

SHEFFER POLYNOMIALS IN PATH ENUMERATION

by

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1. Introduction.

A lattice path has unit step vectors, say, if its steps go only in the direction of the axis, one unit each. In other words: if the path has reached the point $(n_1, \dots, n_{r+1})^T \in \mathbb{N}_0^{r+1}$, the next point is obtained by adding 1 to exactly one component n_i ($1 \leq i \leq r+1$). For $m \in \mathbb{N}_0$ and $\underline{n} \in \mathbb{N}_0^r$ denote by $D(\underline{n}, m)$ the number of paths, which start at the origin,

have only unit step vectors,

stay in a certain specified region of \mathbb{N}_0^{r+1} , and

reach the point $(\underline{n}, m) \in \mathbb{N}_0^{r+1}$.

The first kind of regions we look at are sets of points (i, j) with $j > v(i)$, where v is a given boundary function. We make the following obvious restrictions for the boundary v :

v is integer valued

$v(0) = -1$ (each path starts at the origin)

$v(\underline{n}) \geq v(\underline{m}) \quad \forall \underline{n} \geq \underline{m}$ (no path can go down).

Here $\underline{n} \geq \underline{m}$ means $n_i \geq m_i$ for all $i = 1, \dots, r$. The following recursion and side conditions uniquely determine the numbers $D(\underline{n}, m)$ for the one-sided boundary case: ($\underline{e}_k = k^{\text{th}}$ -unit vector in \mathbb{Z}^r)

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$$(1) \quad D(\underline{n}, m) = \begin{cases} D(\underline{n}, m-1) + \sum_{k=1}^r D(\underline{n}-\underline{e}_k, m) & \forall m > v(\underline{n}), \underline{n} > \underline{0} \\ 0 & \forall m \leq v(\underline{n}), \underline{n} \geq \underline{0} \end{cases}$$

and

$$(2) \quad D(\underline{n}, m) = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } \underline{n} = \underline{0} \text{ and } m \in \mathbb{N}_0 \\ 0 & \forall \underline{n} \in \mathbb{Z}^r \setminus \mathbb{N}_0^r, m \in \mathbb{Z} \end{cases}$$

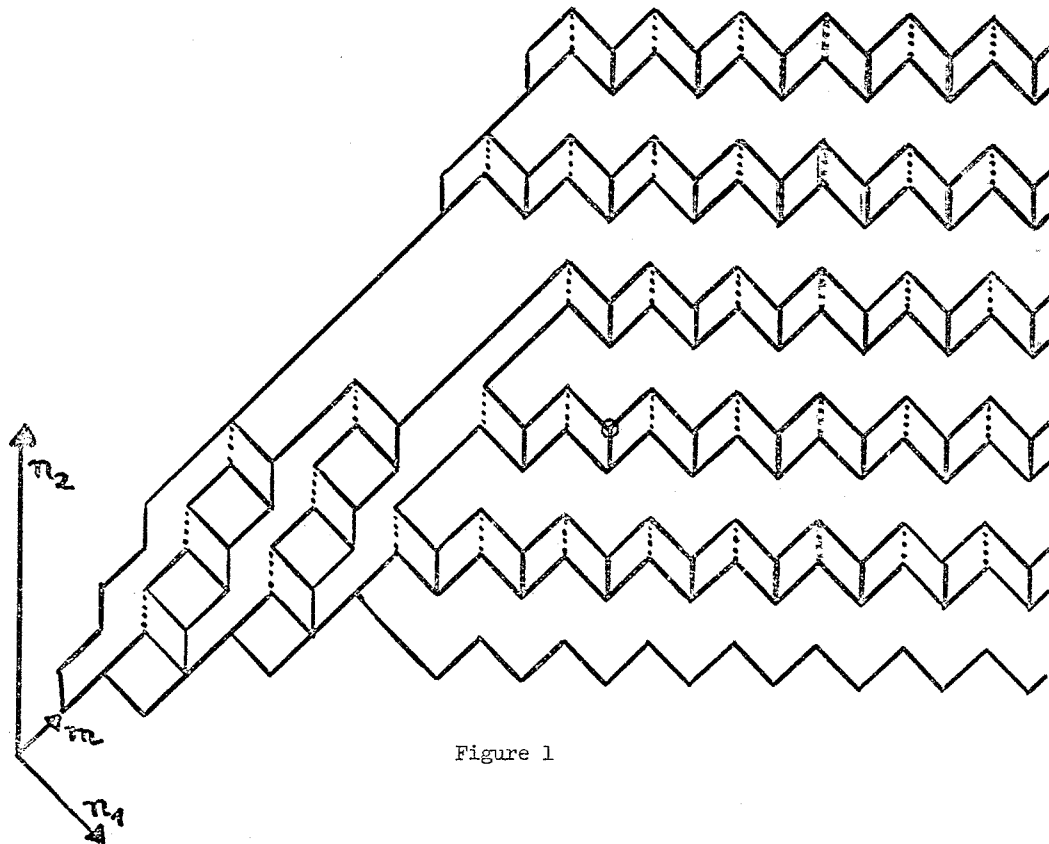


Figure 1

Example 1: Figure 1 shows the region

$$\{(i_1, i_2, j) \mid j > v(i_1, i_2)\} \text{ in } \mathbb{N}_0^3, \text{ with}$$

$$v(i_1, i_2) = \begin{cases} 2i_1 + i_2 - 1 & \forall (0,0) \leq (i_1, i_2) \leq (3,3) \\ i_1 + 2i_2 + 1 & \text{else.} \end{cases}$$

For $n_2 = 0$ and $n_2 = 1$ the computation of $D(n_1, n_2, m)$ is demonstrated in the next two tables.

8	1	7	25	55	97	139	139	8	8	60	220	440	537	0	
7	1	6	18	30	42	42	0	7	7	45	135	165	0		
6	1	5	12	12	12	0		6	6	32	72	0			
5	1	4	7	0	0			5	5	21	28				
4	1	3	3					4	4	12	0				
3	1	2	0					3	3	5					
2	1	1						2	2	0					
1	1	0						1	1						
0	1							0	0						
m/n_1	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	m/n_1	0	1	2	3	4	5	
	$n_2 = 0$								$n_2 = 1$						

General results about path enumeration can be found in T.V. Narayana's book [6]. The two sided boundary case (see section 5) is solved with other methods by B. R. Handa and S.G. Mohanty [2].

2. Affine Boundaries.

From the recursion (1) and side conditions (2) follows the existence of a multi-indexed sequence of real polynomials $(d_{\underline{n}})_{\underline{n} \in \mathbb{N}_0^r}$ with the properties:

$$d_{\underline{n}}(m) = D(\underline{n}, m) \quad \forall m \geq v(\underline{n}), \quad \underline{n} > 0$$

$$d_{\underline{0}}(x) = 1 \quad \forall x \in \mathbb{R}$$

$$(3) \quad d_{\underline{n}}(x) - d_{\underline{n}}(x-1) = \sum_{k=1}^r d_{\underline{n}-\underline{e}_k}(x) \quad \forall x \in \mathbb{R}.$$

Define $d_{\underline{n}}(x) \equiv 0$ if $\underline{n} \in \mathbb{Z}^r \setminus \mathbb{N}_0^r$. $(d_{\underline{n}})$ is a multi-indexed analogy of a Sheffer sequence. The theory of Sheffer sequences is highly developed in the „Finite Operator Calculus“ [3]. An abstract of the definitions and theorems needed for two dimensional path counting can be found in [8], where we refer to in the following. We call a sequence of polynomials $(s_{\underline{n}})_{\underline{n} \in \mathbb{N}_0^r}$ a Sheffer r -sequence for the delta operator Q [8, section 3.1], iff $s_{\underline{0}}(x) = c \neq 0 \quad \forall x \in \mathbb{R}$ and

$$(4) \quad Q s_{\underline{n}} = \sum_{k=1}^r s_{\underline{n}-\underline{e}_k} \quad \forall \underline{n} \in \mathbb{N}_0^r.$$

$$(s_{\underline{n}}) \text{ has roots in } \nu, \text{ say, iff } s_{\underline{n}}(\nu(\underline{n})) = \delta_{\underline{0}, \underline{n}} := \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } \underline{n} = \underline{0} \\ 0 & \text{else} \end{cases},$$

where ν is any function from \mathbb{N}_0^r onto \mathbb{R} (not necessary a boundary).

The Sheffer r -sequence $(d_{\underline{n}})$ corresponds to the backwards difference delta operator ∇ : $\nabla d_{\underline{n}}(x) := d_{\underline{n}}(x) - d_{\underline{n}}(x-1)$, and (4) holds because of (3).

In generalization of [8, (4.1)], we obtain: if ν is any affine function, $\nu(i) = \underline{a}^T i + b$ ($\underline{a} \in \mathbb{R}^r$, $b \in \mathbb{R}$), then the Sheffer r -sequence for ∇ with roots in ν is given by

$$(5) \quad \frac{x - \underline{a}^T \underline{n} + b}{x - b} \binom{x - b + \bar{n} - 1}{\underline{n}} = \frac{x - \underline{a}^T \underline{n} - b}{x - b + \bar{n}} \binom{x - b + \bar{n}}{\underline{n}}$$

For all $x \in \mathbb{R}$ and $\underline{n} \in \mathbb{N}_0^r$, where $\bar{n} := \sum_{k=1}^r n_k$ and

$$(6) \quad \binom{y}{\underline{n}} := \frac{(y - \underline{n} + 1) \cdot (y - \underline{n} + 2) \cdot \dots \cdot y}{n_1! \cdot \dots \cdot n_r!}, \quad \binom{y}{\underline{0}} = 1.$$

For $\underline{a} \in \mathbb{N}_0^r$ and $b = -1$, ν is a boundary, and (5) is the number $D(\underline{n}, m)$ of paths, staying strictly over the hyperplane $\{(\underline{n}, m) \in \mathbb{Z}^{r+1} \mid m = \underline{a}^T \underline{n} - 1\}$. See [5] for another proof.

3. Piecewise Affine Boundaries.

Analogously to lemma 4.1 in [8], the following main representation formula holds:

Lemma 1: If $(r_{\underline{n}})$ is a Sheffer r -sequence for \mathcal{Q} , then

$$r_{\underline{n}}(x) = \sum_{\underline{j}=\underline{0}}^{\underline{n}} r_{\underline{j}}(\nu(\underline{j})) s_{\underline{j}, \underline{n}-\underline{j}}(x) \quad \forall x \in \mathbb{R},$$

where $(s_{\underline{j}, \underline{n}})_{\underline{n} \in \mathbb{N}_0^r}$ is for each $\underline{j} \in \mathbb{N}_0^r$ the Sheffer r -sequence for \mathcal{Q} with roots in $\nu_{\underline{j}}(\underline{i}) := \nu(\underline{i} + \underline{j})$.

This lemma and formula (5) yield a theorem which can be used to compute Sheffer r -sequences for ∇ in a recursive way:

Theorem 1: Let $(r_{\underline{n}})$ be the Sheffer r -sequence for ∇ with roots in

$$v(\underline{i}) := \begin{cases} \rho(\underline{i}) & \forall \underline{i} \in L \\ \underline{c}^T \underline{i} + d & \forall \underline{i} \in \mathbb{N}_0^r \setminus L, \end{cases}$$

where ρ is any function from \mathbb{N}_0^r onto \mathbb{R} , $\underline{c} \in \mathbb{N}_0^r$, $d \in \mathbb{R}$, and L is a set in \mathbb{N}_0^r with the property: if $\underline{i} \in L$ and $0 \leq \underline{j} \leq \underline{i}$, then $\underline{j} \in L$.

If the numbers $r_{\underline{i}}(\underline{c}^T \underline{i} + d)$ are known for all \underline{i} in L , then $r_{\underline{n}}(x)$ can be computed from

$$(7) \quad r_{\underline{n}}(x) = \sum_{\underline{i} \in L} r_{\underline{i}}(\underline{c}^T \underline{i} + d) \frac{x - \underline{c}^T \underline{n} - d}{x - \underline{c}^T \underline{i} - d} \binom{x - d - \underline{c}^T \underline{i} + \bar{n} - \bar{i} - 1}{\underline{n} - \underline{c}}$$

for all $x \in \mathbb{R}$, $\underline{n} \in \mathbb{N}_0^r$ (see (6) for the symbols \bar{n} and $\binom{\bar{y}}{\underline{n}}$).

If $\rho(\underline{i}) = \underline{a}^T \underline{i} + b$ in the theorem above ($\underline{a} \in \mathbb{R}^r$, $b \in \mathbb{R}$), we obtain from (5) and (7):

$$(8) \quad r_{\underline{n}}(x) = \sum_{\underline{i} \in L} \frac{(\underline{c} - \underline{a})^T \underline{i} + d - b}{\underline{c}^T \underline{i} + d - b} \binom{\underline{c}^T \underline{i} + d - b + \bar{i} - 1}{\underline{i}} \frac{x - \underline{c}^T \underline{n} - d}{x - \underline{c}^T \underline{i} - d} \binom{x - \underline{c}^T \underline{i} - d + \bar{n} - \bar{i} - 1}{\underline{n} - \underline{i}}$$

Example 2: In continuation of example 1 we compute $D(4,2,10) = d_{4,2}(10)$.

We find $\underline{a}^T = (2,1)$, $b = -1$, $\underline{c}^T = (1,2)$, $d = 1$ and

$L = \{(i_1, i_2) \in \mathbb{N}_0^2: 0 \leq i_1 \leq 3, 0 \leq i_2 \leq 3\}$. Hence, (8) yields

$$D(4,2,10) = \sum_{i_1=0}^3 \sum_{i_2=0}^2 \frac{-i_1 + i_2 + 2}{i_1 + 2i_2 + 2} \binom{2i_1 + 3i_2 + 1}{i_1, i_2} \frac{1}{9 - i_1 - 2i_2} \binom{14 - 2i_1 - 3i_2}{4 - i_1, 2 - i_2}$$

= 11541 ((4,2,10) is the circled point in Figure 1).

Repeated use of theorem 1 yields an explicit expression for each piece-wise affine boundary function, if the affine pieces are defined on sets L_1, L_2, \dots with the property: if $\underline{i} \in L_m$, and $\underline{j} \leq \underline{i}$, then $\underline{j} \in \bigcup_{t=1}^m L_t$. But computing $r_{\underline{n}}(x)$ for an $\underline{n} \in L_m$ would need an $(m-1)$ -fold summation.

4. A General Ballot Problem.

In a ballot with $r+1$ candidates C_k , the candidate C_{r+1} , say, gets the relative majority of m votes. Given n_k votes for each candidate C_k ($k = 1, \dots, r$), what is the probability that candidate C_{r+1} had the relative majority during the whole counting of votes? For $r = 1$ we obtain the ordinary ballot problem. It is well known (and follows from (5) with $v(i) := i-1$) that in this case $D(n_1, m) = \frac{m-n_1+1}{m+1} \binom{n_1+m}{n_1}$ is the number of countings (= paths) in question. For the general case we have to compute the Sheffer r -sequence $(d_{\underline{n}})$ for ∇ with roots in $\tilde{v}(\underline{i}) := \max\{i_1, \dots, i_r\} - 1$. Beside $r=1$ an explicit solution is only known for $r = 2$ [4]. We will show another proof for this case, and a recursion defining identity for the general case. The expansion

$$(9) \quad d_{\underline{n}}(x) = \sum_{\underline{i} \geq \underline{0}} d_{\underline{i}}(-\bar{i}) \binom{x+\bar{n}}{\underline{n}-\underline{i}} \quad \forall x \in \mathbb{R}$$

holds for all Sheffer r -sequences for ∇ (choose $v(\underline{i}) = -\bar{i}$ in lemma 1). Decompose $\underline{n} \in \mathbb{N}_0^r$ into (n, \underline{m}) , where $n := n_1$ and $\underline{m} = (n_2, \dots, n_r)$. Write $d_{n, \underline{m}}$ instead of $d_{\underline{n}}$. Then (9) becomes

$$d_{n, \underline{m}}(x) = \sum_{i \geq 0} \sum_{\underline{j} \geq \underline{0}} d_{i, \underline{j}}(-i-\bar{j}) \binom{x+n+\bar{m}}{n-i, \underline{m}-\underline{j}}.$$

Using the abbreviation $\varphi(i, \underline{j}) := d_{i, \underline{j}}(-i-j)$, we obtain from

$$v(\underline{i}) = \max\{i_1, \dots, i_r\} - 1:$$

$$(10) \quad \delta_{0, n+\bar{m}} = \sum_{i \geq 0} \sum_{\underline{j} \geq 0} \varphi(i, \underline{j}) \binom{2n+\bar{m}-1}{n-i, \underline{m}-\underline{j}} \quad \forall n \geq \max\{m_1, \dots, m_{r-1}\}.$$

The boundary function v is invariant under permutations of its argument. Therefore, $d_{\underline{n}}$ is invariant under permutations of its index vector \underline{n} , and it is sufficient to have an algorithm for computing $d_{\underline{n}, \underline{m}}$ only for $n \geq \max\{m_1, \dots, m_{r-1}\}$. (10) defines a recursion of this kind. But (10) is unnecessary complicated. An elementary induction over \bar{m} shows that

$$(11) \quad \delta_{0, n+\bar{m}} = \sum_{i \geq 0} \varphi(i, \underline{m}) \binom{2n+\bar{m}-1}{n-i} \quad \forall n \geq \max\{m_1, \dots, m_{r-1}\}.$$

The numbers $\varphi(i, \underline{m})$ are not only invariant under permutations of the vector (i, \underline{m}) , they are in addition independent of zeros in this vector. Therefore, the numbers computed for an r -dimensional problem can be used in an $r+k$ -dimensional problem. For instance, $\varphi(i, k, j)$ equals $\varphi(i, 0, j, 0, 0, k)$. Some special values (from (11)):

$$\varphi(0, 0) = 1$$

$$\varphi(1, 0) = -\varphi(0, 0) \binom{2+0-1}{1} = -1$$

$$\varphi(n, 0) = -\binom{2n-1}{n} + \binom{2n-1}{n-1} - \sum_{i=2}^{n-1} \varphi(i, 0) \binom{2n-1}{n-1} = -\sum_{i=2}^{n-1} \varphi(i, 0) \binom{2n-1}{n-i}$$

$$= 0 \quad \forall n \geq 2 \quad (\text{by induction}).$$

The following formula for $\varphi(i,j) \forall i,j \in \mathbb{N}_1$ is due to G. Kreweras [4, p. 83]:

$$\varphi(i,j) = 2(-1)^{i+j} \frac{(i+j-1)!(2(i+j-1)-1)!}{i!j!(2i-1)!(2j-1)!}.$$

Kreweras proved his result by inserting $\varphi(i,j)$ into (9), showing that the polynomial has the right zeros and yields the right recursion. We can insert $\varphi(i,j)$ into (11) and have to prove that

$$(12) \quad 0 = \sum_{i=1}^n 2(-1)^{i+m} \frac{(i+m-1)!(2(i+m-1)-1)!}{i!m!(2i-1)!(2m-1)!} \binom{2n+m-1}{n-i} \quad \forall n \geq m \geq 2$$

(the case $m = 1$ is elementary).

The following proof of this identity is due to D. Stanton.

Using generalized hypergeometric functions, (12) can be written as

$$0 = {}_4F_3 \left[\begin{matrix} m+1, m, m+1/2, -n+1 \\ 2, 3/2, m+n+1 \end{matrix} \right] \quad \forall n \geq m \geq 2.$$

Transform this well-poised ${}_4F_3$ into the Saalschützian

$$(\langle x \rangle_n := x \cdot (x+1) \cdot \dots \cdot (x+n-1))$$

$$\frac{\langle n \rangle_{n-1}}{\langle m+n+1 \rangle_{n-1}} {}_4F_3 \left[\begin{matrix} -n+1, (m+1)/2, m/2+1, 3/2-m \\ 2, 3/2, 3/2-n \end{matrix} \right]$$

(See W.N. Bailey [1], formula 4.5.(1), p. 30).

With transformation 4.6.(2), p. 32 of [1] we obtain

$$\begin{aligned} & {}_4F_3 \left[\begin{matrix} (m+1)/2, m/2+1, 3/2-m, -n+1 \\ 3/2, 2, 3/2-n \end{matrix} \right] = \\ & = \frac{\langle 2-m \rangle_{n-1} \langle m+5/2 \rangle_{n-1}}{\langle 4 \rangle_{n-1} \langle 1/2 \rangle_{n-1}} {}_4F_3 \left[\begin{matrix} 5/2, m+2, 3/2-m, -n+1 \\ 3/2, m+5/2, 3+n \end{matrix} \right]. \end{aligned}$$

In the nominator of the r.h.s., $\langle 2-m \rangle_{n-1}$ equals zero for all $n \geq m \geq 2$.

5. The Two-Sided Case.

Now we introduce a second (upper) boundary function $\mu: \mathbb{N}_0^r \rightarrow \mathbb{N}_0$ and count paths in the region $\{(\underline{n}, m): v(\underline{n}) < m \leq \mu(\underline{n})\}$. Excluding trivial cases, we make the assumptions

$$\begin{aligned} \mu(\underline{n}) &\geq \mu(\underline{m}) \quad \forall \underline{n} \geq \underline{m} \quad \text{and} \\ v(\underline{n}) &< \max\{\mu(\underline{n}-\underline{e}_k) \mid k = 1, \dots, r\} \quad \forall \underline{n} > \underline{0}. \end{aligned}$$

The numbers $D(\underline{n}, m)$ are now determined by

$$D(\underline{n}, m) = \begin{cases} D(\underline{n}, m-1) + \sum_{k=1}^r D(\underline{n}-\underline{e}_k, m) & \forall v(\underline{n}) < m \leq \mu(\underline{n}), \underline{n} > \underline{0} \\ 0 & \forall m \leq v(\underline{n}) \text{ or } m > \mu(\underline{n}), \underline{n} \geq \underline{0}, \end{cases}$$

and

$$D(\underline{n}, m) = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } \underline{n} = \underline{0} \text{ and } 0 \leq m \leq \mu(\underline{0}), \\ 0 & \text{if } \forall \underline{n} \in \mathbb{Z}^r \setminus \mathbb{N}_0^r, m \in \mathbb{Z}. \end{cases}$$

A generalization of piecewise polynomial Sheffer functions (Sheffer splines) to r dimensions leads to the following analog of corollary III.1 in [7]:

$$(13) \quad \delta_{\underline{0}, \underline{n}} = \sum_{\underline{j} \geq \underline{0}} (-1)^{\bar{n}-\bar{j}} \binom{\mu(\underline{j})-v(\underline{n})}{\underline{n}-\underline{j}}_+ D(\underline{j}, \mu(\underline{j})),$$

where

$$\binom{x}{\underline{n}}_+ := \begin{cases} \binom{x}{\underline{n}} & \text{if } x \geq 0, \\ 0 & \text{else.} \end{cases}$$

(13) defines a recursion for $D(\underline{n}, \mu(\underline{n}))$. For any $v(\underline{n}) < m \leq \mu(\underline{n})$, $D(\underline{n}, m)$ can be found by changing μ into $\mu'(\underline{i}) := \min[m, \mu(\underline{i})]$.

Let $N(\underline{n})$ be the set of all indices \underline{m} with $\underline{0} \leq \underline{m} \leq \underline{n}$. N has $d := \prod_{k=1}^r (n_k + 1)$ elements. Arrange this d elements in such a way that $\underline{m}_1 = \underline{0}$, $\underline{m}_d = \underline{n}$ and $\underline{m}_i - \underline{m}_j \in \mathbb{Z}^r \setminus \mathbb{N}_0^r$ for all $1 \leq i < j \leq d$. Using this quasi order (introduced by B. R. Handa and S. G. Mohanty [2] in the path counting context) and Crámer's rule, (13) yields

$$(14) \quad D(\underline{n}, \mu(\underline{n})) = (-1)^{d-1-\bar{n}} \det \left(\begin{array}{c} \mu(\underline{m}_j) - \nu(\underline{m}_{i+1}) \\ \underline{m}_{i+1} - \underline{m}_j \end{array} \right)_{i,j=1,\dots,d-1}$$

For $r=1$, this result was obtained by G. Kreweras 1965 [4, 2.3.7], and by G.P. Steck 1969 [9]. For general r , (13) and (14) were first proved by B.R. Handa and S.G. Mohanty 1979 [2] with other methods.

Example 3 (from [2]). Suppose, (\underline{n}, m) is a fixed point in \mathbb{N}_0^{r+1} and we want to compute $D(\underline{n}, m)$. The following relations hold between our boundaries ν, μ , and the upper and lower restrictions a, b in [2]:

$$a(\underline{i}) = m-1-\nu(\underline{n}-\underline{i}), \text{ and}$$

$$b(\underline{i}) = m-\mu(\underline{n}-\underline{i}) \quad \forall 0 \leq i \leq n.$$

Consider the number of paths which reach $(\underline{n}, m) := (1, 2, 5)$ and cross only through points (i_1, i_2, j) where $j > \max\{3.7i_1, i_2^2-1\}$. Then $D(1, 2, 5)$ is determined by the upper boundary $\mu \equiv 5$ and the lower boundary ν with values

i_2	0	1	2
i_1	0	-1	-1
	1	3	3

(The other values of ν are not interesting for this example.) Now we bring $N = \{\underline{m} \in \mathbb{N}_0^2 \mid 0 \leq \underline{m} \leq (1, 2)\}$ in the order $\underline{m}_1 := (0, 0)$, $\underline{m}_2 := (0, 1)$, $\underline{m}_3 := (0, 2)$, $\underline{m}_4 := (1, 0)$, $\underline{m}_5 := (1, 1)$, $\underline{m}_6 := (1, 2)$ (see [2] for another ordering). From (14) we obtain

$$D(1,2,5) = (-1)^{6-1-3} \det \left(\binom{5-v(\underline{m}_{i+1})}{\underline{m}_{i+1}-\underline{m}_j} \right)_{+i, j=1, \dots, 5}$$

$$= \begin{vmatrix} \binom{6}{0,1} & 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ \binom{3}{0,2} & \binom{3}{0,1} & 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ \binom{2}{1,0} & 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 \\ \binom{2}{1,1} & \binom{2}{1,0} & 0 & \binom{2}{0,1} & 1 & 0 \\ \binom{2}{1,2} & \binom{2}{1,1} & \binom{2}{1,0} & \binom{2}{0,2} & \binom{2}{0,1} & 0 \end{vmatrix} = 44 .$$

Of course, there is a faster method for computing this little example: observe, that v can be written as

$$v(\underline{i}) = \begin{cases} 4i_1 - 1 & \forall 0 \leq \underline{i} \leq (1,1) \\ i_1 + 2 & \text{else .} \end{cases}$$

Now (8) yields

$$\begin{aligned} D(1,2,m) &= \sum_{\underline{i}=(0,0)}^{\binom{1,1}{1}} \frac{-3i_1+2+1}{i_1+2+1} \binom{\bar{i}+i_1+2}{\underline{i}} \frac{m-1-2}{m-i_1-2} \binom{3-\bar{i}+m-i_1-2-1}{1-i_1, 2-i_2} \\ &= \binom{2}{0,0} \frac{m-3}{m-2} \binom{m}{1,2} + \binom{3}{0,1} \frac{m-3}{m-2} \binom{m-1}{1,1} = \frac{1}{2}(m-1)(m-3)(m+6) . \end{aligned}$$

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