Ultrafilters on Semigroups and some of their Properties
(Strong Summability, Sparseness, Idempotence, etc.)

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The Stone-Čech compactification of a discrete abelian semigroup $S$ is the set $\beta S$ of ultrafilters on $S$, where every $x \in S$ is identified with

$$\{A \subseteq S \mid x \in A\},$$

and basic open sets are those of the form

$$\bar{A} = \{p \in \beta S \mid A \in p\}.$$

Then these sets are actually clopen, and $\bar{A}$ is really the closure in $\beta S$ of the set $A$. The group operation $+$ on $S$ is also extended by the formula

$$p + q = \{A \subseteq S \mid \{x \in S \mid \{y \in S \mid x + y \in A\} \in q\} \in p\}$$

which turns $\beta S$ into a right semitopological semigroup, meaning that for each $p \in \beta S$ the mapping $(\cdot) + p : \beta S \rightarrow \beta S$ is continuous (note that the extended operation $+$ need not be commutative).
If $S$ is a semigroup, and $\vec{x} = \langle x_n \mid n < \omega \rangle$ is a sequence of elements of $S$, then we denote the set of finite sums of the sequence $\vec{x}$ by:

$$FS(\vec{x}) = \left\{ \sum_{n \in a} x_n \mid a \in [\omega]^<\omega \setminus \{\emptyset\} \right\}.$$ 

**Definition**

Let $S$ be a semigroup, and $p \in \beta S$.

- We say that $p$ is **weakly summable** if for every $A \in p$ there exists a sequence $\vec{x}$ such that $FS(\vec{x}) \subseteq A$.

- We say that $p$ is **strongly summable** if it is weakly summable, and additionally, the above sequence $\vec{x}$ can be chosen in such a way that $FS(\vec{x}) \in p$.

On abelian groups, strongly summable implies idempotent, which in turn implies weakly summable. However, the existence of a strongly summable ultrafilter on $(\omega, +)$ implies that of a P-point and hence cannot be established in ZFC.
The importance of these concepts stems from the following

**Theorem (Hindman)**

Let $\omega = \bigcup_{i<n} A_i$ be a partition of $\omega$ into finitely many pieces. Then there exists a sequence $\vec{x}$ of natural numbers and an element $A_i$ of the partition such that $FS(\vec{x}) \subseteq A_i$.

**Proof.**

Use the so-known *Ellis-Nukamura Lemma* to get an idempotent ultrafilter $p \in \beta \omega$. Then $p$ chooses one element $A_i$ of the partition, and since $p$ must be weakly summable, the result follows.

This provides an elegant proof of Hindman’s finite sums theorem. It was actually Neil Hindman who first constructed strongly summable ultrafilters on $\omega$, under CH, since at the time he was not aware of the Ellis-Nukamura Lemma, but knew that an idempotent ultrafilter would give him the desired result.
Strongly summable ultrafilters have some properties that not all idempotents have.

**Theorem (Hindman-Strauss)**

Let $p \in \beta\omega$ be a strongly summable ultrafilter, and let $q, r \in \omega^*$ be such that $q + r = r + q = p$. Then, $q, r \in \mathbb{Z} + p$.

**Theorem (Hindman-Protasov-Strauss)**

If $G$ can be embedded in the circle group $\mathbb{T} = \mathbb{R}/\mathbb{Z}$, and $p \in \beta G$ is strongly summable, then whenever $q, r \in G^* = \beta G \setminus G$ are such that $q + r = r + q = p$, it must be the case that $q, r \in G + p$. 
By strengthening a bit the definition of strongly summable, Hindman, Protasov and Strauss were able to get a slightly stronger theorem.

**Definition**

An ultrafilter \( p \in \beta G \) is **sparse** if for every \( A \in p \) there exist two sequences \( \vec{x} = \langle x_n \mid n < \omega \rangle \), \( \vec{y} = \langle y_n \mid n < \omega \rangle \), where \( \vec{y} \) is a subsequence of \( \vec{x} \) such that \( \{ x_n \mid n < \omega \} \setminus \{ y_n \mid n < \omega \} \) is infinite, \( FS(\vec{x}) \subseteq A \), and \( FS(\vec{y}) \in p \).

MA implies that there are sparse ultrafilters. And obviously every sparse ultrafilter will be strongly summable. But sparse ultrafilters have a stronger property.

**Theorem (Hindman-Protasov-Strauss)**

*If \( G \) can be embedded in \( T \) and \( p \in G^* \) is sparse, then whenever \( q, r \in G^* \) are such that \( q + r = p \), it must be the case that \( q, r \in G + p \).*
Theorem (Hindman-Steprāns-Strauss)

The semigroup \((\omega, +)\) has the property that every strongly summable ultrafilter on it is sparse. So does every subsemigroup of \(T\).

Theorem (Hindman-Steprāns-Strauss)

Let \(S\) be a countable subsemigroup of \(\bigoplus_{n<\omega} T\) and let \(p\) be a nonprincipal strongly summable ultrafilter on \(S\). If

\[
\left\{ x \in S \mid \pi_{\min(x)}(x) \neq \frac{1}{2} \right\} \in p,
\]

then \(p\) must be sparse (here \(\min(x)\) denotes the minimum \(i\) such that \(\pi_i(x)\) is nonzero).
**Question (Hindman-Steprāns-Strauss)**

Is it consistent with ZFC that there exists a nonsparse strongly summable ultrafilter on \( \bigoplus_{n<\omega} \mathbb{Z}_2 \)?

**Theorem (F.B.)**

Let \( p \) be a strongly summable ultrafilter on \( \bigoplus_{n<\omega} \mathbb{Z}_2 \). Then, \( p \) is sparse.

**Theorem (F.B.)**

If there is an abelian cancellative semigroup \( S \) and a nonsparse strongly summable ultrafilter on \( S \), then there is one on \( \bigoplus_{n<\omega} \mathbb{Z}_{2^n} \).
Questions About Strongly Summable Ultrafilters

Question

Is every strongly summable ultrafilter on any abelian group (equivalently, on $\bigoplus_{n<\omega} T$) sparse?

Question

Is there (under suitable assumptions, such as MA) a strongly summable ultrafilter on $\bigoplus_{n<\omega} \mathbb{Z}_2$ that is not additively isomorphic to a union ultrafilter?

Question

Does the existence of a strongly summable ultrafilter on any abelian group imply that of a P-point?
Questions

Question

What happens when $G$ is not abelian?

Question

Does the existence of a nondiscrete extremally disconnected group topology on $([\omega]^<\omega, \triangle)$ implies that of a strongly summable ultrafilter? What about a P-point? Is there a model with P-points but no strongly summable ultrafilters (say, on the Boolean group)?
In general, for a fixed $q \in \beta \omega$, the mapping $q + (\cdot) : \beta \omega \to \beta \omega$ is not continuous. However, every P-point is a point of continuity of such a map for every $q \in \beta \omega$.

**Question (Protasov)**

Are there $p, q \in \omega^*$ such that $p$ is not a P-point, yet it is a point of continuity of $q + (\cdot)$?

**Conjecture (Steprāns)**

There is a model of ZFC in which there are no P-points, yet there is one (are many?) $p \in \omega^*$ that is a point of continuity of $q + (\cdot)$ for some (many?) $q \in \omega^*$. 
References


Fernández Bretón, D., Every Strongly Summable Ultrafilter on $\bigoplus_{n<\omega} \mathbb{Z}_2$ is Sparse, preprint, 2012.


