

SIMILARITY ORBITS OF APPROXIMATELY FINITE C^* -ALGEBRAS

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Let H denote a Hilbert space, and let $B(H)$ denote the algebra of all bounded linear operators on H . In this note, an intrinsic characterization of those Banach subalgebras of $B(H)$ which are similar to approximately finite C^* -subalgebras of $B(H)$ is obtained.

This can be viewed as a noncommutative analog of theorems of Mackey ([9], p. 131) and Wermer ([10], Theorem 1). These authors gave conditions on certain families of idempotents $\{E_\alpha\}_{\alpha \in A}$ in $B(H)$ which insured the existence of an invertible T in $B(H)$ such that $TE_\alpha T^{-1}$ is a projection for all α in A . The main idea of the present paper involves finding conditions on certain families of matrix units $\{e(i, j)\}$ in $B(H)$ which guarantee the existence of an invertible T in $B(H)$ for which $\{Te(i, j)T^{-1}\}$ spans a C^* -algebra. This technique also has interesting applications to the orthogonalization of continuous representations of C^* -algebras (cf. [11]).

2. Preliminary definitions and lemmas. We begin by recalling the definition of an approximately finite C^* -algebra. A C^* -algebra \mathcal{C} is *approximately finite* if there is an increasing sequence of finite dimensional C^* -subalgebras of \mathcal{C} whose union is norm dense in \mathcal{C} . These algebras were defined and studied by Ola Bratteli in 1972 ([1]) as a generalization of the UHF algebras of Glimm ([7]), and have become popular objects of study among C^* -algebra enthusiasts (cf. [2], [3], [4], [5], and [8]).

The definition of approximate finiteness can be extended slightly to the context of Banach algebras as follows:

DEFINITION 2.1. A Banach algebra \mathcal{A} is *approximately finite* if there is an increasing sequence $\{\mathcal{A}_n\}_{n=1}^\infty$ of finite dimensional, semi-simple subalgebras such that $\mathcal{A} = (\bigcup_n \mathcal{A}_n)^-$, where $-$ denotes norm closure.

Note that the most natural definition of approximate finiteness for Banach algebras would not include the hypothesis of semisimplicity on the \mathcal{A}_n 's. It is included here primarily to simplify the statement of Theorem 3.1 below.

Consider then an approximately finite Banach algebra $\mathcal{A} = (\bigcup_n \mathcal{A}_n)^-$. Since each \mathcal{A}_n is by definition finite dimensional and semisimple, it has a Wedderburn decomposition

$$\mathcal{A}_n = \dot{+} \{ \mathcal{A}_k^{(n)} : k = 1, \dots, r_n \},$$

where $\mathcal{A}_k^{(n)}$ is isomorphic to the full complex matrix algebra $M_{[n,k]}$ of order $[n, k]$. (This notation is the same as [1].) One may hence select matrix units $\{e_k^{(n)}(i, j) : i, j = 1, \dots, [n, k]\}$ for each $\mathcal{A}_k^{(n)}$ for which

$$\mathcal{A}_k^{(n)} = \text{linear span of } \{e_k^{(n)}(i, j) : i, j = 1, \dots, [n, k]\}.$$

Now $\mathcal{A}_n \subseteq \mathcal{A}_{n+1}$, and the selection of matrix units $\{e_k^{(n)}(i, j)\}$ can be made to reflect this inclusion. This is accomplished in the following proposition, whose proof, left to the reader, is a straightforward modification of the proof of Proposition 1.7 of [1].

PROPOSITION 2.2. *Let \mathcal{A}_1 and \mathcal{A}_2 be finite dimensional, semisimple algebras, with Wedderburn decompositions*

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{A}_i &= \dot{+} \{ \mathcal{A}_k^{(i)}, k = 1, \dots, n_i \}, \quad i = 1, 2, \\ \mathcal{A}_k^{(i)} &\cong M_{[i,k]}, \quad i = 1, 2. \end{aligned}$$

Let $\{e_i^{(1)}(i, j) : i, j = 1, \dots, [1, l]\}$, $l = 1, \dots, n_1$, be matrix units for \mathcal{A}_1 . If $\mathcal{A}_1 \subseteq \mathcal{A}_2$, then there exists unique nonnegative integers n_{ki} , $k = 1, \dots, n_2$, $i = 1, \dots, n_1$, and matrix units $\{e_k^{(2)}(i, j) : i, j = 1, \dots, [2, k]\}$, $k = 1, \dots, n_2$ for \mathcal{A}_2 such that

$$\sum_{p=1}^{n_1} n_{kp} [1, p] \leq [2, k]$$

and

$$(2.1) \quad \begin{aligned} e_i^{(1)}(i, j) &= \sum_{q=1}^{n_2} \sum_{m=1}^{n_{q1}} e_q^{(2)} \left(\sum_{p=1}^{l-1} n_{qp} [1, p] + (m-1)n_{q1} + i, \right. \\ &\quad \left. \sum_{p=1}^{l-1} n_{qp} [1, p] + (m-1)n_{q1} + j \right). \end{aligned}$$

The matrix units for \mathcal{A}_n are now chosen inductively by applying Proposition 2.2 at the n th inclusion, so that for each n the matrix units for \mathcal{A}_{n+1} satisfy (2.1) relative to the matrix units for \mathcal{A}_n . Such a selection of matrix units will be called an *admissible selection of matrix units for \mathcal{A}* .

We turn now to the problem of orthogonalization of matrix units in $B(H)$ for a fixed Hilbert space H . Recall that a set of bounded operators $\{e(i, j) : i, j = 1, \dots, n\}$ on H is said to form a *system of matrix units on H* if

- (i) $\sum_{i=1}^n e(i, i) = \text{identity operator on } H$,
- (ii) $e(i, j)e(k, l) = \delta_{jk} \cdot e(i, l)$, $i, j, k, l = 1, \dots, n$,

where δ_{jk} denotes the Kronecker delta. $\{e(i, j) : i, j = 1, \dots, n\}$ is said to form a *C^* -system of matrix units* if in addition to (i) and (ii), one has

(iii) $e(i, j)^* = e(j, i), i, j = 1, \dots, n.$

DEFINITION 2.3. Let $\{e(i, j): i, j = 1, \dots, n\}$ be a system of matrix units on H . An invertible operator T on H is said to *orthogonalize* $\{e(i, j): i, j = 1, \dots, n\}$ if

$$(Te(i, j)T^{-1})^* = Te(j, i)T^{-1}, i, j = 1, \dots, n,$$

i.e., if $\{Te(i, j)T^{-1}: i, j = 1, \dots, n\}$ is a C*-system of matrix units on H .

LEMMA 2.4. Let $\{e(i, j): i, j = 1, \dots, n\}$ be a system of matrix units on H . Then there exists an invertible operator T on H which orthogonalizes $\{e(i, j): i, j = 1, \dots, n\}$.

Proof. Set

$$T = \left(\sum_{1 \leq i, j \leq n} e(i, j)^* e(i, j) \right)^{1/2}.$$

We claim that T is invertible. For x in H ,

$$\begin{aligned} \|Tx\|^2 &= \sum_{1 \leq i, j \leq n} \|e(i, j)x\|^2 \\ &\geq \sum_{i=1}^n \|e(i, i)x\|^2 \\ &\geq n^{-2} \left(\sum_{i=1}^n \|e(i, i)x\| \right)^2 \\ &\geq n^{-2} \|x\|^2, \end{aligned}$$

since $x = \sum_i e(i, i)x$; T is thus bounded below. By a theorem of T. Crimmins ([6], Theorem 2.2),

$$\begin{aligned} \text{range of } T &= \text{range of } \left(\sum_{1 \leq i, j \leq n} e(i, j)^* e(i, j) \right)^{1/2} \\ (2.2) \qquad &= \sum_{1 \leq i, j \leq n} \text{range of } e(i, j)^*. \end{aligned}$$

Since $\sum_i e(i, i)^* = I, H = \sum_i \text{range of } e(i, i)^*$, and therefore by (2.2), T is surjective. T is hence invertible.

Let k and l be fixed positive integers between 1 and n . Then

$$\begin{aligned} T^2 e(k, l) &= \sum_{i, j} (e(i, j)^* e(i, j)) e(k, l) \\ &= \sum_{j=1}^n e(j, k)^* e(j, l), \end{aligned}$$

so that if $f(k, l) = Te(k, l)T^{-1}$,

$$(2.3) \qquad f(k, l) = T^{-1} \left(\sum_{j=1}^n e(j, k)^* e(j, l) \right) T^{-1}.$$

Since T is positive, (2.3) yields

$$\begin{aligned}
 f(k, l)^* &= (Te(k, l)T^{-1})^* \\
 &= T^{-1}\left(\sum_{j=1}^n e(j, l)^*e(j, k)\right)T^{-1} \\
 &= f(l, k).
 \end{aligned}$$

The next lemma is the basic orthogonalization lemma of Mackey (see [9], p. 135).

LEMMA 2.5. Let $\{E_1, \dots, E_n\}$ be a pairwise independent set of idempotents in $B(H)$ (i.e., $E_i^2 = E_i$, $E_iE_j = 0$, $i \neq j$) such that $\sum_{i=1}^n E_i = I$, and let $M > 0$ be such that for every set $\{\varepsilon_1, \dots, \varepsilon_n\}$ on zero's and one's,

$$\left\| \sum_{i=1}^n \varepsilon_i E_i \right\| \leq M.$$

Then for all x in H ,

$$\frac{\|x\|^2}{4M^2} \leq \sum_{i=1}^n \|E_i x\|^2 \leq 4M^2 \|x\|^2.$$

We now extend Lemma 2.5 to matrix units:

LEMMA 2.6. Let $\{e(i, j): i, j = 1, \dots, n\}$ be a system of matrix units on H such that each $e(i, i)$ is a projection. Let $M > 0$ be such that $\|e(i, j)\| \leq M$, $i, j = 1, \dots, n$. Then for all x in H ,

$$\frac{n}{M^2} \|x\|^2 \leq \sum_{1 \leq i, j \leq n} \|e(i, j)x\|^2 \leq nM^2 \|x\|^2.$$

Proof. $\{e(i, i): i = 1, \dots, n\}$ is a set of pairwise orthogonal projections with sum I , so if $\mathcal{M}_i = \text{range of } e(i, i)$, $i = 1, \dots, n$, then $H = \mathcal{M}_1 \oplus \dots \oplus \mathcal{M}_n$.

Since $e(i, j)e(k, k) = 0$, $k \neq j$, $e(i, j)e(j, i) = e(i, i)$, and $e(i, j)e(i, j) = e(i, j)$, we have

$$(2.4) \quad \text{kernel of } e(i, j) \supseteq \bigoplus_{\substack{1 \leq k \leq n \\ k \neq j}} \mathcal{M}_k$$

$$(2.5) \quad \text{range of } e(i, j) = \mathcal{M}_i.$$

Suppose $e(i, j)x = 0$, with $x = \bigoplus_{i=1}^n m_i$, $m_i \in \mathcal{M}_i$.

Then

$$(2.6) \quad m_j = e(j, j)x = e(j, i)e(i, j)x = 0, \quad i \neq j.$$

(2.4) and (2.6) imply

$$(7) \quad \text{kernel of } e(i, j) = \bigoplus_{\substack{1 \leq k \leq n \\ k \neq j}} \mathcal{M}_k.$$

From (2.5) and (2.7), it follows that $e(i, j)$ maps \mathcal{M}_j bijectively onto \mathcal{M}_i . Therefore if $e(i, j)$ is represented as an operator matrix relative to the decomposition $H = \mathcal{M}_1 \oplus \cdots \oplus \mathcal{M}_n$, then there exists an invertible linear transformation $T_{ij}: \mathcal{M}_j \rightarrow \mathcal{M}_i$ such that

(2.8) $e(i, j)$ has a matrix with T_{ij} in the (i, j) th position and zeros elsewhere .

Set

$$T = \sum_{1 \leq i, j \leq n} e(i, j)^* e(i, j) .$$

From (2.8), we find that the operator matrix of $e(i, j)^* e(i, j)$ has $T_{ij}^* T_{ij}$ in the (j, j) th position and zeros elsewhere, so that T is the diagonal matrix

$$(2.9) \quad T = \begin{pmatrix} I_{\mathcal{M}_1} + A_1 & & & \\ & I_{\mathcal{M}_2} + A_2 & & \\ & & \ddots & \\ & & & I_{\mathcal{M}_n} + A_n \end{pmatrix}$$

where

$$A_k = \sum_{\substack{1 \leq i \leq n \\ i \neq k}} T_{ik}^* T_{ik} , \quad k = 1, \dots, n .$$

Let $x \in H, x = \bigoplus_{i=1}^n x_i, x_i \in \mathcal{M}_i$. By (2.9),

$$(2.10) \quad \begin{aligned} \sum_{1 \leq i, j \leq n} \|e(i, j)x\|^2 &= (Tx, x) \\ &= \sum_{i=1}^n \left(\|x_i\|^2 + \sum_{\substack{1 \leq j \leq n \\ j \neq i}} \|T_{ji}x_i\|^2 \right) . \end{aligned}$$

Since $\|e(i, j)\| \leq M, i, j = 1, \dots, n$,

$$(2.11) \quad \|T_{ij}\| = \|e(i, j)\| \leq M, i, j = 1, \dots, n .$$

Also $e(i, j)e(j, i) = e(i, i)$ implies $T_{ij}T_{ji} = I_{\mathcal{M}_i}$, so that by (2.11), for x in \mathcal{M}_j ,

$$(2.12) \quad \begin{aligned} \|T_{ij}x\|^2 &= \|T_{ji}^{-1}x\|^2 \\ &\geq \frac{\|x\|^2}{\|T_{ji}\|^2} \\ &\geq \frac{\|x\|^2}{M^2} . \end{aligned}$$

Therefore by (2.10) and (2.12),

$$\begin{aligned} \sum_{1 \leq i, j \leq n} \|e(i, j)x\|^2 &\geq \sum_{i=1}^n \left(\|x_i\|^2 + \frac{1}{M^2} \sum_{\substack{1 \leq j \leq n \\ i \neq j}} \|x_i\|^2 \right) \\ &\geq nM^{-2} \sum_{i=1}^n \|x_i\|^2 \\ &= nM^{-2} \|x\|^2. \end{aligned}$$

By (2.10) and (2.11),

$$\begin{aligned} \sum_{1 \leq i, j \leq n} \|e(i, j)x\|^2 &\leq \sum_{i=1}^n \left(\|x_i\|^2 + M^2 \sum_{\substack{1 \leq j \leq n \\ j \neq i}} \|x_i\|^2 \right) \\ &\leq nM^2 \sum_{i=1}^n \|x_i\|^2 \\ &= nM^2 \|x\|^2. \end{aligned}$$

LEMMA 2.7. *Let $\{E_i\}_{i=1}^n$ be a pairwise independent set of idempotents in $B(H)$ and $M > 0$ a constant satisfying the hypotheses of Lemma 2.5. Then there exists an invertible T in $B(H)$ such that TE_iT^{-1} is self-adjoint, $i = 1, \dots, n$, and $\|T\|^{\pm 1} \leq 2M$.*

Proof. The proof is similar to the proof of Lemma 2.4. Set

$$T = \left(\sum_{i=1}^n E_i^* E_i \right)^{1/2}.$$

Then for x in H , Lemma 2.5 gives

$$\frac{\|x\|^2}{4M^2} \leq \|Tx\|^2 = \sum_{i=1}^n \|E_i x\|^2 \leq 4M^2 \|x\|^2,$$

whence $\|T^{\pm 1}\| < 2M$. One shows that $(TE_iT^{-1})^* = TE_iT^{-1}$, $i = 1, \dots, n$, as before.

3. The theorem. The following theorem can now be stated and proved.

THEOREM 3.1. *Let \mathcal{A} be a Banach subalgebra of $B(H)$. Then \mathcal{A} is similar to an approximately finite C^* -subalgebra of $B(H)$ if and only if \mathcal{A} is approximately finite and the following condition holds: there is an admissible selection of matrix units $\{e_k^{(n)}(i, j): i, j = 1, \dots, [k, n]\}$, $k = 1, \dots, r_n$ for \mathcal{A} and a constant $M > 0$ such that:*

(i) *for each fixed n and for all sets $\{\delta_i^{(k)}: i = 1, \dots, [n, k]\}$ of zero's and one's,*

$$\left\| \sum_{k=1}^{r_n} \sum_{i=1}^{[n, k]} \delta_i^{(k)} e_k^{(n)}(i, i) \right\| \leq M,$$

(ii) *for each k and n ,*

$$\|e_k^{(n)}(i, j)\| \leq M, i, j = 1, \dots, [n, k].$$

Moreover, if these conditions are met, an invertible operator implementing the similarity can be chosen in the von Neumann algebra generated by \mathcal{A} .

Proof. (\Rightarrow). Suppose $\mathcal{E} = T\mathcal{A}T^{-1}$ is an approximately finite C^* -algebra for some invertible T in $B(H)$. Thus, $\mathcal{E} = (\mathbf{U}_n \mathcal{E}_n)^-$, where $\{\mathcal{E}_n\}$ is an ascending sequence of finite dimensional C^* -subalgebras. By Proposition 1.7 of [1], there is an admissible selection of C^* -matrix units $\{f_k^{(n)}(i, j): i, j = 1, \dots, [n, k], k = 1, \dots, r_n$ for \mathcal{E} relative to $\{\mathcal{E}_n\}$. If $\mathcal{A}_n = T^{-1}\mathcal{E}_nT$, then $\{\mathcal{A}_n\}$ is an increasing sequence of finite dimensional, semisimple subalgebras of \mathcal{A} such that $\mathcal{A} = (\mathbf{U}_n \mathcal{A}_n)^-$, so that \mathcal{A} is approximately finite, and if $e_k^{(n)}(i, j) = T^{-1}f_k^{(n)}(i, j)T$, then $\{e_k^{(n)}(i, j): i, j = 1, \dots, [n, k], k = 1, \dots, r_n$ is an admissible selection of matrix units for \mathcal{A} .

For each positive integer n , let $\text{diag}(\lambda_1, \dots, \lambda_n)$ denote the $n \times n$ diagonal matrix with main diagonal $\{\lambda_1, \dots, \lambda_n\}$. Let $\{\delta_i^{(k)}: i = 1, \dots, [n, k], k = 1, \dots, r_n$ be sets of zero's and one's. Let

$$A = \sum_{k=1}^{r_n} \sum_{i=1}^{[n,k]} \delta_i^{(k)} e_k^{(n)}(i, i).$$

Then

$$\begin{aligned} \|TAT^{-1}\| &= \left\| \bigoplus_{k=1}^{r_n} \bigoplus_{i=1}^{[n,k]} \delta_i^{(k)} f_k^{(n)}(i, i) \right\| \\ &= \max_{1 \leq k \leq r_n} \|\text{diag}(\delta_1^{(k)}, \dots, \delta_{[n,k]}^{(k)})\| \\ &\leq 1. \end{aligned}$$

It therefore follows that (i) obtains with $M = \|T\| \|T^{-1}\|$. (ii) follows on noticing that $\|f_k^{(n)}(i, j)\| = 1$ for all i, j, k , and n .

(\Leftarrow). It will first be shown that there exists an invertible T in the von Neumann algebra generated by \mathcal{A} such that $Te_k^{(n)}(i, i)T^{-1}$ is self-adjoint for all i, k , and n . Set

$$F_n = \sum_{k=1}^{r_n} \sum_{i=1}^{[n,k]} e_k^{(n)}(i, i).$$

Then if $E_n = I - F_n$, $\mathcal{E}_n = \{E_n\} \cup \{e_k^{(n)}(i, i): i = 1, \dots, [n, k], k = 1, \dots, r_n\}$ is a pairwise independent set of idempotents in $B(H)$ with sum I . It follows by (i) that \mathcal{E}_n satisfies the hypotheses of Lemma 2.7 with constant $2M + 1$. By that lemma, an invertible T_n in the C^* -algebra generated by \mathcal{A} and I may hence be chosen such that $T_n e_k^{(n)}(i, i) T_n^{-1}$ is self-adjoint for $i = 1, \dots, [n, k], k = 1, \dots, r_n$, and such that

$$(3.1) \quad \|T_n^{21}\| \leq 2(2M + 1), \quad n = 1, 2, \dots$$

Since the selection of matrix units is admissible, for each fixed i, k , and n , $e_k^{(n)}(i, i)$ is a sum of a subfamily of idempotents $e_k^{(n+1)}(j, j)$. It follows that

$$(3.2) \quad T_m e_k^{(m)}(i, i) T_m^{-1} \text{ is self-adjoint, for all } m \geq n.$$

Since closed balls are compact in the weak operator topology on $B(H)$, (3.1) implies the existence of a subsequence $\{n_k\}$ and an invertible T in the von Neumann algebra generated by \mathcal{A} for which

$$(3.3) \quad T_{n_k}^2 \longrightarrow T^2(WOT), \quad k \longrightarrow \infty.$$

Since each T_n is positive, we may assume T is positive.

Now fix i, k , and n . By (3.2), for x, y in H ,

$$(3.4) \quad (T_m e_k^{(m)}(i, i)x, T_m y) = (T_m x, T_m e_k^{(m)}(i, i)y), \quad m \geq n.$$

The self-adjointness of T and each T_n together with (3.3) and (3.4) hence yield

$$(T e_k^{(n)}(i, i)x, Ty) = (Tx, T e_k^{(n)}(i, i)y),$$

i.e., $T e_k^{(n)}(i, i) T^{-1}$ is self-adjoint. There is therefore no loss of generality in assuming that $e_k^{(n)}(i, i)$ is a projection for each i, k , and n .

We have $\mathcal{A} = (\cup_n \mathcal{A}_n)^-$, where

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{A}_n &= \bigoplus \{ \mathcal{A}_k^{(n)} : k = 1, \dots, r_n \}, \\ \mathcal{A}_k^{(n)} &= \bigvee \{ e_k^{(n)}(i, j) : i, j = 1, \dots, [n, k] \}. \end{aligned}$$

Set

$$\begin{aligned} P_k^{(n)} &= \bigoplus \{ e_k^{(n)}(i, i) : i = 1, \dots, [n, k] \}, \\ P_n &= \bigoplus \{ P_k^{(n)} : k = 1, \dots, r_n \}, \\ M_k^{(n)} &= \text{range of } P_k^{(n)}. \end{aligned}$$

For each k and n , $\{e_k^{(n)}(i, j) : i, j = 1, \dots, [n, k]\}$ can be considered as a system of matrix units in $B(M_k^{(n)})$. By (ii), $\{e_k^{(n)}(i, j)\}$ satisfies the hypotheses of Lemma 2.6, so if

$$T_k^{(n)} = \frac{1}{[k, n]^{1/2}} \left(\sum_{1 \leq i, j \leq [n, k]} e_k^{(n)}(i, j)^* e_k^{(n)}(i, j) \right)^{1/2},$$

then by that lemma,

$$(3.5) \quad \frac{\|x\|^2}{M^2} \leq \|T_k^{(n)} x\|^2 \leq M^2 \|x\|^2, \quad x \in M_k^{(n)}.$$

Now $H = (\text{range of } P_n)^\perp \bigoplus (\bigoplus \{M_k^{(n)} : k = 1, \dots, r_n\})$, and therefore if

$$T_n = (I - P_n) \oplus \left(\bigoplus \{T_k^{(n)} : k = 1, \dots, r_n\} \right),$$

then by (3.5)

$$(3.6) \quad \frac{\|x\|^2}{M^2} \leq \|T_n x\|^2 \leq M^2 \|x\|^2, \quad x \in H, \quad n = 1, 2, \dots.$$

The proof of Lemma 2.4 shows that T_n orthogonalizes $\{e_k^{(n)}(i, j) : i, j = 1, \dots, [n, k], k = 1, \dots, r_n\}$. Since the selection of matrix units is admissible, each $e_k^{(n)}(i, j)$ is a sum of the form (2.1) of a subfamily of matrix units of \mathcal{A}_{n+1} . (3.6) hence allows one to use the previous compactness argument to find an invertible operator T in the von Neumann algebra generated by \mathcal{A} which orthogonalizes $e_k^{(n)}(i, j)$ for all i, j, k , and n . It follows that $T\mathcal{A}T^{-1}$ is an approximately finite C^* -subalgebra of $B(H)$.

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