) copies of \(C_4\) (observe that the edge added to the \(T_2(n)\) is not in any copy of \(C_4\)).

Therefore, we may assume that \(G\) has at most \(\lfloor n^2/4 \rfloor\) edges. Let \(uv\) be an arbitrary edge of \(G\). We claim that \(uv\) is in at most \(\lfloor (n-2)^2/4 \rfloor\) copies of \(C_4\), which will complete the proof as it implies \(N(C_4, G) \leq \frac{1}{4} \lfloor n^2/4 \rfloor \lfloor (n-2)^2/4 \rfloor = N(C_4, T_2(n))\). We distinguish two cases.

**Case 1:** \(uv\) is not contained in a \(K_4\).

Delete \(u\) and \(v\) from \(G\) and let \(G'\) be the resulting graph. Every edge of \(G'\) forms at most one \(C_4\) with \(uv\) and we count each such \(C_4\) exactly once this way. The number of edges in \(G'\) is at most \(\lfloor (n-2)^2/4 \rfloor + 1\) by Theorem \[17\]. We are done unless \(|E(G')| = \lfloor (n-2)^2/4 \rfloor + 1\) and every edge of \(G'\) forms a \(C_4\) with \(uv\) in \(G\). So, by Theorem \[17\] we may assume that \(G'\) is a \(T_2(n-2)\) with classes \(A\) and \(B\) and an extra edge \(xy\) in class \(A\). Without loss of generality, we may assume \(xywz\) is a \(C_4\) in \(G\). Thus \(wx\) and \(wy\) are edges of \(G\).

Now let \(z\) be an arbitrary vertex of \(B\). Observe that if \(ux\) (or \(vy\)) is an edge of \(G\), then we have a copy of \(F_2\) spanned by the two triangles \(xyzx\) and \(uvzu\) (or \(uvyu\), a contradiction. On the other hand, the edges \(xz\) and \(yz\) are each in a \(C_4\) with \(uv\). This implies that \(zu\) and \(zv\) are both edges of \(G\). But then the two triangles \(uvzu\) and \(xyzx\) span a copy of \(F_2\), a contradiction.

**Case 2:** \(uv\) is contained in a \(K_4\).

Let \(u, v, x, y\) be the vertices of a \(K_4\). Delete these four vertices and let \(G'\) be the resulting \(F_2\)-free graph on \(n-4\) vertices. Observe that each vertex of \(G'\) is adjacent to at most one of \(u, v, x, y\) as otherwise we have an \(F_2\) in \(G\). Therefore, each edge of \(G'\) forms at most one \(C_4\) with \(uv\). By Theorem \[17\] we have \(|E(G')| \leq \lfloor (n-4)^2/4 \rfloor + 1\). Therefore,
the number of copies of $C_4$ containing $uv$ is at most $2 + \lfloor (n - 4)^2/4 \rfloor + 1 \leq \lfloor (n - 2)^2/4 \rfloor$, completing the proof.

4 Concluding remarks

Theorem 7 and a weaker version of Proposition 11 previously appeared in the authors’ first and second arXiv version of [12], but were ultimately not included in the published version.

Győri, Pach and Simonovits [18] also studied when the Turán graph is the unique extremal graph. We have so far avoided this for simplicity. Let us say that a graph $H$ is strictly $F$-Turán-good for a $k$-chromatic graph $F$ if for every $n$ large enough, $T_{k-1}(n)$ is the unique $F$-free graph with $\text{ex}(n, H, F)$ copies of $H$. By Theorem 6 if $F$ does not have a color-critical edge, then there is no strictly $F$-Turán-good graph. However, it is not hard to show that our results when $F$ has a color-critical edge hold for the strict version as well.

Let us conclude with several natural conjectures supported by the results in this paper.

Conjecture 19. For every pair of integers $l$ and $k$, the path $P_l$ is $k$-Turán-good.

Theorem 4 and Corollary 11 imply that the conjecture holds for $l = 3$ and $k \geq 3$. Proposition 8 shows that the conjecture holds asymptotically.

Conjecture 20. For every graph $H$ there is an integer $k_0$ such that if $k \geq k_0$, then $H$ is $k$-Turán-good.

Theorem 10 implies that the conjecture is true for $H$ a complete multipartite graph. As noted in the introduction, this conjecture cannot in general be extended to hold for small $k$. Observe that Conjecture 20 would imply that if we increase $k$, sooner or later every graph becomes $k$-Turán-good. In some of our examples if a graph was $k$-Turán-good, then it was also $(k + 1)$-Turán-good. We do not know if this behavior holds for every graph $H$.

Conjecture 21. The path $P_k$ and the even cycle $C_{2k}$ are $C_{2l+1}$-Turán-good.

The asymptotic version of this statement was proved in [10]. By Theorem 4 the conjecture holds when $l = 1$. In this paper, we proved that it holds for $P_3$ when $l \geq 1$ (Corollary 11) and for $P_4$ and $C_4$ when $l = 2$ (Theorem 14 and Corollary 16).

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