

A Discussion About Pólya Urn

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The following exercise is E10.1 of the textbook.

At time 0, an urn contains 1 black ball and 1 white ball. At each time $1, 2, 3, \dots$, a ball is chosen at random from the urn and is replaced together with a new ball of the same colour. Just after time n , there are therefore $n + 2$ balls in the urn, of which $B_n + 1$ are black, where B_n is the number of black balls chosen by time n . Let $M_n = (B_n + 1) / (n + 2)$, the proportion of black balls in the urn just after time n .

Question 1. *Prove that (relative to a natural filtration which you should specify) M is a martingale.*

Let $\mathcal{F}_n := \sigma(B_i, 0 \leq i \leq n)$ be the natural filtration, then $M = (M_n : n \geq 0)$ is adapted and integrable. Next we prove that $\mathbb{E}[M_n | \mathcal{F}_{n-1}] = M_{n-1}$, a.s. ($n \geq 1$).

$$\begin{aligned} & \mathbb{E}[M_n | \mathcal{F}_{n-1}] \\ &= \mathbb{E}\left[\frac{B_n + 1}{n + 2} \middle| \mathcal{F}_{n-1}\right] \\ &= \frac{1}{n + 2} \mathbb{E}[B_n + 1 | \mathcal{F}_{n-1}] \\ &= \frac{1}{n + 2} \mathbb{E}\left[B_{n-1} + \frac{B_{n-1} + 1}{n + 1} + 1 \middle| \mathcal{F}_{n-1}\right] \\ &= \mathbb{E}\left[\frac{B_{n-1} + 1}{(n-1) + 2} \middle| \mathcal{F}_{n-1}\right] \\ &= M_{n-1} \end{aligned}$$

Therefore, M is a martingale relative to $\{\{\mathcal{F}_n\}, \mathbf{P}\}$.

Question 2. *Prove that $\mathbf{P}(B_n = k) = (n + 1)^{-1}$ for $0 \leq k \leq n$.*

$$\begin{aligned} & \mathbf{P}(B_n = k) \\ &= \binom{n}{k} \frac{(1 \times \dots \times k) \times (1 \times \dots \times (n - k))}{2 \times 3 \times \dots \times (n + 1)} \\ &= \frac{n!}{k!(n - k)!} \cdot \frac{k!(n - k)!}{(n + 1)!} \\ &= \frac{1}{n + 1} \end{aligned}$$

Question 3. *What is the distribution of Θ , where $\Theta := \lim M_n$?*

We have known that $P(B_n = k) = \frac{1}{n+1}$, so M_n is uniform in $\{\frac{1}{n+2}, \frac{2}{n+2}, \dots, \frac{n+2}{n+2}\}$. Thus we have

$$\begin{aligned} & P(\Theta \leq t)(t \in [0, 1]) \\ &= P(\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} M_n \leq t) \\ &= \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} P(M_n \leq t) \\ &= t \end{aligned}$$

Therefore, Θ satisfies the uniform distribution.