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STRONG CONCENTRATION OF THE SPECTRA OF SELF-ADJOINT OPERATORS

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## STRONG CONCENTRATION OF THE SPECTRA OF SELF-ADJOINT OPERATORS

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Let H be a self-adjoint operator with spectral measure E(S) over the Borel sets S of the real line. The spectrum of H is said to be strongly concentrated on S if whenever  $H_n$  converges strongly to H in the generalized sense it is true that  $E_n(S)$  converges strongly to the identity. Sufficient conditions on H are given for this to occur for a given arbitrary Borel set S and necessary and sufficient conditions when S is the spectrum of H. In addition several more workable sufficient conditions are cited and a few examples illustrating the results are given.

Many authors have studied the changes in the spectra of a sequence of self-adjoint operators  $H_n$  as it converges strongly in some sense to a self-adjoint operator-e.g., [2], [3], [5], [6], [7, pp. 471-477], [8], [11]. It is known that while as point sets the spectra of  $H_n$  do not necessarily converge to the spectrum of H, nevertheless in some sense the spectra of  $H_n$  are concentrated on that of H. This spectral concentration phenomenon is described through the spectral measures  $E_n$ , E of the operators involved. In particular since  $E(\Sigma)$  is the identity when  $\Sigma$  is the spectrum of H it is reasonable to say that the spectrum of the sequence  $H_n$  is concentrated on  $\Sigma$  if  $E_n(\Sigma)$  converges to the identity as  $n \to \infty$ . Our main results concern necessary and sufficient conditions for this to occur for an arbitrary sequence  $H_n$  converging strongly to a fixed operator H. We make extensive use of the properties of the spectral measure E(S) over the Borel sets S of the real line for which a general reference is [4] § § X. 2 and XII. 2.

1. Preliminaries. Throughout this paper the following notation will be adhered to. H will denote a self-adjoint operator over a Hilbert space H. Its domain will be denoted by D(H) and its spectrum by  $\Sigma$  (which is always a closed subset of the real line R). The resolution of the identity of H will be denoted by  $E(\lambda)$ ,  $-\infty < \lambda < \infty$ , and the associated projection-valued spectral measure by E(S) over all Borel subsets S of R. By convention we take  $E(\lambda)$  to be right continuous, i.e.,  $E(\lambda + 0) = E(\lambda)$ . For a sequence of self-adjoint operators  $H_n$ ,  $n = 1, 2, \cdots$ , over H the quantities  $D(H_n)$ ,  $\Sigma_n$ ,  $E_n(\lambda)$ , and  $E_n(S)$  are defined accordingly.

According to a definition of Rellich (cf. [9] or [7, p. 429]) we

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say that the sequence of self-adjoint operators  $H_n$  coverges strongly to H in the generalized sense (denoted  $H_n \rightarrow H$  in the generalized sense) if there exists a dense linear manifold D in H such that the following conditions are satisfied:

- (i)  $D \subseteq D(H_n)$  for all *n* sufficiently large
- (ii) the closure of H restricted to D is again H
- (iii)  $\lim H_n u = H u$  for all  $u \in D$ .

If the operators  $H_n$  and H are all bounded the above definition reduces to ordinary strong convergence which we denote simply  $H_n \xrightarrow{} H$ .

The following theorem of Rellich (cf. [9] or [7, p. 432]) will be basic to our analysis:

THEOREM 1.1. Let the sequence of self adjoint operators  $H_n$  converge strongly in the generalized sense to the self-adjoint operator H. Then if  $\lambda$  is not an eigenvalue of H we have

$$E_n(\lambda) \xrightarrow{s} E(\lambda)$$

and

$$E_n(\lambda - 0) \xrightarrow{s} E(\lambda)$$
.

Next we give the definition of a spectral concentration phenomenon suggested by Titchmarsh (cf. [11], [12, p. 261]) and later refined by Conley and Rejto (cf. [2], [3]).

DEFINITION 1.2<sup>1</sup>. The spectrum of  $H_n$  is asymptotically concentrated on the Borel set S if  $E_n(S) \xrightarrow{\circ} I$ .

Asymptotic concentration is thus a property of a sequence  $H_n$ (and a subset S). We now introduce the definition of a concentration phenomenon associated with a single self-adjoint operator H.

DEFINITION 1.3. The spectrum of H is strongly concentrated on the Borel set S if whenever  $H_n \xrightarrow{s} H$  in the generalized sense it is true that  $E_n(S) \to I$ .

Hence if the spectrum of H is strongly concentrated on S then the spectrum of any sequence  $H_n$  which converges strongly to H in the generalized sense is asymptoically concentrated on S.

The following lemma states, as we would expect, that if the

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Actually asymptotic concentration is defined more generally to allow the subset S to depend on n. We then say the spectrum of  $H_n$  is asymptotically concentrated on the sets  $S_n$  if  $E_n(S_n) \xrightarrow{} I$ . We shall not need this generalization however.

spectrum of an operator is strongly concentrated on a set it is also strongly concentrated on any larger set. The proof follows easily from the fact that if  $S \subseteq S'$  then  $E(S) \leq E(S')$ .

LEMMA 1.4. If the spectrum of H is strongly concentrated on S and if  $S \subseteq S'$  then the spectrum of H is strongly concentrated on S'.

2. Main results. Our main interest will be to see how small we may make the set S. To this end the following theorem (cf. [7, p. 472]), reworded using our terminology, is of interest:

THEOREM 2.1. Let S be an open set which contains the spectrum  $\Sigma$  of H. Then the spectrum of H is strongly concentrated on S.

We shall next strengthen this theorem to the case where S is not necessarily open. Let int S denote the interior of the set S and let  $\partial S$  denote its boundary. Then

THEOREM 2.2. Let S be a Borel set which contains the spectrum  $\Sigma$  of H. Then if  $E(\partial S) = 0$  the spectrum of H is strongly concentrated on int S.

Proof. We have

$$\Sigma \subseteq S \subseteq (\text{int } S) \cup \partial S \text{ and } (\text{int } S) \cap \partial S = \emptyset$$

hence

$$E(\Sigma) \leq E(S) \leq E(\operatorname{int} S) + E(\partial S)$$
.

But  $E(\Sigma) = I$  and  $E(\partial S) = 0$ . Hence E(int S) = I.

Since int S is an open subset of R it may be expressed as a countable union of disjoint open intervals, say

int 
$$S = igcup_{k=1}^\infty I_k$$
 where  $I_k = (lpha_k,\,eta_k)$  .

Since the spectral measure is strongly countably additive we therefore have

(1) 
$$\sum_{k=1}^{\infty} E(I_k) = I$$
.

Furthermore none of the endpoints of the intervals  $(\alpha_k, \beta_k)$  can be eigenvalues of H, for the endpoints belong to  $\partial S$  and  $E(\partial S) = 0$ while for eigenvalues  $\lambda_0$  we have  $E(\{\lambda_0\}) \neq 0$ . Since (1) is in the sense of strong convergence of the sum, given any  $u \in H$  and any  $\varepsilon > 0$  there exists a K such that

$$\left\| (I - \sum\limits_{k=1}^K E(I_k)) u \, \right\| < arepsilon/2$$
 .

Now let  $H_n$  be any sequence which converges strongly to H in the generalized sense. Then by Theorem 1.1 we have

$$E_n(\beta_k - 0) \xrightarrow{s} E(\beta_k) \quad \text{as} \ n \longrightarrow \infty$$

and

$$E_n(\alpha_k) \xrightarrow{s} E(\alpha_k)$$
 as  $n \longrightarrow \infty$ .

For the above value of K we may therefore find a value N such that for  $n \ge N$ 

$$egin{aligned} &|| \left( E_n(eta_k - 0) - E(eta_k) 
ight) u \, || < arepsilon/4K \ &|| \left( E_n(eta_k - 0) - E(lpha_k) 
ight) u \, || < arepsilon/4K \end{aligned}$$

for  $k = 1, 2, \dots, K$ .

By definition of the spectral measure we have

$$E(I_k) = E(\beta_k) - E(\alpha_k)$$
 (since  $E(\beta_k - 0) = E(\beta_k)$ )

and

$$E_n(I_k) = E_n(eta_k - 0) - E_n(lpha_k)$$
.

Hence by successive use of the triangle inequality we have for  $n \ge N$ 

$$\left\| \left(I - \sum_{k=1}^{K} E_n(I_k)\right) u \right\| \leq \left\| \left(I - \sum_{k=1}^{K} E(I_k)\right) u \right\|$$
  
(2) 
$$+ \left\| \sum_{k=1}^{K} E(I_k) u - \sum_{k=1}^{K} E_n(I_k) u \right\| < \varepsilon/2 + \sum_{k=1}^{K} || (E(\beta_k) - E_n(\beta_k - 0)) u ||$$
  
$$+ \sum_{k=1}^{K} || (E_n(\alpha_k) - E(\alpha_k)) u || < \varepsilon/2 + \sum_{k=1}^{K} \varepsilon/4K + \sum_{k=1}^{K} \varepsilon/4K = \varepsilon .$$

Now for all K we have

$$igvee_{k=1}^{ extsf{K}} I_k \cong igvee_{k=1}^{\infty} I_k = \operatorname{int} S$$

hence

$$\sum_{k=1}^{K} E_n(I_k) \leq E_n(\operatorname{int} S)$$

and so

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$$I - E_n( ext{int } S) \leq I - \sum\limits_{k=1}^K E_n(I_k)$$
 .

Therefore from (2) above we have for  $n \ge N$ 

$$|| (I - E_n(\operatorname{int} S))u || < \varepsilon$$

which implies that  $E_n(\text{int } S) \rightarrow I$ .

Notice that Theorem 2.2 is indeed a generalization of Theorem 2.1 for if S is open then int S = S and if  $\Sigma \subseteq S$  then  $\partial S$  must lie in the resolvent set of H, hence  $E(\partial S) = 0$ .

This theorem suggests that under certain conditions we may expect the spectrum of H to be strongly concentrated on itself, by which we mean

DEFINITION 2.3. The spectrum  $\Sigma$  of H is strongly concentrated on itself if whenever  $H_n \xrightarrow{s} H$  in the generalized sense it is true that  $E_n(\Sigma) \to I$ .

The condition suggested by Theorem 2.2 will be shown also to be necessary in the following

THEOREM 2.4. The spectrum  $\Sigma$  of H is strongly concentrated on itself if and only if  $E(\partial \Sigma) = 0$ .

*Proof.* First assume that  $E(\partial \Sigma) = 0$ . Then from Theorem 2.2 with  $S = \Sigma$  we have that the spectrum of H is strongly concentrated on int  $\Sigma$  hence on itself.

To prove the converse we must show that if  $E(\partial \Sigma) \neq 0$  then there exists a sequence  $H_n$  which converges strongly to H in the generalized sense for which  $E_n(\Sigma)$  does not converge strongly to the identity. To construct this sequence we will need the following subspaces

$$H_{\scriptscriptstyle B} = E(\partial \Sigma)H$$
 and  $H_{\scriptscriptstyle I} = E(\operatorname{int} \Sigma)H$ .

Since  $\Sigma = \operatorname{int} \Sigma \cup \partial \Sigma$  and  $\operatorname{int} \Sigma \cap \partial \Sigma = \emptyset$  the closed subspaces  $H_B$ and  $H_I$  are orthogonal and span the whole space H. Furthermore they each reduce the operator H. Let us denote the part of H restricted to  $H_B$  by  $H_B$  and the part of H restricted to  $H_I$  by  $H_I$ . Let  $\Sigma_B$  and  $\Sigma_I$  be their corresponding spectra. Then we have  $\Sigma = \Sigma_B \cup \Sigma_I$ ,  $\Sigma_B \subseteq \partial \Sigma$ , and  $\Sigma_I = \operatorname{int} \Sigma$  where  $\operatorname{int} \Sigma$  is the closure of the set  $\operatorname{int} \Sigma$ .

We may now define the sequence  $H_n$  in each of the subspaces  $H_B$ and  $H_I$ . We set

$$H_{I,n}u = Hu$$
 for  $u \in H_I \cap D(H)$ 

and

$$H_{B,n}u = \sum_{k=-\infty}^{\infty} \lambda_{kn} E(I_{kn})u \quad \text{for } u \in H_B \cap D(H)$$
 .

 $H_{B,n}$  is an approximation to the representation  $H = \int \lambda dE(\lambda)$  restricted to  $H_B$ , which converges strongly to  $H_B$  in the generalized sense as  $n \to \infty$ . For each fixed n the intervals  $I_{kn}, k = 0, \pm 1, \cdots$ , are to be a subdivision of the real line chosen so that the end points do not fall on  $\partial \Sigma$ . The length of the largest interval is to approach zero as  $n \to \infty$ . Each interval  $I_{kn}$  which contains a point of  $\partial \Sigma$  also contains points not belonging to  $\Sigma$ , from which we choose  $\lambda_{kn}$ . In the intervals which do not contain points of  $\partial \Sigma$  we have that  $E(I_{kn})u = 0$  for  $u \in H_B \cap D(H)$ , hence the choice of  $\lambda_{kn}$  is immaterial. The spectrum of  $H_{B,n}$  for each fixed n consists of those  $\lambda_{kn}, k = 0, \pm 1, \cdots$ , for which  $\partial \Sigma \cap I_{kn} \neq \emptyset$ , and so is disjoint from  $\Sigma$ .

Finally let

$$H_n = H_{I,n} \bigoplus H_{B,n}$$
.

Then  $H_{ns} \to H$  in the generalized sense since  $H_{I,n}u \to H_Iu$  and  $H_{B,n}v \to H_Bv$  for all  $u \in H_I \cap D(H)$  and all  $v \in H_B \cap D(H)$ . To show that  $E_n(\Sigma)$  does not converge strongly to the identity, let v be any nonzero element of  $H_B$ . Then

$$E_n(\Sigma)v = E_{B,n}(\Sigma)v$$
.

But the spectrum of  $H_{B,n}$  is disjoint from  $\Sigma$ , hence  $E_{B,n}(\Sigma) = 0$ . Therefore  $E_n(\Sigma)v = 0$  and so  $E_n(\Sigma)v$  does not converge to v.

Actually this theorem also shows the spectrum of H to be strongly concentrated on a slightly smaller set, as follows.

COROLLARY 2.5. The spectrum  $\Sigma$  of H is concentrated on itself if and only if it is concentrated on int  $\Sigma$ .

*Proof.* The "if" part follows from Lemma 1.4. Conversely if the spectrum of H is concentrated on itself then  $E(\partial \Sigma) = 0$  and hence from Theorem 2.2 with  $S = \Sigma$  it is concentrated on int  $\Sigma$ .

The condition  $E(\partial \Sigma) = 0$  requires that no eigenvalues of H lie on  $\partial \Sigma$  (in particular H may have no isolated eigenvalues). However more is required. To give sufficient conditions for  $E(\partial \Sigma) = 0$  let us denote by  $H_{AC}$  the set of all  $u \in H$  for which  $(E(\lambda)u, u)$  is absolutely

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continuous in  $\lambda$ . It is known (cf. [7, p. 516]) that  $H_{AC}$  is a closed subspace of H which reduces H. Let us further denote by m(S) the Lebesgue measure of the set S. Then we have

THEOREM 2.6. If  $m(\partial \Sigma) = 0$  and  $H_B \subseteq H_{AC}$  then  $E(\partial \Sigma) = 0$ .

*Proof.* If  $u \in H_I$  then  $E(\text{int } \Sigma)u = u$ . Hence

 $E(\partial \Sigma)u = E(\partial \Sigma)E(\operatorname{int} \Sigma)u = 0 \text{ since } \partial \Sigma \cap \operatorname{int} \Sigma = \emptyset$  .

And if  $u \in H_B$  then  $u \in H_{AC}$  and since then  $(E(\lambda)u, u)$  is absolutely continuous we have

$$|| E(\partial \Sigma)u ||^2 = (E(\partial \Sigma)u, u) = \int_{\partial \Sigma} d(E(\lambda)u, u) = 0$$

as  $m(\partial \Sigma) = 0$ .

As  $H_I$  and  $H_B$  span H we have  $E(\partial \Sigma)u = 0$  for all  $u \in H$ .

The orthogonal complement of  $H_{AC}$  is denoted by  $H_S$  and is identical to the set of all  $u \in H$  for which  $(E(\lambda)u, u)$  is a singular function of  $\lambda$ . The spectrum of H restricted to  $H_{AC}$  or  $H_S$  is called, respectively, the absolutely continuous spectrum and the singular spectrum of H (denoted  $\Sigma_{AC}$  and  $\Sigma_S$ ). The condition  $H_B \subseteq H_{AC}$  in Theorem 2.6 implies, but is not implied by, the condition  $\partial \Sigma \subseteq \Sigma_{AC}$ . The following corollary gives sufficient conditions for  $E(\partial \Sigma) = 0$  in terms of the singular spectrum.

COROLLARY 2.7. If 
$$m(\partial \Sigma) = 0$$
 and  $\partial \Sigma \cap \Sigma_s = \emptyset$  then  $E(\partial \Sigma) = 0$ .

**Proof.** If  $\partial \Sigma \cap \Sigma_s = \emptyset$  then  $E(\partial \Sigma)E(\Sigma_s) = 0$  and hence  $E(\partial \Sigma)H$ and  $E(\Sigma_s)H$  are orthogonal subspaces. Now  $H_B = E(\partial \Sigma)H$  and  $H_s \subseteq E(\Sigma_s)H$  since  $H_s$  reduces H, consequently  $H_B$  and  $H_s$  are orthogonal. But since  $H_{AC}$  is the orthogonal complement of  $H_s$  it follows that  $H_B \subseteq H_{AC}$  and so the conditions of Theorem 2.6 are satisfied.

A weaker but somewhat more useful sufficient condition is the following:

THEOREM 2.8. Let  $\partial \Sigma$  be countable and not contain any eigenvalues of H. Then  $E(\partial \Sigma) = 0$ .

*Proof.* Let  $\partial \Sigma = \bigcup_{k=1}^{\infty} \{\lambda_k\}$ . Then

$$E(\partial \Sigma) = \sum_{k=1}^{\infty} E(\{\lambda_k\}) = \sum_{k=1}^{\infty} (E(\lambda_k) - E(\lambda_k - 0)) = 0$$

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since  $E(\lambda)$  is continuous at any point  $\lambda$  not an eigenvalue of H.

3. Examples and applications. Our first example will be to show that the condition  $m(\partial \Sigma) = 0$  in theorem 2.6 is essential. Let  $\{r_n\} \ n = 1, 2, \cdots$ , be an enumeration of the rational numbers in the closed interval [0, 1]. Let  $\varepsilon$  be any positive number less than 1 and let

$$0_n = \{x \in (0, 1) \mid |x - r_n| < \varepsilon/2^n\}$$

and

 $Q=igcup_{n=1}^\infty 0_n$  .

Then  $0_n$  is an open set with Lebesgue measure less than or equal to  $\varepsilon/2^n$ , and Q is open with

$$m(Q) \leqq \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} m(0_n) \leqq \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} arepsilon/2^n = arepsilon$$
 .

If we set

$$P = ([0, 1] - Q) \cup \{0\} \cup \{1\}$$

then P is a closed nowhere dense subset of the unit interval consisting entirely of irrational numbers (plus the endpoints 0 and 1). Furthermore  $m(P) \ge 1 - \varepsilon$ . We define a Borel measure  $\sigma$  on R by

$$\sigma(S) = m(S \cap P)$$

with associated generating function

$$\sigma(x) = \sigma((-\infty, x)) \cdot$$

Our Hilbert space H will be  $L^{2}_{\sigma}(R)$ , consisting of all  $\sigma$ -measurable functions f(x) on R for which

$$\int ert f(x) ert^2 d\sigma(x) < \infty$$
 .

The multiplication operator

$$(Hf)(x) = xf(x)$$

is then self-adjoint on H with spectrum  $\Sigma = P$  (cf. [1, pp. 103-106]). But P is closed and nowhere dense, hence  $\partial P = \partial \Sigma = \Sigma$ . Hence  $E(\partial \Sigma) = E(\Sigma) = I$  and so the spectrum of H cannot be concentrated on itself. Furthermore since  $\sigma$  is a restriction of Lebesgue measure it is absolutely continuous, hence  $H_{AC} = H_B = H$ .

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Our second example will be to show that the condition  $H_B \subseteq H_{AC}$ is also essential in Theorem 2.6. Let c(x) be the Cantor Ternary function (cf. [10, p. 39]) on the unit interval and let c(S) be the associated Cantor measure on R. Our Hilbert space will be  $L^2_c(R)$ and H will again be multiplication by the independent variable. c(x) is a continuous non-absolutely continuous function whose only points of increase are on the Cantor set C. Hence  $\Sigma = C$ . But C is closed and nowhere dense so that  $\partial C = \partial \Sigma = \Sigma$ . Therefore  $E(\partial \Sigma) = E(\Sigma) =$ I and so the spectrum of H cannot be strongly concentrated on itself. And since the Cantor set has Lebesgue measure zero we have  $m(\Sigma) = 0$ . The theorem fails, of course, since H has no absolutely continuous spectrum and  $H_B = H$ .

Our final example will be a positive one of interest in itself. Let  $H = L^2(R)$  and let H be the Schroedinger operator

$$(Hf)(x) = -\frac{d^2f}{dx^2} + g(x)f$$

acting on the class of functions f(x) with absolutely continuous first derivatives for which  $Hf \in H$ . Here g(x) is a continuous real-valued periodic function. H is the Hamiltonian operator of a one-dimensional quantum mechanical particle moving in a periodic potential (a crystal for example). It is known (cf. [12, Chapter XXI]) that H is selfadjoint with a purely continuous spectrum consisting of a sequence of closed intervals bounded below, extending to  $+\infty$ , and separated by a finite or infinite number of gaps (these are the so-called energy bands of solid state physics). Since the conditions of Theorem 2.8 are satisfied the spectrum of H is strongly concentrated on itself.

Let us consider the following sequence of operators:

$$(H_nf)(x) = -\frac{d^2f}{dx^2} + g_n(x)f$$

where

$$g_n(x)=egin{cases} g(x) ext{ for } \mid x\mid \leq n \ 0 ext{ for } \mid x\mid > n \ . \end{cases}$$

The operators  $H_n$  are self-adjoint over the same domain as H and they converge strongly to H in the generalized sense since for  $f \in D(H) = D(H_n)$  we have

$$||Hf - H_nf||^2 = \int_{|x|>n} |g(x)|^2 |f(x)|^2 dx \longrightarrow 0 \text{ as } n \longrightarrow \infty$$

The operator  $H_n$  is the Hamiltonian operator of a particle moving in a crystal of finite extent. Its spectrum, since  $g_n(x)$  is continuous CHRIS RORRES

with compact support, consists of a continuous portion  $[0, \infty)$  and at most a finite number of negative eigenvalues with finite multiplicity.

The quantity  $|| E(S)f ||^2$  in quantum mechanics represents the probability of measuring the value of the energy of the particle in the state f within the subset S. While for a finite crystal the energy may assume any value from 0 to  $+\infty$ , for an infinite crystal the energy must lie within the energy bands of the operator H. The fact that the spectrum of H is strongly concentrated on itself then assures us that for a finite crystal and a fixed state f we may make the probability of finding the energy outside the energy bands of the infinite crystal as small as we desire by taking the crystal sufficiently large (i.e., by choosing n sufficiently large).

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