# The determinants of q-distance matrices of trees and two quantities relating to permutations

Weigen Yan<sup>a,b</sup> 1 and Yeong-Nan Yeh<sup>b</sup> 2

<sup>a</sup>School of Sciences, Jimei University, Xiamen 361021, China

<sup>b</sup>Institute of Mathematics, Academia Sinica, Taipei 11529. Taiwan

#### **Abstract**

In this paper we prove that two quantities relating to the length of permutations defined on trees are independent of the structures of trees. We also find that these results are closely related to the results obtained by Graham and Pollak (Bell System Tech. J. 50(1971) 2495–2519) and by Bapat, Kirkland, and Neumann (Linear Alg. Appl. 401(2005) 193–209).

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### 1 Introduction

Let [n] denote the set  $\{1, 2, ..., n\}$  and let  $\mathcal{S}_n$  be the set of permutations of [n]. Partition  $\mathcal{S}_n$  into  $\mathcal{S}_n = \mathcal{E}_n \cup \mathcal{O}_n$ , where  $\mathcal{E}_n$  (resp.  $\mathcal{O}_n$ ) is the set of even (resp. odd) permutations in  $\mathcal{S}_n$ . It is well known that  $|\mathcal{E}_n| = |\mathcal{O}_n|$ . Let  $\sigma$  and  $\pi$  be two elements of  $\mathcal{S}_n$ . Diaconis and Graham [4] defined a metric called Spearman's measure of disarray on the set  $\mathcal{S}_n$  as follows:

$$D(\sigma, \pi) = \sum_{i=1}^{n} |\sigma(i) - \pi(i)|.$$

They derived the mean, variance, and limiting normality of  $D(\sigma, \pi)$  when  $\sigma$  and  $\pi$  are chosen independently and uniformly from  $S_n$ . In particular, the authors in [4] characterized those permutations  $\sigma \in S_n$  for which  $D(\sigma) =: D(1, \sigma)$  takes on its maximum value.

Email address: weigenyan@263.net (W. G. Yan), mayeh@math.sinica.edu.tw (Y. N. Yeh).

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Some related work appears in [12, 16]. The length  $|\sigma|$  of a permutation  $\sigma$  is defined to be  $D(1,\sigma)$ , that is,  $|\sigma| = \sum_{i=1}^{n} |i - \sigma(i)|$ . For an arbitrary nonnegative integer k, let

$$\mathcal{A}_{n,k} = \{ \sigma \in \mathcal{S}_n | |\sigma| = k \},$$

$$N_{n,k} = \sum_{\sigma \in \mathcal{A}_{n,k}} \operatorname{sgn}(\sigma) = |\mathcal{A}_{n,k} \cap \mathcal{E}_n| - |\mathcal{A}_{n,k} \cap \mathcal{O}_n|.$$

Furthermore, we define  $\phi_{\sigma,k} = 0$  if  $\sigma$  has at least one fixed point, otherwise, let  $\phi_{\sigma,k}$  be the number of nonnegative integer solutions of the equation  $x_1 + x_2 + \ldots + x_n = k$  which satisfy  $0 \le x_i < |i - \sigma(i)|$  for  $1 \le i \le n$ . Let

$$M_{n,k} = \sum_{\sigma \in \mathcal{S}_n} \operatorname{sgn}(\sigma) \phi_{\sigma,k}. \tag{1}$$

It is natural to pose the following problem:

### **Problem 1.1** Find closed expressions for $N_{n,k}$ and $M_{n,k}$ .

We may generalize the concept of the length of a permutation defined in Problem 1.1 as follows. Let T be a weighted tree with the vertex set  $V(T) = \{v_1, v_2, \ldots, v_n\}$ . For two vertices u and v in T, there exists a unique path  $u = v_{i_1} - v_{i_2} - \ldots - v_{i_l} - v_{i_{l+1}} = v$  from u to v in T. Define the distance d(u, v) between u and v as zero if u = v, otherwise, let d(u, v) be the sum  $x_1 + x_2 + \ldots + x_l$ , where  $x_k$  is the weight of edge  $v_{i_k}v_{i_{k+1}}$  for  $k = 1, 2, \ldots, l$ . Let T be a simple tree (i.e., the weight of each edge equals one) and let  $\sigma \in \mathcal{S}_n$ . The length  $|\sigma_T|$  of  $\sigma$  on T is defined as the sum of all  $d(v_i, v_{\sigma(v_i)})$ , that is,  $|\sigma_T| = \sum_{i=1}^n d(v_i, v_{\sigma(i)})$ . Let

$$\mathcal{A}_{n,k}(T) = \{ \sigma \in \mathcal{S}_n | |\sigma_T| = k \},$$

$$N_{n,k}(T) = \sum_{\sigma \in \mathcal{A}_{n,k}(T)} \operatorname{sgn}(\sigma) = |\mathcal{A}_{n,k}(T) \cap \mathcal{E}_n| - |\mathcal{A}_{n,k}(T) \cap \mathcal{O}_n|.$$

Furthermore, we define  $\phi_{\sigma,k}(T) = 0$  if  $\sigma$  has at least one fixed point, otherwise, let  $\phi_{\sigma,k}(T)$  be the number of nonnegative integer solutions of the equation  $x_1 + x_2 + \ldots + x_n = k$  which satisfy  $0 \le x_i < d(v_i, v_{\sigma(i)})$  for  $1 \le i \le n$ . Let

$$M_{n,k}(T) = \sum_{\sigma \in \mathcal{S}_n} \operatorname{sgn}(\sigma) \phi_{\sigma,k}(T). \tag{2}$$

A more general problem than Problem 1.1 is the following:

**Problem 1.2** Let T be a simple tree with vertex set  $\{v_1, v_2, \ldots, v_n\}$ . Find closed expressions for  $N_{n,k}(T)$  and  $M_{n,k}(T)$ .

**Remark 1.1** If we take  $T = P_n$  (where  $P_n$  is a simple path with vertex set  $\{v_1, v_2, \ldots, v_n\}$  and edge set  $\{(v_i, v_{i+1}) | 1 \le i \le n-1\}$ ) in Problem 1.2, then Problem 1.1 is a special case of Problem 1.2. That is,  $N_{n,k} = N_{n,k}(P_n)$  and  $M_{n,k} = M_{n,k}(P_n)$ .

The distance matrix D(T) of the weighted tree T is an  $n \times n$  matrix with its (i, j)-entry equal to the distance between vertices  $v_i$  and  $v_j$ . If T is a simple tree, Graham and Pollak [9] obtained the following result:

Theorem 1.1 (Graham and Pollak [9]) Let T be a simple tree with n vertices. Then

$$\det(D(T)) = -(n-1)(-2)^{n-2},\tag{3}$$

which is independent of the structure of T.

Other proofs of Theorem 1.1 can be found in [1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 19]. In particular, in [19] we gave a simple method to prove (3). If T is a weighted tree, Bapat, Kirkland, and Neumann [3] generalized the result in Theorem 1.1 as follows.

Theorem 1.2 (Bapat, Kirkland, and Neumann [3]) Let T be a weighted tree with n vertices and with edge weights  $\alpha_1, \alpha_2, \ldots, \alpha_{n-1}$ . Then, for any real number x,

$$\det(D(T) + xJ) = (-1)^{n-1} 2^{n-2} \left( \prod_{i=1}^{n-1} \alpha_i \right) \left( 2x + \sum_{i=1}^{n-1} \alpha_i \right), \tag{4}$$

where J is an  $n \times n$  matrix with all entries equal to one.

A direct consequence of Theorem 1.2 is the following:

Corollary 1.1 (Bapat, Kirkland, and Neumann [3]) Let D(T) be as in Theorem 1.2. Then

$$\det(D(T)) = (-1)^{n-1} 2^{n-2} \left( \prod_{i=1}^{n-1} \alpha_i \right) \left( \sum_{i=1}^{n-1} \alpha_i \right).$$
 (5)

Suppose T is a weighted tree with the vertex set  $V(T) = \{v_1, v_2, \dots, v_n\}$ , and suppose the distance d(u, v) between two vertices u and v is  $\alpha$ . Define two kinds of q-distances between u and v, denoted by  $d_q(u, v)$  and  $d_q^*(u, v)$ , as  $[\alpha]$  and  $q^{\alpha}$  respectively, where

$$[\alpha] = \begin{cases} \frac{1-q^{\alpha}}{1-q} & \text{if } q \neq 1, \\ \alpha & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

By definition, [0] = 0 and  $[\alpha] = 1 + q + q^2 + \ldots + q^{\alpha-1}$  if  $\alpha$  is a positive integer. We define two q-distance matrices on the weighted tree T, denoted by  $D_q(T)$  and  $D_q^*(T)$ , as the  $n \times n$  matrices with their (i,j)-entries equal to  $d_q(v_i,v_j)$  and  $d_q^*(v_i,v_j)$ , respectively. If q = 1 then  $D_q(T)$  is the distance matrix D(T) of T. Hence the distance matrix is a special case of the q-distance matrix  $D_q(T)$ .

In quantum chemistry, if T is a simple tree with vertex set  $V(T) = \{v_1, v_2, \dots, v_n\},\$ 

$$W(T,q) = \sum_{i < j} d_q^*(v_i, v_j) = \sum_{\{u,v\} \subseteq V(T)} q^{d(u,v)}$$

is called the Wiener polynomial of T [11],  $D_1(T)$  is called the Wiener matrix [10], and the q-derivative W'(T,1) is defined as the Wiener index of T [17, 18]. The study of the Wiener index, one of the molecular-graph-based structure descriptors (so-called "topological indices"), has been undergoing rapid expansion in the last few years (see for example [13, 14, 15, 20, 21]).

In the next section, we compute the determinants of  $D_q^*(T)$  and  $D_q(T)$ , and show that they are independent of the structure of T, and hence we generalize the results obtained by Graham and Pollak [9] and by Bapat, Kirkland, and Neumann [3]. In Section 3, based on the results in Section 2, we prove that the generating functions  $F_n(q) = \sum_{k\geq 0} N_{n,k}(T)q^k$  and  $G_n(q) = \sum_{k\geq 0} M_{n,k}(T)q^k$  of  $\{N_{n,k}(T)\}_{k\geq 0}$  and  $\{M_{n,k}(T)\}_{k\geq 0}$ , as defined in Problem 1.2, are exactly  $\det(D_q^*(T))$  and  $\det(D_q(T))$ , respectively. Hence, both  $F_n(q)$  and  $G_n(q)$  are independent of the structure of T, and this leads to a resolution of Problem 1.2.

# **2** Determinants of $D_q^*(T)$ and $D_q(T)$

First we compute the determinant of  $D_q^*(T)$ .

**Theorem 2.3** Let T be a weighted tree with n vertices and with edge weights  $\alpha_1, \alpha_2, \ldots, \alpha_{n-1}$ . Then, for any  $n \geq 2$ ,

$$\det(D_q^*(T)) = \prod_{i=1}^{n-1} (1 - q^{2\alpha_i}), \tag{6}$$

which is independent of the structure of T.

**Proof** We prove the theorem by induction on n. It is trivial to show that the theorem holds for n = 2 or n = 3. Hence we assume that  $n \ge 4$ . Without loss of generality, we

suppose that  $v_1$  is a pendant vertex and  $e = (v_1, v_s)$  is a pendant edge with weight  $\alpha_1$  in T. Let  $d_i$  denote the i-th column of  $D_q^*(T)$  for  $1 \le i \le n$ . Note that each entry along the diagonal is one. Hence, by the definition of  $D_q^*(T)$ , we have

$$(d_1 - q^{\alpha_1} d_s)^T = (1 - q^{2\alpha_1}, 0, \dots, 0).$$

Thus

$$\det(D_q^*(T)) = \det(d_1 - q^{\alpha_1} d_s, d_2, d_3, \dots, d_n) = (1 - q^{2\alpha_1}) \det(D_q^*(T)_1^1), \tag{7}$$

where  $D_q^*(T)_1^1$  equals  $D_q^*(T-v_1)$ . By induction, the theorem is immediate from (7).  $\square$ 

Corollary 2.2 Let T be a simple tree with n vertices. Then

$$\det(D_q^*(T)) = (1 - q^2)^{n-1},$$

which is independent of the structure of T.

To evaluate the determinant of  $D_q(T)$  we must introduce some terminology and notation. Let  $A = (a_{ij})_{n \times n}$  be an  $n \times n$  matrix, and let  $I = \{i_1, i_2, \ldots, i_l\}$  and  $J = \{j_1, j_2, \ldots, j_l\}$  be two subsets of  $\{1, 2, \ldots, n\}$ . We use  $A_{j_1 j_2 \ldots j_l}^{i_1 i_2 \ldots i_l}$  to denote the submatrix of A by deleting rows in I and columns in J.

Zeilberger [22] gave an elegant combinatorial proof of Dodgson's determinant-evaluation rule [5] as follows:

$$\det(A)\det(A_{1n}^{1n}) = \det(A_1^1)\det(A_n^n) - \det(A_1^n)\det(A_n^1), \tag{8}$$

where A is a matrix of order n > 2. Let

$$F(\alpha_1, \alpha_2, \ldots, \alpha_{n-1})$$

$$=\frac{[\alpha_1][\alpha_2][\alpha_1+\alpha_2]}{[2\alpha_1][2\alpha_2]}+\frac{[\alpha_{n-2}][\alpha_{n-1}][\alpha_{n-2}+\alpha_{n-1}]}{[2\alpha_{n-2}][2\alpha_{n-1}]}+\sum_{i=1}^{n-3}\frac{[\alpha_i][\alpha_{i+2}][\alpha_i+\alpha_{i+2}]}{[2\alpha_i][2\alpha_{i+2}]}.$$

It is not difficult to prove the following lemma.

**Lemma 2.1** (a) If  $n \geq 3$ ,  $F(\alpha_1, \alpha_2, \ldots, \alpha_{n-1})$  is a symmetric function on  $\alpha_1, \alpha_2, \ldots, \alpha_{n-1}$ . (b) If T is a weighted tree with two vertices and with edge weight  $\alpha_1$ ,  $\det(D_q(T)) = -[\alpha_1]^2$ . (c) If T is a weighted tree with three vertices and with edge weights  $\alpha_1, \alpha_2, \det(D_q(T)) = 2[\alpha_1][\alpha_2][\alpha_1 + \alpha_2]$ . **Theorem 2.4** Let T be a weighted tree with n vertices and with edge weights  $\alpha_1, \alpha_2, \ldots, \alpha_{n-1}$ . Then, for any  $n \geq 4$ ,

$$\det(D_{q}(T)) = (-1)^{n-1} \left( \prod_{i=1}^{n-1} [2\alpha_{i}] \right) \times \left( \frac{[\alpha_{1}][\alpha_{2}][\alpha_{1} + \alpha_{2}]}{[2\alpha_{1}][2\alpha_{2}]} + \frac{[\alpha_{n-2}][\alpha_{n-1}][\alpha_{n-2} + \alpha_{n-1}]}{[2\alpha_{n-2}][2\alpha_{n-1}]} + \sum_{i=1}^{n-3} \frac{[\alpha_{i}][\alpha_{i+2}][\alpha_{i} + \alpha_{i+2}]}{[2\alpha_{i}][2\alpha_{i+2}]} \right), \quad (9)$$

which is independent of the structure of T.

**Proof** We prove the theorem by induction on n. Note that there exist two trees with four vertices: the star  $K_{1,3}$  and the path  $P_4$ . Let the edge weights of two weighted trees  $K_{1,3}$  and  $P_4$  with four vertices be as shown in Figure 1 (a) and (b), respectively. The q-distance matrices  $D_q(T_{1,3})$  and  $D_q(P_4)$  of  $K_{1,3}$  and  $P_4$  are as follows:

$$D_q(T_{1,3}) = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & [\alpha_1 + \alpha_2] & [\alpha_1 + \alpha_3] & [\alpha_1] \\ [\alpha_1 + \alpha_2] & 0 & [\alpha_2 + \alpha_3] & [\alpha_2] \\ [\alpha_1 + \alpha_3] & [\alpha_2 + \alpha_3] & 0 & [\alpha_3] \\ [\alpha_1] & [\alpha_2] & [\alpha_3] & 0 \end{pmatrix}$$

and

$$D_q(P_4) = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & \alpha_1 & [\alpha_1 + \alpha_2] & [\alpha_1 + \alpha_2 + \alpha_3] \\ [\alpha_1] & 0 & [\alpha_2] & [\alpha_2 + \alpha_3] \\ [\alpha_1 + \alpha_2] & [\alpha_2] & 0 & [\alpha_3] \\ [\alpha_1 + \alpha_2 + \alpha_3] & [\alpha_2 + \alpha_3] & [\alpha_3] & 0 \end{pmatrix}.$$

Figure 1: (a) The weighted tree  $T_{1,3}$ . (b) The weighted tree  $P_4$ .

We calculate

$$\det(D_q(K_{1,3})) = \det(D_q(P_4)) =$$

$$-[2\alpha_1][2\alpha_2][2\alpha_3] \left( \frac{[\alpha_1][\alpha_2][\alpha_1 + \alpha_2]}{[2\alpha_1][2\alpha_2]} + \frac{[\alpha_2][\alpha_3][\alpha_2 + \alpha_3]}{[2\alpha_2][2\alpha_3]} + \frac{[\alpha_1][\alpha_3][\alpha_1 + \alpha_3]}{[2\alpha_1][2\alpha_3]} \right).$$

Hence the theorem holds for n = 4.

Now we assume that T is a weighted tree with n vertices and  $n \geq 5$ . We denote the q-distance matrix  $D_q(T)$  of T by D. Note that T has least two pendant vertices. Without loss of generality, we assume both  $v_1$  and  $v_n$  are pendant vertices of T. The unique neighbor of  $v_1$  (resp.  $v_n$ ) is denoted by  $v_s$  (resp.  $v_t$ ). For convenience, we may suppose that the weights of two edges  $v_1v_s$  and  $v_nv_t$  are  $\beta_1$  and  $\beta_{n-1}$ , and the weights of the edges in  $T - v_1 - v_n$  are  $\beta_2, \beta_3, \ldots, \beta_{n-2}$ . Obviously,  $\{\beta_1, \beta_2, \ldots, \beta_{n-1}\} = \{\alpha_1, \alpha_2, \ldots, \alpha_{n-1}\}$  ( $\{\beta_1, \beta_2, \ldots, \beta_{n-1}\}$  may be a multiset). Let  $d_i$  denote the i-th column of  $D_q(T)$ . By the definition of  $v_1, v_s, v_t$ , and  $v_n$ , we have

$$(d_1 - q^{\beta_1} d_s)^T = (-q^{\beta_1} [\beta_1], [\beta_1], [\beta_1], \dots, [\beta_1])$$

and

$$(d_n - q^{\beta_{n-1}}d_t)^T = ([\beta_{n-1}], [\beta_{n-1}], \dots, [\beta_{n-1}], -q^{\beta_{n-1}}[\beta_{n-1}]),$$

which imply the following:

$$\overline{d_1}^T = (d_1 - q^{\beta_1} d_s)^T + \frac{-[\beta_1]}{[\beta_{n-1}]} (d_n - q^{\beta_{n-1}} d_t)^T = (-[2\beta_1], 0, 0, \dots, 0, (1 + q^{\beta_{n-1}})[\beta_1]),$$

where  $d_1^T$  denotes the transpose of  $d_1$ . Hence

$$\det(D) = \det(d_1, d_2, \dots, d_n) = \det(\overline{d_1}, d_2, d_3, \dots, d_{n-1}, d_n).$$

So we have

$$\det(D) = -[2\beta_1] \det(D_1^1) + (-1)^{n+1} (1 + q^{\beta_{n-1}}) [\beta_1] \det(D_1^n). \tag{10}$$

Similarly, we have

$$\det(D) = -[2\beta_{n-1}] \det(D_n^n) + (-1)^{n+1} (1+q^{\beta_1}) [\beta_{n-1}] \det(D_n^1). \tag{10'}$$

On the other hand, by Dodgson's determinant-evaluation rule (6), we have

$$\det(D)\det(D_{1n}^{1n}) = \det(D_1^1)\det(D_n^n) - \det(D_1^n)\det(D_n^1). \tag{11}$$

By the definition of the q-distance matrix D (= $D_q(T)$ ) of T,  $\det(D_1^n) = \det(D_1^n)$ . In particular,  $D_1^1$ ,  $D_n^n$ , and  $D_{1n}^{1n}$  denote the q-distance matrices  $D_q(T-v_1)$ ,  $D_q(T-v_n)$ , and  $D_q(T-v_1-v_n)$  of trees  $T-v_1$ ,  $T-v_n$ , and  $T-v_1-v_n$ , respectively. Note that  $T-v_1$  (resp.  $T-v_n$ ) is a weighted tree with n-1 vertices and with edge weights  $\beta_2, \beta_3, \ldots, \beta_{n-1}$  (resp.  $\beta_1, \beta_2, \ldots, \beta_{n-2}$ ). Hence, by induction, we have

$$\det(D_1^1) = (-1)^{n-2} \left( \prod_{i=2}^{n-1} [2\beta_i] \right) \times$$

$$\left( \frac{[\beta_2][\beta_3][\beta_2 + \beta_3]}{[2\beta_2][2\beta_3]} + \frac{[\beta_{n-2}][\beta_{n-1}][\beta_{n-2} + \beta_{n-1}]}{[2\beta_{n-2}][2\beta_{n-1}]} + \sum_{i=2}^{n-3} \frac{[\beta_i][\beta_{i+2}][\beta_i + \beta_{i+2}]}{[2\beta_i][2\beta_{i+2}]} \right)$$
(12)

and

$$\det(D_n^n) = (-1)^{n-2} \left( \prod_{i=1}^{n-2} [2\beta_i] \right) \times$$

$$\left(\frac{[\beta_1][\beta_2][\beta_1+\beta_2]}{[2\beta_1][2\beta_2]} + \frac{[\beta_{n-3}][\beta_{n-2}][\beta_{n-3}+\beta_{n-2}]}{[2\beta_{n-3}][2\beta_{n-2}]} + \sum_{i=1}^{n-4} \frac{[\beta_i][\beta_{i+2}][\beta_i+\beta_{i+2}]}{[2\beta_i][2\beta_{i+2}]}\right).$$
(13)

Similarly,

$$\det(D_{1n}^{1n}) = (-1)^{n-3} \left( \prod_{i=2}^{n-2} [2\beta_i] \right) \times$$

$$\left(\frac{[\beta_2][\beta_3][\beta_2 + \beta_3]}{[2\beta_2][2\beta_3]} + \frac{[\beta_{n-3}][\beta_{n-2}][\beta_{n-3} + \beta_{n-2}]}{[2\beta_{n-3}][2\beta_{n-2}]} + \sum_{i=2}^{n-4} \frac{[\beta_i][\beta_{i+2}][\beta_i + \beta_{i+2}]}{[2\beta_i][2\beta_{i+2}]}\right).$$
(14)

From (10) and (10'),

$$[\det(D)]^2 + [2\beta_1] \det(D) \det(D_1^1) + [2\beta_{n-1}] \det(D) \det(D_n^n) +$$

$$[2\beta_1][2\beta_{n-1}]\det(D_1^1)\det(D_n^n) = [2\beta_1][2\beta_{n-1}]\det(D_n^1)\det(D_1^n),$$

and hence by (11) we have

$$[\det(D)]^{2} + [2\beta_{1}] \det(D) \det(D_{1}^{1}) + [2\beta_{n-1}] \det(D) \det(D_{n}^{n}) + [2\beta_{1}][2\beta_{n-1}] \det(D) \det(D_{1n}^{1n}) = 0.$$
(12)

Note that, by Theorem 1.1, if q = 1 and  $\beta_i = 1$  for  $1 \le i \le n - 1$ , then  $\det(D) = -(n-1)(-2)^{n-1}$ , which implies that  $\det(D) \ne 0$ . Then by (12) we have

$$\det(D) + [2\beta_1] \det(D_1^1) + [2\beta_{n-1}] \det(D_n^n) + [2\beta_1][2\beta_{n-1}] \det(D_{1n}^{1n}) = 0.$$
 (16)

From (12), (13), (14) and (16), it is immediate that

$$\det(D) = (-1)^{n-1} \left( \prod_{i=1}^{n-1} [2\beta_i] \right) \times$$

$$\left(\frac{[\beta_1][\beta_2][\beta_1+\beta_2]}{[2\beta_1][2\beta_2]} + \frac{[\beta_{n-2}][\beta_{n-1}][\beta_{n-2}+\beta_{n-1}]}{[2\beta_{n-2}][2\beta_{n-1}]} + \sum_{i=1}^{n-3} \frac{[\beta_i][\beta_{i+2}][\beta_i+\beta_{i+2}]}{[2\beta_i][2\beta_{i+2}]}\right).$$
(17)

Note that  $\{\alpha_1, \alpha_2, \dots, \alpha_{n-1}\} = \{\beta_1, \beta_2, \dots, \beta_{n-1}\}$ . The theorem follows immediately from (a) in Lemma 2.1 and (17).

Let T be a weighted tree with the vertex set  $V(T) = \{v_1, v_2, \dots, v_n\}$  and with the edge weights  $\alpha_1, \alpha_2, \dots, \alpha_{n-1}$ , and let  $v_1$  and  $v_n$  be two pendant vertices of T. The unique neighbor of  $v_1$  (resp.  $v_n$ ) is denoted by  $v_s$  (resp.  $v_t$ ). The proof above also implies that

$$\det(D_q(T)_1^n) = [\alpha_1][\alpha_{n-1}] \prod_{i=2}^{n-2} [2\alpha_i],$$

where  $\alpha_1$  and  $\alpha_{n-1}$  are the weights of edges  $v_1v_s$  and  $v_nv_t$ , respectively.

If we set q = 1 then the right hand side of (9) in Theorem 2.4 equals

$$(-1)^{n-1} \prod_{i=1}^{n-1} (2\alpha_i) \left( \frac{\alpha_1 \alpha_2 (\alpha_1 + \alpha_2)}{(2\alpha_1)(2\alpha_2)} + \frac{\alpha_{n-2} \alpha_{n-1} (\alpha_{n-2} + \alpha_{n-1})}{(2\alpha_{n-2})(2\alpha_{n-1})} + \sum_{i=1}^{n-3} \frac{\alpha_i \alpha_{i+2} (\alpha_i + \alpha_{i+2})}{(2\alpha_i)(2\alpha_{i+2})} \right)$$

$$= (-1)^{n-1} 2^{n-2} \left( \prod_{i=1}^{n-1} \alpha_i \right) \left( \sum_{i=1}^{n-1} \alpha_i \right),$$

which implies Corollary 1.1 is a special case of Theorem 2.4. Hence we generalize the results obtained by Graham and Pollak [9], and by Bapat, Kirkland, and Neumann [3]. In particular, the following corollary is immediate from Theorem 2.4.

Corollary 2.3 Let T be a simple tree with n vertices. Then

$$\det(D_q(T)) = (-1)^{n-1}(n-1)(1+q)^{n-2},$$

which is independent of the structure of T.

# **3** The quantities $M_{n,k}(T)$ and $N_{n,k}(T)$

Let T be a simple tree and and  $\mathcal{A}_{n,k}(T) = \{ \sigma \in \mathcal{S}_n | |\sigma_T| = k \}$ . Partition  $\mathcal{S}_n$  into  $\mathcal{S}_n = \mathcal{A}_{n,0}(T) \cup \mathcal{A}_{n,1}(T) \cup \ldots \cup \mathcal{A}_{n,k}(T) \cup \ldots$ 

**Theorem 3.5** Let T be a simple tree with vertex set  $\{v_1, v_2, \ldots, v_n\}$ , and let  $N_{n,k}(T)$  be defined as in Problem 1.2. Then

$$N_{n,k}(T) = \sum_{\sigma \in \mathcal{A}_{n,k}(T)} \operatorname{sgn}(\sigma) = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if } k \text{ is odd,} \\ (-1)^{\frac{k}{2}} {n-1 \choose \frac{k}{2}} & \text{if } k \text{ is even,} \end{cases}$$

which is independent of the structure of T.

**Proof** Let  $F_n(q) = \sum_{k\geq 0} N_{n,k}(T)q^k$  be the generating function of  $\{N_{n,k}(T)\}_{k\geq 0}$ . Hence

$$F_{n}(q) = \sum_{k\geq 0} \left( \sum_{\sigma \in \mathcal{A}_{n,k}(T)} \operatorname{sgn}(\sigma) \right) q^{k} = \sum_{k\geq 0} \left( \sum_{\sigma \in \mathcal{A}_{n,k}(T)} \operatorname{sgn}(\sigma) \right) q^{|\sigma_{T}|}$$

$$= \sum_{k\geq 0} \left( \sum_{\sigma \in \mathcal{A}_{n,k}(T)} \operatorname{sgn}(\sigma) \right) q^{\sum_{i=1}^{n} d(v_{i}, v_{\sigma(i)})} = \sum_{\sigma \in \mathcal{S}_{n}} \left( \operatorname{sgn}(\sigma) q^{\sum_{i=1}^{n} d(v_{i}, v_{\sigma(i)})} \right)$$

$$= \sum_{\sigma \in \mathcal{S}_{n}} \left( \operatorname{sgn}(\sigma) \prod_{i=1}^{n} d_{q}^{*}(v_{i}, v_{\sigma(i)}) \right).$$

By the definition of  $D_q^*(T)$ , we have

$$\det(D_q^*(T)) = \sum_{\sigma \in \mathcal{S}_n} \left( \operatorname{sgn}(\sigma) \prod_{i=1}^n d_q^*(v_i, v_{\sigma(i)}) \right).$$

The theorem is immediate from Corollary 2.2.

With notation as in the introduction, we state and prove our last result.

**Theorem 3.6** Let T be a simple tree with vertex set  $\{v_1, v_2, \ldots, v_n\}$ , and let  $M_{n,k}(T)$  and  $\phi_{\sigma,k}(T)$  be as in (2). Then

$$M_{n,k}(T) = \sum_{\sigma \in \mathcal{S}_n} \operatorname{sgn}(\sigma) \phi_{\sigma,k}(T) = (-1)^{n-1} (n-1) \binom{n-2}{k},$$

which is independent of the structure of T.

**Proof** Let  $G_n(q) = \sum_{k\geq 0} M_{n,k}(T)q^k$  be the generating function of  $\{M_{n,k}(T)\}_{k\geq 0}$ . Hence

$$G_n(q) = \sum_{k\geq 0} \left( \sum_{\sigma\in\mathcal{S}_n} \operatorname{sgn}(\sigma) \phi_{\sigma,k}(T) \right) q^k = \sum_{\sigma\in\mathcal{S}_n} \left( \operatorname{sgn}(\sigma) \sum_{k\geq 0} \phi_{\sigma,k}(T) q^k \right)$$

$$= \sum_{\sigma\in\mathcal{S}_n} \operatorname{sgn}(\sigma) (1+q+\ldots+q^{d(v_1,v_{\sigma(1)})-1}) \ldots (1+q+\ldots+q^{d(v_n,v_{\sigma(n)})-1})$$

$$= \sum_{\sigma\in\mathcal{S}_n} \operatorname{sgn}(\sigma) d_q(v_1,v_{\sigma(1)}) d_q(v_2,v_{\sigma(2)}) \ldots d_q(v_n,v_{\sigma(n)}).$$

By the definition of  $D_q(T)$ , we have

$$\det(D_q(T)) = \sum_{\sigma \in \mathcal{S}_n} \operatorname{sgn}(\sigma) d_q(v_1, v_{\sigma(1)}) d_q(v_2, v_{\sigma(2)}) \dots d_q(v_n, v_{\sigma(n)}).$$

The theorem follows immediately from Corollary 2.3.

By Remark 1.1, Theorems 3.5, and 3.6,  $M_{n,k} = (-1)^{n-1}(n-1)\binom{n-2}{k}$ , while  $N_{n,k} = 0$  if k is odd and  $N_{n,k} = (-1)^{\frac{k}{2}}\binom{n-1}{\frac{k}{2}}$  otherwise.

Our method to prove Theorems 3.5 and 3.6 is completely algebraic. Therefore it would be interesting to consider the following problem.

**Problem 3.3** Give combinatorial proofs of Theorems 3.5 and 3.6.

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