ON THE DIAMETER OF A GRAPH

J. W. Moon

A *graph* G_n consists of a set of n *nodes*, some pairs of which are joined by a single *edge*. The *degree* of a node x is the number d(x) of edges joining it to other nodes. A graph is *connected* if it cannot be represented as the union of disjoint smaller graphs. The *diameter* of a connected graph G_n is the least integer k such that any pair of nodes of G_n can be joined by a sequence of at most k edges, consecutive ones of which have a node in common.

In what follows, n and k denote integers satisfying the inequality $n - 1 > k > 2$. Let g(n, k) be the least integer r such that if $d(x) \geq r$ for every node x of a connected graph G_n, then the diameter of G_n is at most k. The object of this note is to prove the following result (here [x] denotes the largest integer not exceeding x).

THEOREM.

$$g(n, k) = \begin{cases} \left[\frac{n}{t}\right] & \text{if } k = 3t - 4, \\ \left[\frac{n-1}{t}\right] & \text{if } k = 3t - 3, \\ \left[\frac{n-2}{t}\right] & \text{if } k = 3t - 2. \end{cases}$$

Proof. Let us suppose that $k = 3t - 3$, where t is an integer greater than 1. We first show that

$$g(n, k) \leq \left[\frac{n-1}{t}\right].$$

To accomplish this we assume the contrary, namely, that there exists a connected graph G_n, the degree of each of whose nodes is at least $\left[\frac{n-1}{t}\right]$ and whose diameter exceeds k. From this we shall deduce a contradiction.

It is easy to see that by introducing additional edges, we can transform G_n into a graph G_n' of the form

$$\langle 1 \rangle — \langle a_1 \rangle — \langle a_2 \rangle — \cdots — \langle a_{3t-3} \rangle — \langle 1 \rangle$$

(here $\langle j \rangle$ denotes a (nonempty) complete subgraph with j nodes and $\binom{j}{2}$ edges, and two nodes in different indicated subgraphs are joined by an edge if and only if the two subgraphs are adjacent in our representation), in such a way that the diameter of G_n' is $k + 1$ and the degree of each node of G_n' is at least $\left[\frac{n-1}{t}\right]$.

Consider such a graph. Clearly, the degree of the first node on the left is a_1. The degree of any node in $\langle a_3 \rangle$ is $a_2 + (a_3 - 1) + a_4$. Continuing in this fashion,

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