Hindawi Publishing Corporation
Journal of Inequalities and Applications
Volume 2010, Article ID 295620, 10 pages
doi:10.1155/2010/295620

Research Article

Some Comparison Inequalities for Generalized Muirhead and Identric Means

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Received 21 December 2009; Accepted 23 January 2010

Academic Editor: Jong Kim

For $x, y > 0$, $a, b \in \mathbb{R}$, with $a + b \neq 0$, the generalized Muirhead mean $M(a,b;x,y)$ with parameters a and b and the identric mean $I(x,y)$ are defined by $M(a,b;x,y) = ((x^a y^b + x^b y^a)/2)^{1/(a+b)}$ and $I(x,y) = (1/e)(y^y/x^x)^{1/(y-x)}$, $x \neq y$, $I(x,y) = x$, $x = y$, respectively. In this paper, the following results are established: (1) $M(a,b;x,y) > I(x,y)$ for all $x, y > 0$ with $x \neq y$ and $(a,b) \in \{(a,b) \in \mathbb{R}^2 : a+b > 0,\ ab \leq 0,\ 2(a-b)^2 - 3(a+b) + 1 \geq 0,\ 3(a-b)^2 - 2(a+b) \geq 0\}$; (2) $M(a,b;x,y) < I(x,y)$ for all $x, y > 0$ with $x \neq y$ and $(a,b) \in \{(a,b) \in \mathbb{R}^2 : a \geq 0,\ b \geq 0,\ 3(a-b)^2 - 2(a+b) \leq 0\} \cup \{(a,b) \in \mathbb{R}^2 : a+b < 0\}$; (3) if $(a,b) \in \{(a,b) \in \mathbb{R}^2 : a > 0,\ b > 0,\ 3(a-b)^2 - 2(a+b) > 0\} \cup \{(a,b) \in \mathbb{R}^2 : ab < 0,\ 3(a-b)^2 - 2(a+b) < 0\}$, then there exist $x_1, y_1, x_2, y_2 > 0$ such that $M(a,b;x_1,y_1) > I(x_1,y_1)$ and $M(a,b;x_2,y_2) < I(x_2,y_2)$.

1. Introduction

For $x, y > 0$, $a, b \in \mathbb{R}$, with $a + b \neq 0$, the generalized Muirhead mean $M(a,b;x,y)$ with parameters a and b and the identric mean $I(x,y)$ are defined by

$$M(a,b;x,y) = \left(\frac{x^a y^b + x^b y^a}{2}\right)^{1/(a+b)}, \tag{1.1}$$

$$I(x,y) = \begin{cases} \dfrac{1}{e}\left(\dfrac{y^y}{x^x}\right)^{1/(y-x)}, & x \neq y, \\ x, & x = y, \end{cases} \tag{1.2}$$

respectively.

The generalized Muirhead mean was introduced by Trif [1], the monotonicity of $M(a,b;x,y)$ with respect to a or b was discussed, and a comparison theorem and a Minkowski-type inequality involving the generalized Muirhead mean $M(a,b;x,y)$ were discussed.

It is easy to see that the generalized Muirhead mean $M(a,b;x,y)$ is continuous on the domain $\{(a,b;x,y) : a+b\neq 0;\ x,y>0\}$ and differentiable with respect to $(x,y)\in(0,+\infty)\times(0,+\infty)$ for fixed $a,b\in\mathbb{R}$ with $a+b\neq 0$. It is symmetric in a and b and in x and y. Many means are special cases of the generalized Muirhead mean, for example,

$$\begin{gathered}
M(p,0;x,y) \quad \text{is the power or Hölder mean,} \\
M(0,1;x,y) \quad \text{is the arithmetic mean,} \\
M(a,a;x,y) \quad \text{is the geometric mean,} \\
M(0,-1;x,y) \quad \text{is the harmonic mean.}
\end{gathered} \tag{1.3}$$

The well-known Muirhead inequality [2] implies that if $x,y>0$ are fixed, then $M(a,b;x,y)$ is Schur convex on the domain $\{(a,b)\in\mathbb{R}^2 : a+b>0\}$ and Schur concave on the domain $\{(a,b)\in\mathbb{R}^2 : a+b<0\}$. Chu and Xia [3] discussed the Schur convexity and Schur concavity of $M(a,b;x,y)$ with respect to $(x,y)\in(0,\infty)\times(0,\infty)$ for fixed $a,b\in\mathbb{R}$ with $a+b\neq 0$.

Recently, the identric mean $I(x,y)$ has been the subject of intensive research. In particular, many remarkable inequalities for the identric mean $I(x,y)$ can be found in the literature [4–13].

The power mean of order r of the positive real numbers x and y is defined by

$$M_r(x,y)=\begin{cases}\left(\dfrac{x^r+y^r}{2}\right)^{1/r}, & r\neq 0,\\ \sqrt{xy}, & r=0.\end{cases} \tag{1.4}$$

The main properties of the power mean $M_r(x,y)$ are given in [14]. In particular, $M_r(x,y)$ is continuous and increasing with respect to $r\in\mathbb{R}$ for fixed $x,y>0$. Let $A(x,y)=(1/2)(x+y)$,

$$L(x,y)=\begin{cases}\dfrac{y-x}{\log y-\log x}, & x\neq y,\\ x, & x=y,\end{cases} \tag{1.5}$$

$G(x,y)=\sqrt{xy}$, and $H(x,y)=2xy/(x+y)$ be the arithmetic, logarithmic, geometric, and harmonic means of two positive numbers x and y. Then it is well known that

$$\begin{aligned}
\min\{x,y\} &< H(x,y)=M(0,-1;x,y)=M_{-1}(x,y)\\
&< G(x,y)=M(a,a;x,y)=M_0(x,y)<L(x,y)<I(x,y)\\
&< A(x,y)=M(0,1;x,y)=M_1(x,y)<\max\{x,y\}
\end{aligned} \tag{1.6}$$

for all $x,y>0$ with $x\neq y$.

The following sharp inequality is due to Carlson [15]:

$$L(x,y) < \frac{1}{3}M(0,1;x,y) + \frac{2}{3}M(a,a;x,y) \tag{1.7}$$

for all $x, y > 0$ with $x \neq y$.

Pittenger [16] proved that

$$M\left(\frac{2}{3},0;x,y\right) = M_{2/3}(x,y) < I(x,y) < M_{\log 2}(x,y) = M(\log 2,0;x,y) \tag{1.8}$$

for all $x, y > 0$ with $x \neq y$, and $M_{\log 2}(x,y)$ and $M_{2/3}(x,y)$ are the optimal upper and lower power mean bounds for the identric mean $I(x,y)$.

In [8, 9], Sándor established that

$$I(x,y) > \frac{2}{3}M(0,1;x,y) + \frac{1}{3}M(a,a;x,y) \tag{1.9}$$

for all $x, y > 0$ with $x \neq y$.

Alzer and Qiu [5] proved the inequalities

$$\alpha M(0,1;x,y) + (1-\alpha)M(a,a;x,y) < I(x,y) < \beta M(0,1;x,y) + (1-\beta)M(a,a;x,y) \tag{1.10}$$

for all $x, y > 0$ with $x \neq y$ if and only if $\alpha \leq 2/3$ and $\beta \geq 2/e$.

In [3], Chu and Xia proved that

$$M(a,b;x,y) \geq A(x,y) \tag{1.11}$$

for all $x, y > 0$ and $(a,b) \in \{(a,b) \in \mathbb{R}^2 : (a-b)^2 \geq a+b >, ab \leq 0\}$, and

$$M(a,b;x,y) \leq A(x,y) \tag{1.12}$$

for all $x, y > 0$ and $(a,b) \in \{(a,b) \in \mathbb{R}^2 : (a-b)^2 \leq a+b, a^2+b^2 \neq 0\} \cup \{(a,b) \in \mathbb{R}^2 : a+b < 0\}$.

Our purpose in what follows is to compare the generalized Muirhead mean $M(a,b;x,y)$ with the identric mean $I(x,y)$. Our main result is Theorem 1.1 which follows.

Theorem 1.1. *Suppose that* $E_1 = \{(a,b) \in \mathbb{R}^2 : a+b > 0, ab \leq 0, 2(a-b)^2 - 3(a+b) + 1 \geq 0, 3(a-b)^2 - 2(a+b) \geq 0\}$, $E_2 = \{(a,b) \in \mathbb{R}^2 : a \geq 0, b \geq 0, a^2+b^2 \neq 0, 3(a-b)^2 - 2(a+b) \leq 0\} \cup \{(a,b) \in \mathbb{R}^2 : a+b < 0\}$, *and* $E_3 = \{(a,b) \in \mathbb{R}^2 : a > 0, b > 0, 3(a-b)^2 - 2(a+b) > 0\} \cup \{(a,b) \in \mathbb{R}^2 : ab < 0, 3(a-b)^2 - 2(a+b) < 0\}$. *The following statements hold,*

(1) *If* $(a,b) \in E_1$, *then* $M(a,b;x,y) > I(x,y)$ *for all* $x, y > 0$ *with* $x \neq y$.

(2) *If* $(a,b) \in E_2$, *then* $M(a,b;x,y) < I(x,y)$ *for all* $x, y > 0$ *with* $x \neq y$.

(3) *If* $(a,b) \in E_3$, *then there exist* $x_1, y_1, x_2, y_2 > 0$ *such that* $M(a,b;x_1,y_1) > I(x_1,y_1)$ *and* $M(a,b;x_2,y_2) < I(x_2,y_2)$.

2. Lemma

In order to prove Theorem 1.1 we need Lemma 2.1 that follows.

Lemma 2.1. *Let a and b be two real numbers such that $a > b$ and $a+b \neq 0$. Let one define the function $f : [1,+\infty) \to \mathbb{R}$ as follows:*

$$f(t) = \frac{1}{a+b}\left[-bt^{a-b+1} + at^{a-b} - at^{b-a+1} + bt^{b-a} + \left(a^2 + b^2 - 2ab - a - b\right)(t-1)\right], \tag{2.1}$$

then the following statements hold.

(1) *If $b > 0$ and $3(a-b)^2 - 2(a+b) \leq 0$, then $f(t) < 0$ for $t > 1$.*

(2) *If $b < 0$, $a+b > 0$, $2(a-b)^2 - 3(a+b) + 1 \geq 0$, and $3(a-b)^2 - 2(a+b) \geq 0$, then $f(t) > 0$ for $t > 1$.*

(3) *If $a+b < 0$, then $f(t) < 0$ for $t > 1$.*

Proof. Simple computations lead to

$$f(1) = 0, \tag{2.2}$$

$$\begin{aligned} f'(t) = \frac{1}{a+b}\big[&-b(a-b+1)t^{a-b} + a(a-b)t^{a-b-1} + a(a-b-1)t^{b-a} \\ &-b(a-b)t^{b-a-1} + a^2 + b^2 - 2ab - a - b\big], \end{aligned} \tag{2.3}$$

$$f'(1) = \frac{3(a-b)^2 - 2(a+b)}{a+b}, \tag{2.4}$$

$$f''(t) = (a-b)t^{b-a-2}f_1(t), \tag{2.5}$$

where

$$\begin{aligned} f_1(t) = \frac{1}{a+b}\big[&-b(a-b+1)t^{2a-2b+1} + a(a-b-1)t^{2a-2b} \\ &-a(a-b-1)t + b(a-b+1)\big], \end{aligned} \tag{2.6}$$

$$f_1(1) = 0, \tag{2.7}$$

$$\begin{aligned} f_1'(t) = \frac{1}{a+b}\big[&-b(a-b+1)(2a-2b+1)t^{2a-2b} \\ &+2a(a-b)(a-b-1)t^{2a-2b-1} - a(a-b-1)\big], \end{aligned} \tag{2.8}$$

$$f_1'(1) = \frac{a-b}{a+b}\left[2(a-b)^2 - 3(a+b) + 1\right], \tag{2.9}$$

$$f_1''(t) = 2(a-b)t^{2a-2b-2}f_2(t), \tag{2.10}$$

where

$$f_2(t) = \frac{1}{a+b}[-b(a-b+1)(2a-2b+1)t + a(a-b-1)(2a-2b-1)], \tag{2.11}$$

$$f_2(1) = \frac{a-b}{a+b}\left[2(a-b)^2 - 3(a+b) + 1\right], \tag{2.12}$$

$$f_2'(t) = -\frac{b(a-b+1)(2a-2b+1)}{a+b}. \tag{2.13}$$

(1) We divide the proof of Lemma 2.1(1) into two cases.

Case 1. $b > 0$, $3(a-b)^2 - 2(a+b) \leq 0$, and $2(a-b)^2 - 3(a+b) + 1 \leq 0$. From (2.13), (2.12), (2.9), and (2.4), we clearly see that

$$\begin{aligned} &f_2'(t) < 0, \qquad f_2(1) \leq 0, \\ &f_1'(1) \leq 0, \qquad f'(1) \leq 0. \end{aligned} \tag{2.14}$$

Therefore, $f(t) < 0$ for $t \in (1, +\infty)$ easily follows from (2.2), (2.5), (2.7), (2.10), and (2.14).

Case 2. $b > 0$, $3(a-b)^2 - 2(a+b) \leq 0$, and $2(a-b)^2 - 3(a+b) + 1 > 0$; we conclude that

$$a < \frac{1}{2}. \tag{2.15}$$

In fact, we clearly see that $2(a-b)^2 - 3(a+b) + 1 = (2a^2 - 3a + 1) - (4ab - 2b^2 + 3b) < 2a^2 - 3a + 1 = (2a-1)(a-1) \leq 0$ for $1/2 \leq a < 1$, and $2(a-b)^2 - 3(a+b) + 1 \leq -(5/3)(a+b) + 1 < -2/3 < 0$ for $a \geq 1$ and $3(a-b)^2 - 2(a+b) \leq 0$.

Equation (2.15) and $3(a-b)^2 - 2(a+b) \leq 0$ imply that

$$\begin{aligned} &2a - 2b - 1 < 0, \\ &a^2 + b^2 - 2ab - a - b = (a-b)^2 - (a+b) < 0. \end{aligned} \tag{2.16}$$

Therefore, $f(t) < 0$ for $t > 1$ follows from (2.16) together with that $f(t)$ can be rewritten as

$$\begin{aligned} f(t) = &\frac{1}{a+b}\Big[at^{b-a+1}\left(t^{2a-2b-1} - 1\right) - bt^{b-a}\left(t^{2a-2b+1} - 1\right) \\ &+\left(a^2 + b^2 - 2ab - a - b\right)(t-1)\Big]. \end{aligned} \tag{2.17}$$

(2) If $b < 0$, $a+b > 0$, $2(a-b)^2 - 3(a+b) + 1 \geq 0$ and $3(a-b)^2 - 2(a+b) \geq 0$, then from (2.13), (2.12), (2.9), and (2.4) we get

$$\begin{aligned} &f_2'(t) > 0, \qquad f_2(1) \geq 0, \\ &f_1'(1) \geq 0, \qquad f'(1) \geq 0. \end{aligned} \tag{2.18}$$

Therefore, $f(t) > 0$ for $t \in (1, +\infty)$ easily follows from (2.2), (2.5), (2.7), and (2.10) together with (2.18).

(3) If $a + b < 0$, then we clearly see that inequalities (2.14) again hold, and $f(t) < 0$ for $t > 1$ follows from (2.2), (2.5), (2.7), and (2.10) together with (2.14). □

3. Proof of Theorem 1.1

Proof of Theorem 1.1. For convenience, we introduce the following classified regions in $\mathbb{R}^2$:

$$\begin{aligned}
E_{11} &= \Big\{(a,b) \in \mathbb{R}^2 : a+b > 0, a > 0, b < 0, 2(a-b)^2 - 3(a+b) + 1 \geq 0, \\
&\qquad 3(a-b)^2 - 2(a+b) \geq 0\Big\}, \\
E_{12} &= \Big\{(a,b) \in \mathbb{R}^2 : a+b > 0, a < 0, b > 0, 2(a-b)^2 - 3(a+b) + 1 \geq 0, \\
&\qquad 3(a-b)^2 - 2(a+b) \geq 0\Big\}, \\
E_{13} &= \Big\{(a,b) \in \mathbb{R}^2 : a = 0, b \geq 1\Big\}, \\
E_{14} &= \Big\{(a,b) \in \mathbb{R}^2 : b = 0, a \geq 1\Big\}, \\
E_{21} &= \Big\{(a,b) \in \mathbb{R}^2 : a > b > 0, 3(a-b)^2 - 2(a+b) \leq 0\Big\}, \\
E_{22} &= \Big\{(a,b) \in \mathbb{R}^2 : b > a > 0, 3(a-b)^2 - 2(a+b) \leq 0\Big\}, \\
E_{23} &= \left\{(a,b) \in \mathbb{R}^2 : a = 0, 0 < b \leq \frac{2}{3}\right\}, \\
E_{24} &= \left\{(a,b) \in \mathbb{R}^2 : b = 0, 0 < a \leq \frac{2}{3}\right\}, \\
E_{25} &= \Big\{(a,b) \in \mathbb{R}^2 : a > b, a+b < 0\Big\}, \\
E_{26} &= \Big\{(a,b) \in \mathbb{R}^2 : b > a, a+b < 0\Big\}, \\
E_{27} &= \Big\{(a,b) \in \mathbb{R}^2 : a = b \neq 0\Big\},
\end{aligned}$$

$$E_{31} = \left\{(a,b) \in \mathbb{R}^2 : a > b > 0, 3(a-b)^2 - 2(a+b) > 0\right\},$$
$$E_{32} = \left\{(a,b) \in \mathbb{R}^2 : b > a > 0, 3(a-b)^2 - 2(a+b) > 0\right\},$$
$$E_{33} = \left\{(a,b) \in \mathbb{R}^2 : a > 0, b < 0, 3(a-b)^2 - 2(a+b) < 0\right\},$$
$$E_{34} = \left\{(a,b) \in \mathbb{R}^2 : a < 0, b > 0, 3(a-b)^2 - 2(a+b) < 0\right\}. \tag{3.1}$$

Then we clearly see that $E_1 = \bigcup_{i=1}^{4} E_{1i}$, $E_2 = \bigcup_{i=1}^{7} E_{2i}$, and $E_3 = \bigcup_{i=1}^{4} E_{3i}$.

Without loss of generality, we assume that $y > x$. From the symmetry we clearly see that Theorem 1.1 is true if we prove that $M(a,b;x,y) - I(x,y)$ is positive, negative, and neither positive nor negative with respect to $(x,y) \in \{(x,y) \in \mathbb{R}^2 : y > x > 0\}$ for $(a,b) \in E_{11} \cup E_{13}$, $E_{21} \cup E_{23} \cup E_{25} \cup E_{27}$, and $E_{31} \cup E_{33}$.

Let $t = y/x > 1$, then (1.1) and (1.2) lead to

$$\log M(a,b;x,y) - \log I(x,y) = \frac{1}{a+b} \log \frac{t^a + t^b}{2} - \frac{t}{t-1} \log t + 1. \tag{3.2}$$

Let

$$g(t) = \frac{1}{a+b} \log \frac{t^a + t^b}{2} - \frac{t}{t-1} \log t + 1. \tag{3.3}$$

Then simple computations yield

$$\lim_{t \to 1} g(t) = 0,$$
$$g'(t) = \frac{g_1(t)}{(t-1)^2}, \tag{3.4}$$

where

$$g_1(t) = \log t - \frac{(t-1)\left(bt^{b-1} + at^{a-1} + at^b + bt^a\right)}{(a+b)\left(t^a + t^b\right)}. \tag{3.5}$$

Note that

$$g_1(1) = 0, \tag{3.6}$$

$$g_1'(t) = \frac{(t-1)t^{a+b-2}}{\left(t^a + t^b\right)^2} f(t), \tag{3.7}$$

where $f(t)$ is defined as in Lemma 2.1.

We divide the proof into three cases.

Case 3. $(a, b) \in E_{11} \cup E_{13}$. We divide our discussion into two subcases.

Subcase 1. $(a, b) \in E_{11}$. From Lemma 2.1(2) we get

$$f(t) > 0 \tag{3.8}$$

for $t > 1$.

Equations (3.3)–(3.8) imply that

$$g(t) > 0 \tag{3.9}$$

for $t > 1$.

Therefore, $M(a, b; x, y) > I(x, y)$ follows from (3.2) and (3.9).

Subcase 2. $(a, b) \in E_{13}$. Then from (1.1), (1.4), and (1.6) together with the monotonicity of the power mean $M_r(x, y)$ with respect to $r \in \mathbb{R}$ for fixed $x, y > 0$, we get

$$M(a, b; x, y) = M(0, b; x, y) = M_b(x, y) \geq M_1(x, y) > I(x, y). \tag{3.10}$$

Case 4. $(a, b) \in E_{21} \cup E_{23} \cup E_{25} \cup E_{27}$. We divide our discussion into four subcases.

Subcase 3. $(a, b) \in E_{21}$. Then Lemma 2.1(1) leads to

$$f(t) < 0 \tag{3.11}$$

for $t > 1$.

Therefore, $M(a, b; x, y) < I(x, y)$ follows from (3.2)–(3.7) and (3.11).

Subcase 4. $(a, b) \in E_{23}$. Then from (1.1), (1.4), and (1.8) together with the monotonicity of the power mean $M_r(x, y)$ with respect to $r \in \mathbb{R}$ for fixed $x, y > 0$ we clearly see that

$$M(a, b; x, y) = M_b(x, y) \leq M_{2/3}(x, y) < I(x, y). \tag{3.12}$$

Subcase 5. $(a, b) \in E_{25}$. Then from Lemma 2.1(3) we know that (3.11) holds again; hence, $M(a, b; x, y) < I(x, y)$.

Subcase 6. $(a, b) \in E_{27}$. Then (1.6) leads to

$$M(a, b; x, y) = M(a, a; x, y) = G(x, y) < I(x, y). \tag{3.13}$$

Case 5. $(a, b) \in E_{31} \cup E_{33}$. We divide our discussion into two subcases.

Subcase 7. $(a,b) \in E_{31}$. Then (2.4) leads to

$$f'(1) > 0. \tag{3.14}$$

Inequality (3.14) and the continuity of $f'(t)$ imply that there exists $\delta_1 > 0$ such that

$$f'(t) > 0 \tag{3.15}$$

for $t \in [1, 1+\delta_1)$.

From (2.2) and (3.15) we clearly see that

$$f(t) > 0 \tag{3.16}$$

for $t \in (1, 1+\delta_1)$.

Therefore, $M(a,b;x,y) > I(x,y)$ for $(x,y) \in \{(x,y) \in \mathbb{R}^2 : y > x > 0, y < (1+\delta_1)x\}$ follows from (3.2)–(3.7) and (3.16).

On the other hand, from (3.3) we clearly see that

$$\lim_{t \to +\infty} g(t) = -\infty. \tag{3.17}$$

Equations (3.2) and (3.3) together with (3.17) imply that there exists sufficient large $\lambda_1 > 1$ such that $M(a,b;x,y) < I(x,y)$ for $(x,y) \in \{(x,y) \in \mathbb{R}^2 : y > \lambda_1 x > 0\}$.

Subcase 8. $(a,b) \in E_{33}$. Then (2.2) and (2.4) together with the continuity of $f'(t)$ imply that there exists $\delta_2 > 0$ such that

$$f(t) < 0 \tag{3.18}$$

for $t \in (1, 1+\delta_2)$.

Therefore, $M(a,b;x,y) < I(x,y)$ for $(x,y) \in \{(x,y) \in \mathbb{R}^2 : y > x > 0, y < (1+\delta_2)x\}$ follows from (3.2)–(3.7) and (3.18).

On the other hand, from (3.3) we clearly see that

$$\lim_{t \to +\infty} g(t) = +\infty. \tag{3.19}$$

Equations (3.2) and (3.3) together with (3.19) imply that there exists sufficient large $\lambda_2 > 1$ such that $M(a,b;x,y) > I(x,y)$ for $(x,y) \in \{(x,y) \in \mathbb{R}^2 : y > \lambda_2 x > 0\}$. □

Remark 3.1. Let $E_4 = \{(a,b) \in \mathbb{R}^2 : a+b \neq 0\} \setminus (E_1 \cup E_2 \cup E_3)$, then $E_4 = \{(a,b) \in \mathbb{R}^2 : ab < 0, 3(a-b)^2 - 2(a+b) > 0, 2(a-b)^2 - 3(a+b) + 1 < 0\}$. Unfortunately, in this paper we cannot discuss the case of $(a,b) \in E_4$; we leave it as an open problem to the readers.

Acknowledgments

This research is partly supported by N. S. Foundation of China under grant no. 60850005 and the N. S. Foundation of Zhejiang Province under grants no. D7080080 and no. Y607128.

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