

Can categorical classes in $L_{\omega_1, \omega}$ be bounded in size?

UIC Seminar: 2025

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February 23, 2025

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$K_{(\aleph_2, \aleph_0)^{>\aleph_0}}$ implies ω -stability

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- Arbitrarily large models, bounded categoricity

Formal and Formalism-Free Mathematics

Formal

- 1 Explicit vocabulary, syntax and notion of truth
e.g. $L_{\omega_1, \omega}$, *admissible fragments*, $L_{\lambda, \omega}(Q)$, L_{2nd} etc.
'elementary' submodel.
- 2 Natural axiomatizations of much of mathematics: axiom of Archimedes around structures up to the continuum.
- 3 Lindenbaum algebra and Stone space: Shelah for anything beyond first order [She75]

Formalism-Free [Ken21]

- 1 standard mathematics including
AEC: fixed vocabulary; abstract properties of 'elementary' submodel
- 2 'Galois' types

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ABSTRACT ELEMENTARY CLASSES defined

Definition

A class of L -structures, $(\mathbf{K}, \prec_{\mathbf{K}})$, is said to be an *abstract elementary class*: AEC if both \mathbf{K} and the binary relation $\prec_{\mathbf{K}}$ are closed under isomorphism and satisfy the following conditions.

- **A1.** If $M \prec_{\mathbf{K}} N$ then $M \subseteq N$.
- **A2.** $\prec_{\mathbf{K}}$ is a partial order on \mathbf{K} .
- **A3.** If $\langle A_i : i < \delta \rangle$ is $\prec_{\mathbf{K}}$ -increasing chain:
 - 1 $\bigcup_{i < \delta} A_i \in \mathbf{K}$;
 - 2 for each $j < \delta$, $A_j \prec_{\mathbf{K}} \bigcup_{i < \delta} A_i$
 - 3 if each $A_i \prec_{\mathbf{K}} M \in \mathbf{K}$ then $\bigcup_{i < \delta} A_i \prec_{\mathbf{K}} M$.

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- **A4.** If $A, B, C \in \mathbf{K}$, $A \prec_{\mathbf{K}} C$, $B \prec_{\mathbf{K}} C$ and $A \subseteq B$ then $A \prec_{\mathbf{K}} B$.
- **A5.** There is a Löwenheim-Skolem number $\text{LS}(\mathbf{K})$ such that if $A \subseteq B \in \mathbf{K}$ there is a $A' \in \mathbf{K}$ with $A \subseteq A' \prec_{\mathbf{K}} B$ and $|A'| < \text{LS}(\mathbf{K}) + |A|$.

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When do \aleph_1 -categorical theories (AEC) have a bounded size of models?

In the mid-70's Shelah answered my question as to whether a sentence of $L_{\omega_1, \omega}(Q)$ could be *categorical in the philosophers sense*, have only one model. In different papers he proved in different ways that \aleph_1 -categorical such sentence has a model in \aleph_2 .

Two questions: Under what conditions does a sentence of $L_{\omega_1, \omega}$ (with LN \aleph_0) that is \aleph_1 -categorical have models in \aleph_2 , 2^{\aleph_0} , or even larger?

More generally, *Grossberg's question* Must an aec categorical in λ with $I(\mathbf{K}, \lambda^+) < 2^{\lambda^+}$ have a model in λ^{++} ?

We already know the second is independent of ZFC. As follows.

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One Completely General Result

WGCH(λ): $2^\lambda < 2^{\lambda^+}$

Let \mathbf{K} be an abstract elementary class (AEC).

Theorem

[WGCH (λ)] Suppose $\lambda \geq \text{LS}(\mathbf{K})$ and \mathbf{K} is λ -categorical. If amalgamation fails in λ there are 2^{λ^+} models in \mathbf{K} of cardinality $\kappa = \lambda^+$.

Uses $[\hat{\Theta}_{\lambda^+}(S)]$ (weak diamond) for many S .

λ -categoricity plays a fundamental role.

No really specific model theoretic hypothesis but a **set-theoretic** one?

Definitely not provable in ZFC for AEC (even for $L_{\omega_1, \omega}(Q_1)$ maybe for $L_{\omega_1, \omega}$).

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THE counterexample: Φ

\mathbf{K} is the models in a vocabulary with two unary relations P , Q and two binary relations E , R which satisfy:

For any model $M \in \mathbf{K}$,

- 1 P and Q partition M .
- 2 E is an equivalence relation on Q .
- 3 P and each equivalence class of E is denumerably infinite.
- 4 R is a relation on $P \times Q$ so that each element of Q codes a subset of P .
- 5 R induces the independence property on $P \cup Q$.

This class is axiomatized by a sentence Φ in $L_{\omega_1, \omega}(Q_1)$.

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Properties of models of Φ

amalgamation, ω -stability, and arbitrarily large models FAIL

Under MA Φ is \aleph_1 -categorical but is not ω -stable, fails amalgamation in \aleph_0 , and has no models beyond the continuum.

Shelah suggested a variant, axiomatized in $L_{\omega_1, \omega}$ with the same properties in \aleph_0 . Laskowski showed that sentence had at least 2^{\aleph_0} models in \aleph_1 .

The AEC attached to Φ ([She, 6.3]) is the \mathbf{K}_3 .

$M, N \in \mathbf{K}$, $M \leq_{\mathbf{K}_3} N$ if $M \subseteq N$ and $[a]^M = [b]^N$.

[She87, She83, She], [Bal09, §17]

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The class of models

\mathbf{K}_T is the class of atomic models of the countable first order theory T .

Definition

The atomic class \mathbf{K}_T is **extendible** if there is a pair $M \preceq N$ of countable, atomic models, with $N \neq M$.

Equivalently, \mathbf{K}_T is extendible if and only if there is an uncountable, atomic model of T .

We assume throughout that \mathbf{K}_T is extendible. We work in the monster model of T , which is usually not atomic.

A complete sentence of has such a representation by Chang's trick: Expanding the language by introducing predicates for countable conjunctions (theory T^*) and making them correct by omitting types.

The $L_{\omega_1, \omega}$ -class is the reducts of atomic models of T^* .

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ω -stability in Atomic Classes

Definitions

$p \in S_{at}(A)$ if $a \models p$ implies Aa is atomic.

\mathbf{K} is ω -stable if for every countable model M , $S_{at}(M)$ is countable.

But, there may be $A \subseteq M$, $p \in S_{at}(A)$ that has no extension to $S_{at}(M)$.

Note also ϕ may be κ -stable in this sense while the associated AEC is not κ -stable (for Galois types) [BK09].

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First order absoluteness

Theorem (Morley-Baldwin-Lachlan)

A first order theory T in a countable language is \aleph_1 categorical iff

- 1) T has no 2-cardinal models and
- 2) T is ω -stable.

1) is arithmetic and 2) is Π_1^1 .

Fact

A first order theory T in a countable language whose class of atomic models satisfies 1) and 2) is \aleph_1 -categorical.

I emphasize Morley because it is his direction:
' \aleph_1 -categorical implies ω -stable' that is problematic for $L_{\omega_1, \omega}$.

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Getting ω -stability: I

Theorem: Keisler/Shelah

$\mathbf{K} = \text{mod}(\psi)$, $\psi \in L_{\omega_1, \omega}$

- 1 (Keisler) ZFC If some uncountable model in \mathbf{K} realizes uncountably many types (in a countable fragment) over \emptyset then \mathbf{K} has 2^{\aleph_1} models in \aleph_1 .
- 2 (Shelah) ($2^{\aleph_0} < 2^{\aleph_1}$) If \mathbf{K} has $< 2^{\aleph_1}$ models of cardinality \aleph_1 , then \mathbf{K} is ω -stable.

Two uses of WCH

- A WCH implies AP in \aleph_0 . Thus, if \mathbf{K} is not ω -stable there is a countable model M and an uncountable $N \in \mathbf{K}$ which realizes uncountably many types over M .
- B By Keisler, $\text{Th}_M(M)$ has 2^{\aleph_1} models. From WCH we conclude $\text{Th}(M)$ has 2^{\aleph_1} models.

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Getting ω -stability: II

Morley's original *first order* proof using Hanf number for omitting types, EM-models, and the Skolem hull gives:

Theorem

If a complete first order theory has arbitrarily large models and is \aleph_1 -categorical then it is ω -stable.

More generally,

Theorem

An \aleph_1 -categorical atomic class \mathbf{K} that has arbitrarily large models and amalgamation in \aleph_0 is ω -stable.

Tradeoff: \beth_{ω_1} for weak CH

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A new notion of closure

Definition

An atomic tuple \mathbf{c} is in the pseudo-algebraic closure of the finite, atomic set B ($\mathbf{c} \in \text{pcl}(B)$) if for every atomic model M such that $B \subseteq M$, and $M\mathbf{c}$ is atomic, $\mathbf{c} \subseteq M$.

When this occurs, and \mathbf{b} is any enumeration of B and $p(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y})$ is the complete type of $\mathbf{c}\mathbf{b}$, we say that $p(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{b})$ is *pseudo-algebraic*.

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Example I

Our notion, pcl of *algebraic* differs from the classical first-order notion of algebraic as the following examples show:

Example

Suppose that an atomic model M consists of two sorts. The U -part is countable, but non-extendible (e.g., U infinite, and has a successor function S on it, in which every element has a unique predecessor). On the other sort, V is an infinite set with no structure (hence arbitrarily large atomic models). Then, an element $x_0 \in U$ is not algebraic over \emptyset in the normal sense but is in $\text{pcl}(\emptyset)$.

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Example II

Example

Let $L = A, B, \pi, S$ and T say that A and B partition the universe with B infinite, $\pi : A \rightarrow B$ is a total surjective function and S is a successor function on A such that every π -fiber is the union of S -components. K_T is the class of $M \models T$ such that every π -fiber contains exactly one S -component. Now choose elements $a, b \in M$ for such an M such that $a \in A$ and $b \in B$ and $\pi(a) = b$. Clearly, a is not algebraic over b in the classical sense, but $a \in \text{pcl}(b)$.

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Definability of pseudo-algebraic closure

Strong ω -homogeneity of the monster model of T yields:

Fact

If $p(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y})$ is the complete type of \mathbf{cb} , then

$$\mathbf{c} \in \text{pcl}(\mathbf{b}) \quad \text{if and only if} \quad \mathbf{c}' \in \text{pcl}(\mathbf{b}')$$

for any $\mathbf{c}'\mathbf{b}'$ realizing $p(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y})$.

In particular, the truth of $c \in \text{pcl}(\mathbf{b})$ does not depend on an ambient atomic model.

Further, since a model which atomic over the empty set is also atomic over any finite subset, moving M to N we have:

Fact

If $\mathbf{c} \notin \text{pcl}(B)$, witnessed by M then for every countable, atomic $N \supset B$, there is a realization \mathbf{c}' of $p(\mathbf{x}, B)$ such that $\mathbf{c}' \notin N$.

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Pseudo-minimal sets

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Definition

- 1 A possibly incomplete type q over \mathbf{b} is *pseudominimal* if for any finite, $\mathbf{b}^* \supseteq \mathbf{b}$, $\mathbf{a} \models q$, and \mathbf{c} such that $\mathbf{b}^* \mathbf{c} \mathbf{a}$ is atomic, if $\mathbf{c} \subset \text{pcl}(\mathbf{b}^* \mathbf{a})$, and $\mathbf{c} \notin \text{pcl}(\mathbf{b}^*)$, then $\mathbf{a} \in \text{pcl}(\mathbf{b}^* \mathbf{c})$.
- 2 M is pseudominimal if $x = x$ is pseudominimal in M .

I.e, pcl satisfies exchange (and more); we have a geometry.

'Density'

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Definition

K_T satisfies '*density*' of pseudominimal types if for every atomic \mathbf{e} and atomic type $p(\mathbf{e}, \mathbf{x})$ there is a \mathbf{b} with $\mathbf{e}\mathbf{b}$ atomic and $q(\mathbf{e}, \mathbf{b}, \mathbf{x})$ extending p such that q is pseudominimal.

So density fails if there is a single type $p(\mathbf{e}, \mathbf{x})$ over which exchange fails.

Method: 'Consistency implies Truth':I

[BL16]

Let ϕ be a τ -sentence in $L_{\omega_1, \omega}(Q)$ such that it is consistent that ϕ has a model.

Let A be the countable ω -model of set theory, containing ϕ , that thinks ϕ has an uncountable model.

Construct B , an uncountable model of set theory, which is an elementary extension of A , such that B is correct about uncountability. Then the model of ϕ in B is actually an uncountable model of ϕ .

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Main Theorem

Goal Theorem [BLS16]

If \mathcal{K}_T fails 'density of pseudominimal types' then \mathcal{K}_T has 2^{\aleph_1} models of cardinality \aleph_1 .

We prove this in two steps

- 1 Force to construct a model (M, E) of set theory in which a model of T codes model theoretic and combinatorial information sufficient to guarantee the non-isomorphism of its image in the different ultralimits.
- 2 Apply Skolem ultralimits of the models of set theory from 1) to construct 2^{\aleph_1} atomic models of T with cardinality \aleph_1 in V .

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Getting models in 2^{\aleph_0} : Method

In the novel *White Light* [Ruc80], Rudy Rucker proposes a metaphor for the continuum hypothesis. One can reach \aleph_1 by a laborious climb up the side of Mt. ON, pausing at ϵ_0 .

Or one can take

Cantor's elevator An instantaneous trip up a shaft at the center of the mountain.

For atomic models we take the slightly slower

Shelah's elevator The elevator is a bit slower but has only countably many floors. After building finitely many rooms at each step we reach an object of cardinality 2^{\aleph_0} .

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Asymptotic similarity

Definition

Fix an L -structure M . A subset of M , indexed by $\{a_\eta : \eta \in 2^\omega\}$, is *asymptotically similar* if, for every k -ary L -formula θ , there is an integer N_θ such that for every $\ell \geq N_\theta$,

$$M \models \theta(a_{\eta_0}, \dots, a_{\eta_{k-1}}) \leftrightarrow \theta(a_{\tau_0}, \dots, a_{\tau_{k-1}})$$

whenever $(\eta_0, \dots, \eta_{k-1})$ and $(\tau_0, \dots, \tau_{k-1})$ satisfy: $\eta_i \upharpoonright \ell = \tau_i \upharpoonright \ell$ and the $\eta_i \upharpoonright \ell$ are distinct.

Remark

Asymptotic similarity is a type of indiscernibility; the indiscernibility is only formula by formula. Let $M = (2^\omega, \{U_i : i < \omega\})$ where the U_i are independent unary predicates. The entire universe is asymptotically similar, although no two elements have the same 1-type.

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Getting models in 2^{\aleph_0}

Theorem [BL19]

If a countable first order theory T has an atomic pseudominimal model M of cardinality \aleph_1 then there is an atomic pseudominimal model N of T which contains a set of *asymptotically similar* elements with cardinality 2^{\aleph_0} .

Equivalently, if the models of a complete sentence Φ in $L_{\omega_1, \omega}$ are pseudominimal and Φ has an uncountable model, it has a model in the continuum.

A simple application of the method gives Borel models in the continuum of any theory with trivial definable closure.

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Goal Theorem [BLS24]

Theorem

If an atomic class At is \aleph_1 -categorical and has a model of size $(2^{\aleph_0})^+$ then At is ω -stable.

Old and new definitions:

Definition

- 1 A type $p \in S_{\text{at}}(M)$ splits over $F \subseteq M$ if there are tuples $\mathbf{b}, \mathbf{b}' \subseteq M$ and a formula $\phi(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y})$ such that $\text{tp}(\mathbf{b}/F) = \text{tp}(\mathbf{b}'/F)$, but $\phi(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{b}) \wedge \neg\phi(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{b}') \in p$.
- 2 We call $p \in S_{\text{at}}(M)$ constrained if p does not split over some finite $F \subseteq M$ and unconstrained if p splits over every finite subset of M .
- 3 $C_M := \{p \in S_{\text{at}}(M) : p \text{ is constrained}\}$, for an atomic model M , . We say At has **only constrained types** if $S_{\text{at}}(N) = C_N$ for every atomic model N .

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Basic Properties

Lemma

- 1 If M is a countable atomic model and $p \in S_{at}(M)$ then p is realized in an atomic extension of M .
- 2 For any atomic models $M \preceq N$ and finite $A \subseteq M$, then for any $q \in S_{at}(N)$ that does not split over A , the restriction $q \upharpoonright M$ does not split over A ; and any $p \in S_{at}(M)$ that does not split over A has a unique non-splitting extension $q \in S_{at}(N)$.
- 3 If some atomic N has an unconstrained $p \in S_{at}(N)$, then for every countable $A \subseteq N$, there is a countable $M \preceq N$ with $A \subseteq M$ for which the restriction $p \upharpoonright M$ is unconstrained.
- 4 At has only constrained types if and only if $S_{at}(M) = C_M$ for every/some countable atomic model M .

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Limit types

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Definition

For $|N| = \aleph_1$, a type $p \in S_{at}(N)$ is a limit type if the restriction $p \upharpoonright M$ is realized in N for every countable $M \preceq N$.

Trivially, for every N , every type in $S_{at}(N)$ realized in N is a limit type. Since we allow $M = N$ in the definition of a limit type, if M is countable, then the only limit types in $S_{at}(M)$ are those realized in M .

'Consistency implies Truth': II

Note that there are no additional assumptions on At , other than the existence of an uncountable, atomic model.

KEY Theorem:

If At admits an uncountable, atomic model, then there is some $N \in At$ with $|N| = \aleph_1$ for which every limit type in $S_{at}(N)$ is constrained.

So if \aleph_1 -categorical: limit = constrained on the model in \aleph_1 .

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Linking a largish model with ω -stability

Theorem

If an atomic class At is \aleph_1 -categorical and has a model of size $(2^{\aleph_0})^+$ with a relatively \aleph_1 -saturated submodel of cardinality continuum, then $S_{\text{At}}(M)$ has only constrained types

Pf. Choose a c realizing an unconstrained type and use relative \aleph_1 -saturation to build an unconstrained limit type. This contra the KEY.

Similarly argue that if there is a unconstrained type over a countable model then there is a model in \aleph_1 with an unconstrained limit type. Apply KEY again [BLS24, Theorem 2.4.4]

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Relatively saturated models exist!

Proof.

Let M^{**} be an atomic model of size $(2^{\aleph_0})^+$. We construct a *relatively* \aleph_1 -saturated elementary substructure $M^* \preceq M^{**}$ of size 2^{\aleph_0} as the union of a continuous chain $(N_\alpha : \alpha \in \omega_1)$ of elementary substructures of M^{**} , each of size 2^{\aleph_0} , where, for each $\alpha < \omega_1$ and each of the 2^{\aleph_0} countable $M \preceq N_\alpha$, $N_{\alpha+1}$ realizes each of the at most 2^{\aleph_0} $p \in S(M)$ that is realized in M^{**} . □

Note there is no reason to think any of these models are even \aleph_1 -saturated, until we conclude ω -stability. [BLS24, Theorem 2.4.5]

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Covers of Algebraic Varieties

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$$\text{exp} : (\mathcal{C}, +) \rightarrow (\mathcal{C}, \times).$$

$$j : H \rightarrow \mathcal{C}$$

$$p : \mathcal{C} \rightarrow S(\mathcal{C}).$$

Zilber conjecture that the most complicated (Shimura Varieties) were (almost) quasiminimal excellent and so uncountably categorical. The many partial results/methods are represented in the next chart.

Approaches to categoricity of covers

	topic	paper	method/context	sect
1	Complex exponentiation	[Zil05]	quasiminimality	§7
2	cov mult group	[Zil06]	quasiminimality	§7
3		[BZ11]	quasiminimality	
4	j -function	[Har14]	background	§7
5	Modular/Shimura Curves	[DH17]	quasiminimality	§7
6	Modular/Shimura Curves	[DZ22]	quasiminimality	
7	Abelian Varieties	[BGH14]	finite Morley rank groups	§7
8	Abelian Varieties	[BHP20]	fmr & notop	§7
9	Shimura <i>varieties</i>	[Ete22]	notop	§7
10	Smooth varieties	[Zil22]	o-quasiminimality	§7

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Almost quasiminimal excellence: I

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Definition (Quasiminimal structure)

A structure M is *quasiminimal* if every first order ($L_{\omega_1, \omega}$) definable subset of M is countable or cocountable. Algebraic closure is generalized by saying $b \in \text{acl}'(X)$ if there is a first order formula with **countably many** solutions over X which is satisfied by b .

Almost quasiminimal excellence: II

Definition (Quasiminimal excellent geometry)

Let \mathbf{K} be a class of L -structures such that $M \in \mathbf{K}$ admits a closure relation cl_M mapping $X \subseteq M$ to $\text{cl}_M(X) \subseteq M$ that satisfies the following properties.

1 Basic Conditions

- 1 Each cl_M defines a pregeometry on M .
- 2 For each $X \subseteq M$, $\text{cl}_M(X) \in \mathbf{K}$.
- 3 countable closure property (ccp): If $|X| \leq \aleph_0$ then $|\text{cl}(X)| \leq \aleph_0$.

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4 Homogeneity

- 1 A class \mathbf{K} of models has \aleph_0 -**homogeneity over** \emptyset (Definition 5) if the models of \mathbf{K} are pairwise qf-back and forth equivalent
- 2 A class \mathbf{K} of models has \aleph_0 -**homogeneity over models** if for any $G \in \mathbf{K}$ with G empty or a countable member of \mathbf{K} , any H, H' with $G \leq H, G \leq H'$, H is qf-back and forth equivalent with H' over G .
- 5 \mathbf{K} is an *almost quasiminimal excellent geometry* if the universe of any model $H \in \mathbf{K}$ is in $\text{cl}(X)$ for any maximal cl -independent set $X \subseteq H$.
- 6 We call a class which satisfies these conditions an *almost quasiminimal excellent geometry* [BHH⁺14].

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The **almost** is essential because the structures are two-sorted.
But in the quasi-minimal covers: Galois type are quantifier-free
first order types (in a suitably Morleyized theory).

Arbitrarily large models, bounded categoricity

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Galois may properly refine Syntactic

Theorem Hart-Shelah/B-Kolesnikov

For each $2 \leq k < \omega$ there is an $L_{\omega_1, \omega}$ -sentence ϕ_k such that:

- 1 ϕ_k is categorical in μ if $\mu \leq \aleph_{k-2}$;
- 2 ϕ_k is not \aleph_{k-2} -Galois stable;
- 3 ϕ_k is not categorical in any μ with $\mu > \aleph_{k-2}$;
- 4 ϕ_k has the disjoint amalgamation property in every κ ;
- 5 For $k > 2$,
 - 1 ϕ_k is (\aleph_0, \aleph_{k-3}) -tame; indeed, syntactic first-order types determine Galois types over models of cardinality at most \aleph_{k-3} ;
 - 2 ϕ_k is \aleph_m -Galois stable for $m \leq k - 3$;
 - 3 ϕ_k is not $(\aleph_{k-3}, \aleph_{k-2})$ -tame.

[Bal09, BK09] refining an example of [HS90].

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1 ϕ_2 is \aleph_0 -categorical but not ω -Galois stable nor categorical in any power. (ω -synactic stability unclear in paper.)

2 ϕ_3 is categorial in \aleph_1, \aleph_2 and never again:
In \aleph_0 , syntactic = Galois and ω -stable.

Thus, Morley's result that ω -stable implies κ -stable for all κ is gone (for Galois and likely? syntactic).

Questions/Problems

Let ϕ be a complete sentence of $L_{\omega_1, \omega}$.

- 1 Give a definition of a 'complete' that eliminates uninformative counterexamples [BKS16, BHK13].
- 2 Do the BLS results on $L_{\omega_1, \omega}$ generalize at all? E.g. to analytic classes? [BL16]
- 3 If ϕ characterizes $\kappa > \aleph_0$, must ϕ have 2^κ models in κ ?
- 4 For $\kappa < \aleph_{\omega_1}$, describe an explicit sentence that characterizes κ . [BKL17]

Theorem

[BS24] *There is a complete sentence ϕ of $L_{\omega_1, \omega}$ such that ϕ has maximal models in a set of cardinals λ that is cofinal in the first measurable μ while ϕ has no maximal models in any $\chi \geq \mu$.*

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