

Theory Group Seminar Notes

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Introduction

These are my notes for the seminars that happen in the [Theory Group](#) at The University of Toronto. Many thanks to [Professor Allan Borodin](#) for allowing me to attend the Theory Group seminars and helping out. An online version of these notes are available at <https://rishit-dagli.github.io/cs-theory-notes>.

The Theory Group focuses on theory of computation. The group is interested in using mathematical techniques to understand the nature of computation and to design and analyze algorithms for important and fundamental problems.

The members of the theory group are all interested, in one way or another, in the limitations of computation: What problems are not feasible to solve on a computer? How can the infeasibility of a problem be used to rigorously construct secure cryptographic protocols? What problems cannot be solved faster using more machines? What are the limits to how fast a particular problem can be solved or how much space is needed to solve it? How do randomness, parallelism, the operations that are allowed, and the need for fault tolerance or security affect this?

1 Lower Bounds for Locally Decodable Codes from Semirandom CSP Refutation

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The related paper: Combinatorial lower bounds for 3-query LDCs by Alrabiah et al. [1]. Seminar by Peter Manohar. [2]

1.1 Abstract

A code C is a q -locally decodable code (q -LDC) if one can recover any chosen bit b_i of the k -bit message b with good confidence by randomly querying the n -bit encoding x on at most q coordinates. Existing constructions of 2-LDCs achieve blocklength $n = \exp(O(k))$, and lower bounds show that this is in fact tight. However, when $q = 3$, far less is known: the best constructions have $n = \text{subexp}(k)$, while the best known lower bounds, that have stood for nearly two decades, only show a quadratic lower bound of $n \geq \Omega(k^2)$ on the blocklength.

In this talk, we will survey a new approach to prove lower bounds for LDCs using recent advances in refuting semirandom instances of constraint satisfaction problems. These new tools yield, in the 3-query case, a near-cubic lower bound of $n \geq \Omega(k^3)$, improving on prior work by a polynomial factor in k .

1.2 Locally Decodable Codes

Take codes $b \in 0, 1^k \rightarrow x \in 0, 1^n$

Codes x are read by the decoder, $i \in [k]$, $\hat{b}_i \in 0, 1$

Definition 1. C is a (q, δ, ϵ) -locally decodable if for any x with $\Delta(x, \text{Enc}(b)) \leq \delta n$, $\text{Dec}^x(i) = b_i$ w.p. $\geq \frac{1}{2} + \epsilon$ for any i .

Ask the question, what is the best possible rate for a q -LDC given a q ?

q	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
2	$2^{\Omega(k)} \leq n$	$n \leq 2^k$
3	$k^2 \leq n$	$n \leq \exp(k^{o(1)})$
$O(1)$, even	$k^{\frac{q}{q+1}} \leq n$	$n \leq \exp(k^{o(1)})$
$O(1)$, odd	$k^{\frac{q+1}{q-1}} \leq n$	$n \leq \exp(k^{o(1)})$

Focus on the case $q = 3$, we have gotten better bounds:

$$\begin{aligned} k &\leq n \leq 2^k \\ k^2 &\leq n \leq \exp(\exp(\sqrt{\log k \log \log k})) \end{aligned} \tag{1}$$

In [1], they show that a better minimum bound can be found than these existing ones for $q = 3$:

$$k^3 \leq n \quad (2)$$

The main result is that:

Theorem 1. *Let C be a $(3, \delta, \epsilon)$ -locally decodable codes. Then $n \geq \tilde{\Omega}_{\delta, \epsilon}(k^3)$.*

Semi-random CSP refutation comes to our aid to prove this! The intuitive way to put this theorem is that q -LDC lower bound is same as refuting "LDC" q -XOR.

1.3 How to prove the Theorem

The idea:

- q -LDC lower bound is same as refuting "LDC" q -XOR
 - CSP Refutation
- Proof of existing q -LDC lower bound for q even
- Proof sketch of k^3 lower bound

1.4 Normally Decodable Codes

We can see that the decoder we have can arbitrary but WLOG we can assume there are q -unif hypergraphs H_1, H_2, \dots, H_k where every H_i is such that:

$$H_i \subseteq \binom{[n]}{q}$$

We can also see that:

Each H_i is a matching such that $|H_i| \geq \delta n$
and, $Dec(i)$ picks $C \leftarrow H_i$ and outputs $\sum_{j \in C} x_j$

One such example is the Hadmard code:

$$\begin{aligned} b \in 0, 1^k &\mapsto f = (\langle b, v \rangle)_{v \in 0, 1}^k \\ b_i = f(e_i) &= f(v) + f(v + e_i) \end{aligned} \quad (3)$$

Can think of this as v and $v + e_i$ are connected.

Matching vector codes are $\approx \mathbb{Z}_m^h$

1.5 Proof: Going from LDC to XOR

We suppose that our code is linear and that there exists q -unif hypergraphs H_1, H_2, \dots, H_k .

We also know that:

Each H_i is a matching such that $|H_i| \geq \delta n$
and, $Dec(i)$ picks $C \leftarrow H_i$ and outputs $\sum_{j \in C} x_j$

So, we start by considering a q -XOR instance ψ_b :

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Vars: } & \{x_j\}_{j \in [n]} \\ \text{Over Equations: } & \sum_{j \in C} x_j = b_i, \forall i \in [k], C \in H_i \end{aligned}$$

We can write down the maximum fraction of satisfiable constraints: $val(\psi_b) = 1$ for any $b \in \{0, 1\}^k$.

It is sufficient now if we can argue that ψ_b is unsat w.h.p. for some random b when $n \ll k^{\frac{q}{q-2}}$.

Now we need to refute XOR, there are many ways to argue unsatisfiability of an XOR instance. One reason why we can not use probabilistic approaches here is that ψ_b only has k bits of randomness.

One way we can have some success here is to use a refutation algorithm

$$\psi \rightarrow A \rightarrow algval(\psi)$$

With this the guarantee then would be $val(\psi) \leq algval(\psi)$ which is similar to saying that if $algval(\psi) < 1$ then A refutes ψ . The ideal goal would be to refute random ψ with m constraints w.h.p.

However, we take a look at semi-random XOR. Our refutation algorithm and the guarantee will still be the same:

$$\psi \rightarrow A \rightarrow algval(\psi)$$

with the guarantee that $val(\psi) \leq algval(\psi)$.

So, now we generate semi-random $\psi w/m$ constraints:

- The worst case would be random q -unif hypergraph
- Random RHS b_c for each $C \in H$

The equation we have is:

$$\sum_{j \in C} x_j = b_c \tag{4}$$

And we also already know that

$$\psi_b \text{ is } \sum_{j \in C}$$

And, $x_j = b_i, i \in [k], C \in H_i$.
 ψ_b is almost semi-random.

Thus, we have shown [1.3](#) Part 1 of Proof.

1.6 Proof: Existing q -LDC lower bound for q even

References

- [1] Omar Alrabiah, Venkatesan Guruswami, Pravesh Kothari, and Peter Manohar. A near-cubic lower bound for 3-query locally decodable codes from semirandom CSP refutation. Technical Report TR22-101, Electronic Colloquium on Computational Complexity (ECCC), July 2022.
- [2] Arnab Bhattacharyya, L. Sunil Chandran, and Suprovat Ghoshal. Combinatorial lower bounds for 3-query ldcs, 2019. URL <https://arxiv.org/abs/1911.10698>.