Approximate counting in bounded arithmetic

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Plan for talk

1. Counting in arithmetic
2. Weak pigeonhole principle
3. Counting with additive error
4. Counting with multiplicative error

Counting in arithmetic

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Finite sets and counting

Theories of arithmetic

- official objects: natural numbers
- encode all kinds of stuff: strings, graphs, circuits, ...

We can manipulate finite sets of such objects

The counting problem for a set X:

- Can the theory meaningfully determine the size $\#X$?

Why bother?

Potential applications:

- counting arguments in combinatorics
  e.g., Ramsey's theorem
- probabilistic arguments
- formalization of randomized algorithms,
  randomized (and counting) complexity classes
- translation of arithmetic to propositional proofs
  $\Longrightarrow$ propositional simulations

Bounded arithmetic cheat sheet

Base theory PV_1:

- objects: natural numbers ("in binary")
- symbols for all poly-time functions and relations
  $|x| = \lceil \log_2(x+1) \rceil$
- induction for quantifier-free formulas φ

$$\varphi(0,\dots) \wedge \forall x\,(\varphi(x,\dots) \to \varphi(x+1,\dots)) \to \forall x\,\varphi(x,\dots)$$

$\mathrm{T}^i_2 = \mathrm{PV}_1 +$ induction for Σ^b_i formulas $\equiv \mathrm{PV}_{i+1}$

$$\exists \vec{x}_1 \le t_1\, \forall \vec{x}_2 \le t_2\, \dots Q\vec{x}_i \le t_i\, \theta(\vec{x}_1,\dots,\vec{x}_i,x,\dots)$$

$\mathrm{S}^i_2 = \mathrm{PV}_1 +$ length-induction for Σ^b_i formulas

$$\varphi(0,\dots) \wedge \forall x\,(\varphi(x,\dots) \to \varphi(x+1,\dots)) \to \forall x\,\varphi(|x|,\dots)$$

$$\mathrm{T}^0_2 \equiv \mathrm{PV}_1 \subseteq \mathrm{S}^1_2 \subseteq \mathrm{T}^1_2 \subseteq \mathrm{S}^2_2 \subseteq \mathrm{T}^2_2 \subseteq \mathrm{S}^3_2 \subseteq \cdots$$

One-sorted vs. two-sorted theories

Two-sorted bounded arithmetic:

- (unary/small/auxiliary) natural numbers
- finite sets (= binary strings = binary/large numbers)

one-sorted	two-sorted
numbers	sets (binary numbers)
logarithmic numbers	numbers (unary)
PV_1	VPV
S_2^i, T_2^i	V^i, TV^i
length induction	induction
induction	string induction

We are talking about finite sets of the "binary objects"

$\Longrightarrow$ prefer one-sorted theories to prevent confusion

Representation of sets

Sets (sequences) $X = \{x_i : i < n\}$ encoded by numbers

- can only have logarithmic size
- straightforward to count by a PV-function

Bounded definable sets $X = \{x < a : \varphi(x, p)\}$

- X specified inside the theory by a, p (φ is fixed)
- φ low complexity
  e.g.: φ quantifier-free $\implies$ P/poly sets
  alternatively: given by a circuit $C : \{0,1\}^n \to \{0,1\}$, $a = 2^n$
- how to count them???

Approximate counting

$X = \{x < 2^n : C(x) = 1\}$ given by a circuit $C\colon \{0,1\}^n \to \{0,1\}$

Computing $s = \#X$ exactly is #P-complete

- Toda's theorem [T'89]: $\mathrm{PH} \subseteq \mathrm{P}^{\#\mathrm{P}}$
- if we could define $\#X$ by a Σ_i^b formula
  $\Longrightarrow$ $\#\mathrm{P} \subseteq \mathrm{FPH}$ and PH collapses

But we can approximate $\#X$ in PH!

- with additive error: $s - \varepsilon 2^n \leq \#X \leq s + \varepsilon 2^n$
- with multiplicative error: $(1-\varepsilon)s \leq \#X \leq (1+\varepsilon)s$
- error parameter $\varepsilon = 1/m$, m given in unary (e.g., $\varepsilon = n^{-c}$)

Goal: do that in bounded arithmetic

Weak pigeonhole principle

1. Counting in arithmetic
2. **Weak pigeonhole principle**
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PHP and WPHP

Pigeonhole principle:
a pigeonholes cannot accommodate b pigeons, $b > a$

Formal statement for relations (multifunctions) R:

$$mPHP^b_a(R) = \forall y < b\, \exists x < a\, R(y,x) \\ \rightarrow \exists y < y' < b\, \exists x < a\, \big(R(y,x) \wedge R(y',x)\big)$$

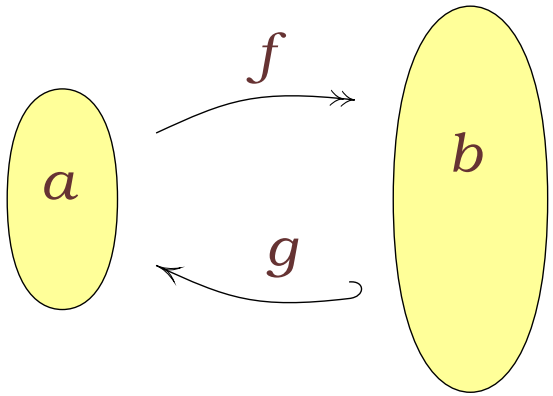
$mPHP^{a+1}_a$ is an exact counting principle
not available in bounded arithmetic

Weak PHP (WPHP): b "much" larger than a
often $b = a^2$, $b = 2a$; we take $b = a(1 + 1/n)$, n unary

Theorem [PWW'88, MPW'02]: $T^2_2 \vdash \mathrm{mWPHP}(\Sigma^b_1)$

Variants of (W)PHP

Special cases where R or R^{-1} is a function:



- injective (W)PHP

$$iPHP^b_a(g) = \forall y < b\ g(y) < a \rightarrow \exists y < y' < b\ g(y) = g(y')$$

- surjective ("dual") (W)PHP

$$sPHP^b_a(f) = \exists y < b \forall x < a\ f(x) \neq y$$

- retraction-pair (W)PHP

$$rPHP^b_a(f, g) = \forall y < b\ g(y) < a \rightarrow \exists y < b\ f(g(y)) \neq y$$

For some reasons, our preferred variant is sWPHP (or rWPHP)

Counting with WPHP

Basic idea: witness that $|X| \leq a$ by exhibiting

a surjection $f : [a] \twoheadrightarrow X$ (for sWPHP)

or

an injection $f : X \hookrightarrow [a]$ (for iWPHP)

Trouble: Where shall we get these functions from?

Ostensibly, WPHP is a passive counting principle:
it says something is impossible, it does not supply any counting functions

Ad hoc counting arguments using WPHP:

- [PWW'88]: T_2^∞ proves the existence of ∞ many primes
- [Pud'90]: T_2^∞ proves Ramsey's theorem

Can we develop a more general method?

Two general setups

Approximate counting with additive error

- estimate the size of $X \subseteq [2^n]$ within error $2^n/m$
  = estimate $\Pr_{x<a}[x \in X]$ within error $1/m$
- Δ_1^b sets can be counted in
  $\mathrm{APC}_1 := \mathrm{PV}_1 + \mathrm{sWPHP}(\mathrm{PV}) \subseteq \mathrm{T}_2^2$
- based on pseudorandom generators

Approximate counting with multiplicative error

- estimate the size of $X \subseteq 2^n$ within error $|X|/m$
- Σ_1^b sets can be counted in
  $\mathrm{APC}_2 := \mathrm{T}_2^1 + \mathrm{sWPHP}(\mathrm{FP}^{\mathrm{NP}}) \subseteq \mathrm{T}_2^3$
- based on linear hashing

Counting with additive error

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2. Weak pigeonhole principle
3. **Counting with additive error**
4. Counting with multiplicative error

Main strategy

Goal: $X \subseteq [2^n]$ given by a circuit
$\rightsquigarrow$ approximate $|X|$ with error $\varepsilon 2^n$ (think $\varepsilon = 1/n^c$)

- estimate $\Pr_{x<2^n}[x \in X]$ with error ε by drawing $O(1/\varepsilon)$ independent random samples
  $\Longrightarrow$ randomized poly-time algorithm
- derandomize using the Nisan–Wigderson generator

How does the theory know that the result is not just a meaningless number?

- analysis of the generator can be carried out in PV_1
  $\Longrightarrow$ explicit "counting functions" for X !

Hard Boolean functions

Nisan–Wigderson generator [NW'94]

- $\mathrm{NW}_h\colon \{0,1\}^{c \log n} \to \{0,1\}^n$ computable in time $n^{O(1)}$
- "fools" circuits $C\colon \{0,1\}^n \to \{0,1\}$ of size $n^{O(1)}$

Needs access to a hard Boolean function:

- $h\colon \{0,1\}^k \to \{0,1\}$, $k = d \log n$
- h cannot be approximated by $2^{k/4}$-size circuits on $\geq \frac{1}{2} + 2^{-k/4}$ fraction of inputs

APC_1 proves: (truth tables of) such hard functions exist!

- simple counting argument
  (count circuits and error vectors)
- enumerate "easy functions" by a poly-time function
  apply sWPHP

Size comparison with error

Naïve idea: $|X| \leq |Y|$ iff there is a surjection $Y \twoheadrightarrow X$

What we get from analysing NW is more complicated:

Definition: $X, Y \subseteq [2^n]$ definable sets, $\varepsilon \geq 0$

- $X \preceq_\varepsilon Y$ iff there exist $v > 0$ and a circuit

$$C : [v] \times (Y \dot\cup [\varepsilon 2^n]) \twoheadrightarrow [v] \times X$$

- $X \approx_\varepsilon Y$ iff $X \preceq_\varepsilon Y \wedge Y \preceq_\varepsilon X$
- notation: $n \in \mathrm{Log} \iff \exists a\, n = |a|$ (i.e., 2^n exists)

Theorem [J'07]: APC_1 proves: If X is defined by a circuit and $\varepsilon^{-1} \in \mathrm{Log}$, there exists s such that $X \approx_\varepsilon [s]$.

(we also get injections going the other way)

Working with $\preceq_\varepsilon$

Basic toolbox for using approximate counting:

APC_1 proves

- $\preceq_\varepsilon$ behaves well wrt $X \cup Y$, $X \setminus Y$, $X \times Y$, ...
- averaging principle
  ("if $\Pr_{x,y}[A(x,y)] \geq p$, there is x s.t. $\Pr_y[A(x,y)] \geq p$")
- Chernoff–Hoeffding inequality
- inclusion-exclusion principle

Complexity of $\preceq_\varepsilon$

In more involved arguments, we might need to

- use $\preceq_\varepsilon$ inside an induction formula,
- define other sets using $\preceq_\varepsilon$, etc.

$\Longrightarrow$ need a bound on the complexity of $\preceq_\varepsilon$

- as it stands: $X \preceq_\varepsilon Y$ is an unbounded $\exists\Pi^b_2$-formula
- $\varepsilon^{-1} \in \mathrm{Log}$ and X, Y are defined by circuits
  $\Longrightarrow$ it is Σ^b_2 by the Theorem
- for parametric families, it is P/poly:
  $\varepsilon^{-1} \in \mathrm{Log}$, family $\{X_u \mid u < a\}$ of subsets of $[2^n]$
  defined by a circuit $C(u, x) \colon [a] \times [2^n] \to [2]$
  $\Longrightarrow$ a circuit $Sz \colon [a] \to [2^n]$ s.t. $X_u \approx_\varepsilon [Sz(u)]$
  $\Longrightarrow$ can appear in induction formulas in APC_1

Relativization

Relativized bounded arithmetic:

- new predicate $\alpha(x)$ w/o any specific axioms
  represents an arbitrary oracle A
- $\mathrm{PV}(\alpha)$-functions, $\Sigma^b_i(\alpha)$ formulas
  theories $\mathrm{PV}_1(\alpha)$, $\mathrm{T}^i_2(\alpha)$, $\mathrm{S}^i_2(\alpha)$, ...

The approximate counting machinery relativizes:

- $\mathrm{APC}_1(\alpha)$ can count $\mathrm{PV}(\alpha)$-definable sets ("$\mathrm{P}^A/\,\mathrm{poly}$")

Specializing α with Σ^b_i formulas:

- $\mathrm{APC}_{i+1} = \mathrm{T}^i_2 + \mathrm{sWPHP}(\mathrm{PV}_{i+1}) \subseteq \mathrm{T}^{i+2}_2$
  can count PV_{i+1}-definable sets ("$\Delta^{\mathrm{P}}_{i+1}/\,\mathrm{poly}$")

Applications

- formalization of randomized complexity classes (e.g., TFRP, BPP, APP, MA, AM)
- formalization of specific randomized algorithms (e.g., Rabin–Miller primality testing algorithm, [LC'12] Edmonds and Mulmuley–Vazirani–Vazirani perfect matching algorithms)
- as a tool for working with probabilities (e.g., [Pich'15] formalization of the PCP theorem)

Counting with multiplicative error

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Overview

Counting $X \subseteq [2^n]$ with error $\varepsilon|X|$ rather than $\varepsilon 2^n$

- witness that $|X| \leq s$ using linear hash functions (Sipser's coding lemma)
- equivalent to existence of suitable surjective "counting functions"
- asymmetric: no witness for $|X| \geq s$!
- can count "sparse" sets
  $\Longrightarrow$ useful for inductive counting arguments

Linear hashing

Let $X \subseteq [2^n] = \mathbb{F}_2^n$, $|X| = s$

- $A \in \mathbb{F}_2^{t \times n}$ random matrix $\implies$
  $\mathsf{E}\,\#\{\{x,y\} \in \binom{X}{2} : Ax = Ay\} = 2^{-t}\binom{s}{2}$
- $2^t \geq s^2 \implies$ random A gives an injection $X \hookrightarrow [2^t] = \mathbb{F}_2^t$
  $\implies$ we can distinguish sets of size $\leq \sqrt{s}$ from size $> s$

Smaller gap: Sipser's coding lemma [Sip'83]

- $A \in \mathbb{F}_2^{t \times n}$ separates x from X if $Ax \neq Ay$ for all $y \in X \setminus \{x\}$
- $\{A_i\}_{i<k}$ isolates X if each $x \in X$ sep. from X by some A_i

Theorem: $t = k = \lceil \log s \rceil + 1 \implies$ random $\{A_i\}_{i<k}$ isolates X

- we can distinguish sets of size $\leq \frac{1}{4}s$ from size $\gtrsim s \log s$
- to get $s(1 \pm \varepsilon)$: apply to suitable Cartesian power X^d

Formalization

For $X \subseteq [2^n]$ a definable set, $\varepsilon^{-1} \in \mathrm{Log}$, $s \leq 2^n$:

$$X \precsim_\varepsilon s \iff \exists \{A_i\}_{i<t} \in (\mathbb{F}_2^{t \times n})^t \text{ that isolates } X^d \subseteq [2^{nd}]$$

where $d = 12|\tilde{s}|\lceil \varepsilon^{-1} \rceil^2$, $t = |\tilde{s}^d| + 1$ for some $0 < \tilde{s} \leq s$
(or: $s = 0$ and $X = \varnothing$)

Complexity:

- X Σ_1^b-definable (NP/poly) $\implies$ $X \precsim_\varepsilon s$ is Σ_2^b
- we can essentially make it Π_1^b (coNP/poly)
  for a parametric family of Σ_1^b sets
  $\implies$ use in induction arguments, ...

Equivalence with surjections

Key result for manipulating $\precsim$:
equivalent to existence of PV_2 ($\mathrm{FP}^{\mathrm{NP}}/\mathrm{poly}$) surjections

Theorem [J'09]: APC_2 proves for Σ^b_1-definable X:

- $X \precsim_\varepsilon s \implies \exists$ PV_2-retraction pair $[\lfloor s(1+\varepsilon)\rfloor^d] \rightleftarrows X^d$
- if $\exists$ PV_2-surjection* $[rs^e] \twoheadrightarrow [r] \times X^e$ for $r > 0$, $e \in \mathrm{Log}$, then $X \precsim_\varepsilon s$, and

$$\Pr\left[\{A_i\}_{i<t} \text{ does not isolate } X^d\right] \preceq_0^{\Sigma^b_1} 2/3$$

where d, t are as in the definition of $\precsim$

$\preceq_0^{\Sigma^b_1}$ = counting with additive error relativized with a Σ^b_1 oracle

*with some technical condition

Properties of approximate counting

APC_2 proves (for Σ^b_1 sets):

- $\precsim_\varepsilon$ agrees with exact counting and $\preceq_\varepsilon$ where possible
- $\precsim_\varepsilon$ behaves well wrt $X \cup Y$, $X \times Y$
  (even for logarithmically many terms)
- averaging principles
- approximate increasing enumeration:
  There are t, s s.t. $s \leq t \leq \lfloor s(1+\varepsilon) \rfloor$, and non-decreasing PV_2-retraction pairs

$$[t] \underset{f'}{\overset{f}{\rightleftarrows}} X \underset{g'}{\overset{g}{\rightleftarrows}} [s]$$

  s.t. f, g are almost 1-to-1, and

$$\left\lfloor \tfrac{s}{t} x \right\rfloor \leq g(f(x)) \leq \left\lceil \tfrac{s}{t} x \right\rceil$$

Relativization

Again, everything relativizes:

- $\mathrm{APC}_2(\alpha)$ can count $\Sigma^b_1(\alpha)$-definable sets ("$\mathrm{NP}^A/\,\mathrm{poly}$")

Specializing α with Σ^b_{i-1} formulas ($i \geq 1$):

- $\mathrm{APC}_{i+1} = \mathrm{T}^i_2 + \mathrm{sWPHP}(\mathrm{PV}_{i+1}) \subseteq \mathrm{T}^{i+2}_2$ can count Σ^b_i-definable sets ($\Sigma^{\mathrm{P}}_i/\,\mathrm{poly}$)
- (recall: with additive error, APC_{i+1} can do $\Delta^{\mathrm{P}}_{i+1}/\,\mathrm{poly}$)

Applications

- formalization of combinatorial counting arguments (e.g., Ramsey's theorem, tournament principle)
- improved collapse of hierarchies: if $\mathrm{T}_2^i = \mathrm{S}_2^{i+1}$, then $\mathrm{T}_2^i = \mathrm{T}_2$ proves $\Sigma^{\mathrm{P}}_{i+1} \subseteq \Delta^{\mathrm{P}}_{i+1}/\operatorname{poly}$ and $\mathrm{PH} = \mathrm{Bool}(\Sigma^{\mathrm{P}}_{i+1})$
- [BKT'14] APC_2 proves the ordering principle
- [BKZ'15] collapse of constant-depth proofs with modular-counting gates (formalization of Valiant–Vazirani and Toda's theorem in $\mathrm{APC}_2{}^{\oplus_p \mathrm{P}}$)

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