CS243: Introduction to Algorithmic Game Theory

Cake Cutting (Dengji ZHAO)

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Cake Cutting

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Cardinal Preferences

- A divisible resource C, say a cake.
- A set of n players to share/divide.
- Each player has valuation function v_i, which gives a value for each subset of C. We assume v_i is additive.

Question

How to divide the resource fairly?

Fairness

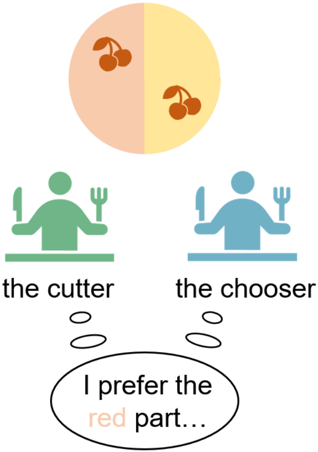
Proportionality Each player receives a piece that he values as at least $1/n$ of the value of the entire cake.

Envy-freeness Each player receives a piece that he values at least as much as every other piece.

Question: Does envy-freeness implies proportionality?

A Cake Cutting Procedure: Divide and Choose

- Two people share one cake.
- One person (the cutter) cuts the cake into two pieces.
- The other person chooses one (the chooser).



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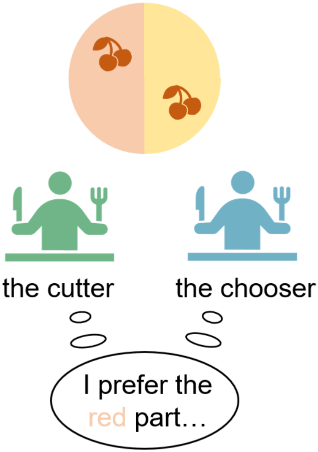

Question

What is the best strategy for the cutter?

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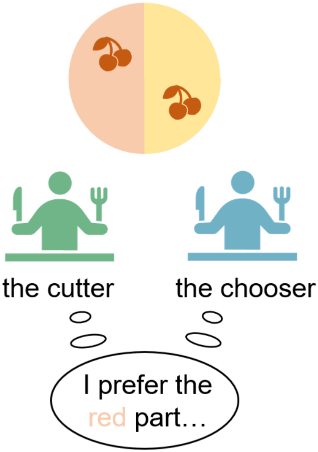


Question

What is the best strategy for the cutter?
Does it satisfy *proportionality*?
Does it satisfy *envy-freeness*?

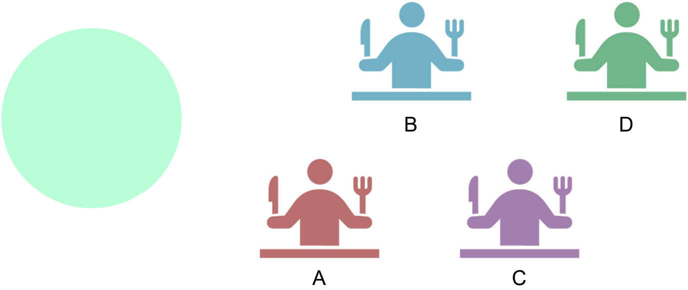
Proportional Cake Cutting: Last Diminisher

Question

How to extend Divide and Choose to more than two person settings?

- The players being ranged A, B, C, ... N.
- A cuts from the cake an arbitrary part.
- B has now the right, but is not obliged, to diminish the slice cut off.
- Whatever B does, C has the right (without obligation) to diminish still the already diminished (or not diminished) slice, and so on up to N.
- The rule obliges the "last diminisher" to take as his part the slice he was the last to touch.

Proportional Cake Cutting: Last Diminisher



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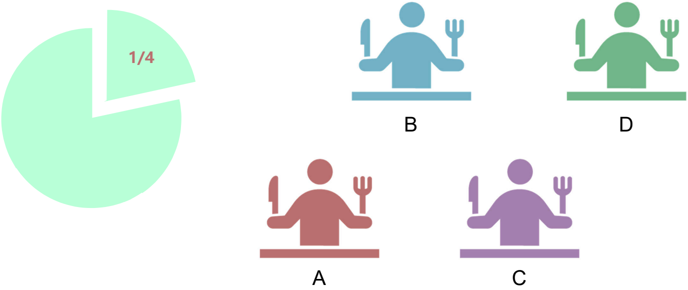

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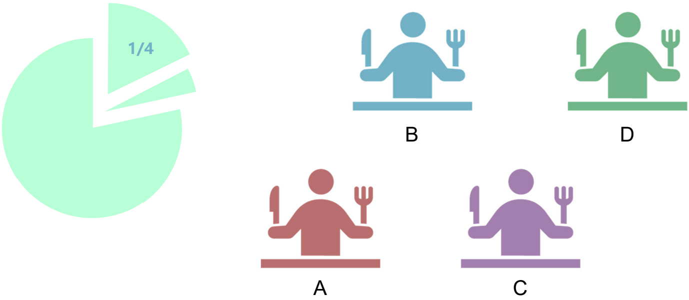

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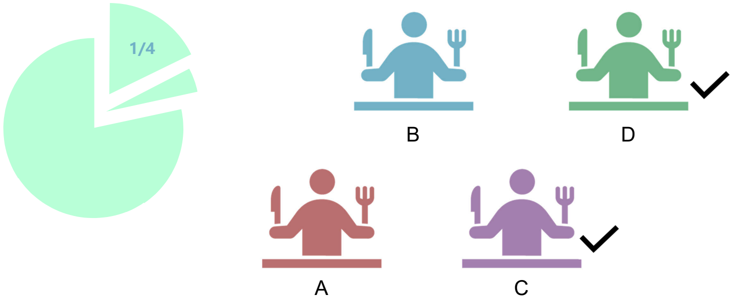

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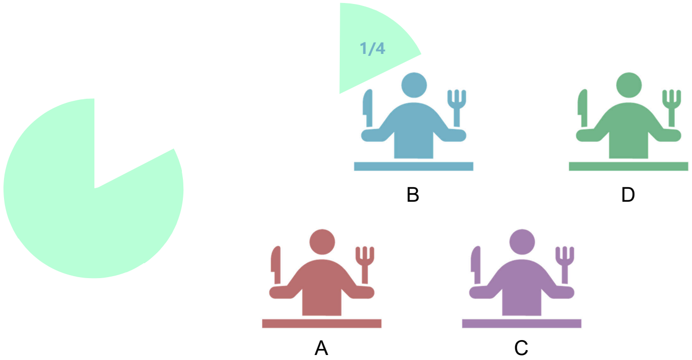

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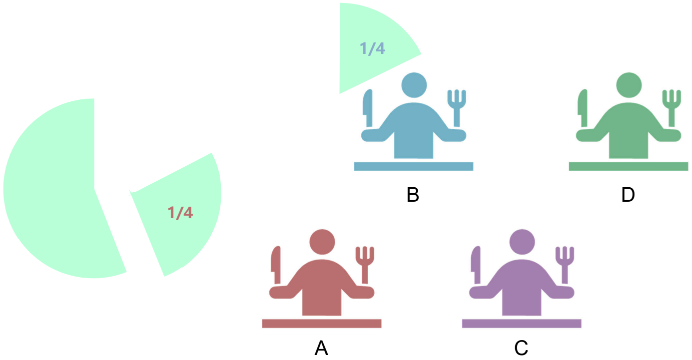

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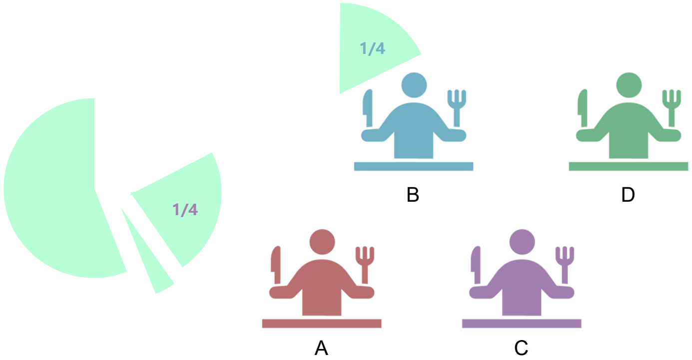

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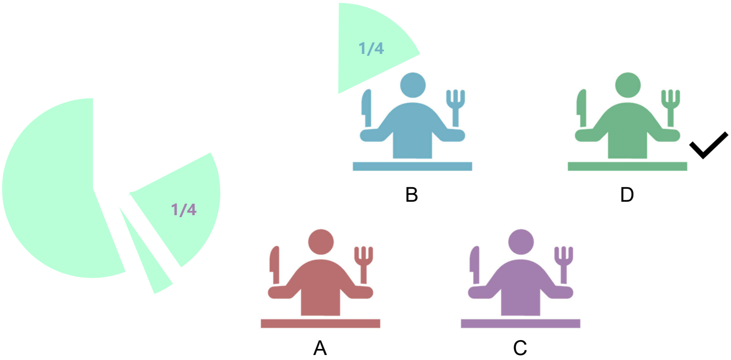

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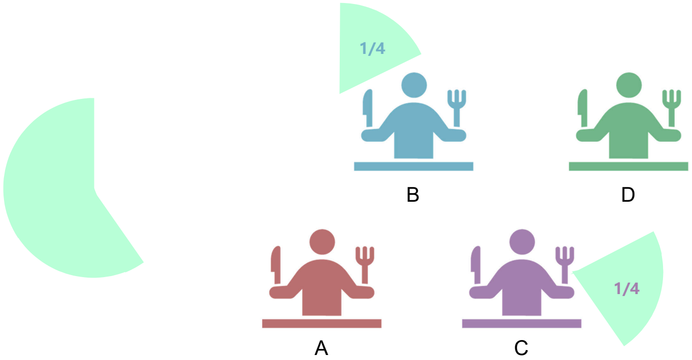

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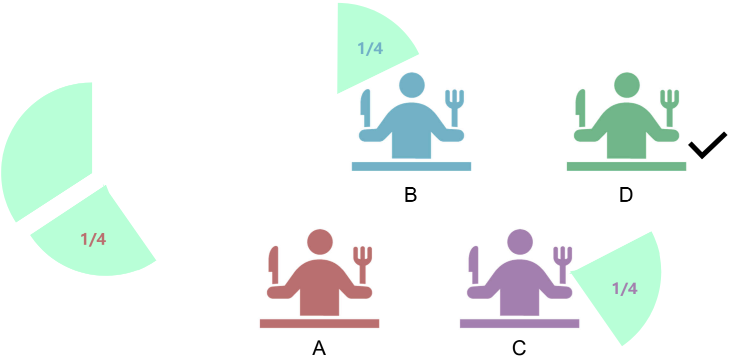

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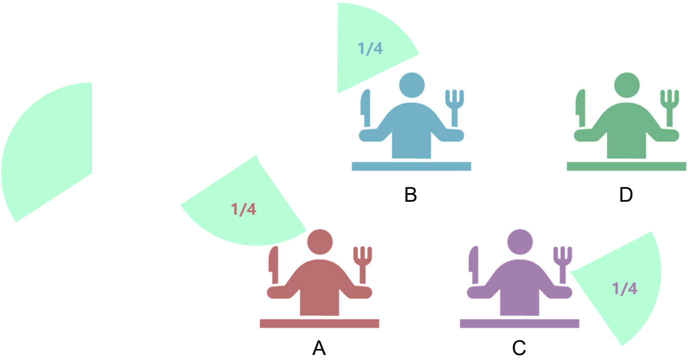

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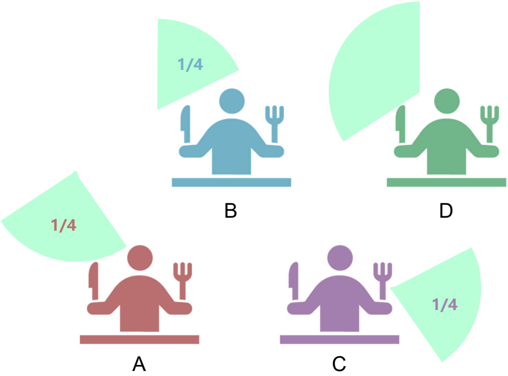


Proportional Cake Cutting: Last Diminisher

Question

- Does Last Diminisher satisfy *proportionality*?
- Does Last Diminisher satisfy *envy-freeness*?
- Is there a way to allocate the cake without having to pre-determine the order of all the individuals involved?

Proportional Cake Cutting: Moving-knife Protocol

(Proposed by Lester Dubins and Edwin Spanier in 1961.)

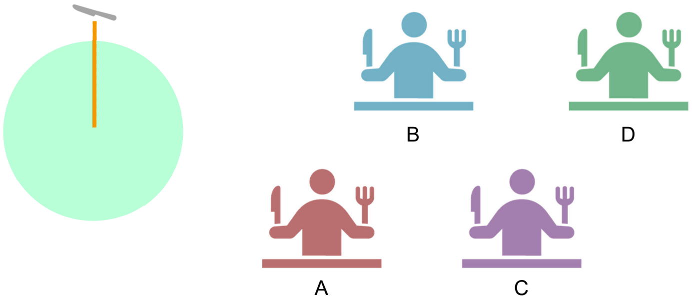
- The cake: interval [0,1].
- n players 1, 2, ..., n and a refree.

Moving-knife Protocol:

- Referee starts a knife at 0 and moves the knife to the right.
- Repeat: When the piece to the left of the knife is worth $1/n$ to a player, the player shouts "stop", receives the piece, and exits.
- When only one player remains, she gets the remaining piece.

Complexity of moving-knife protocol: $\Theta(n^2)$

Proportional Cake Cutting: Moving-knife Protocol



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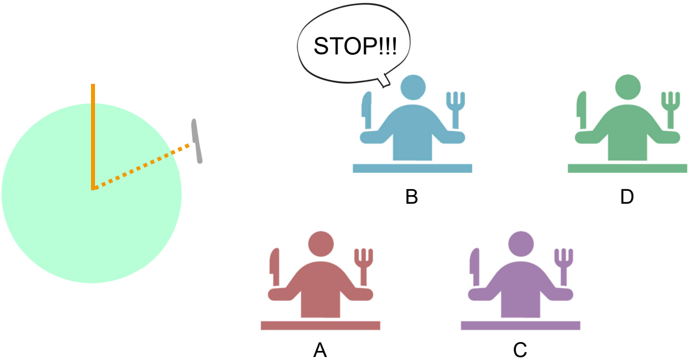

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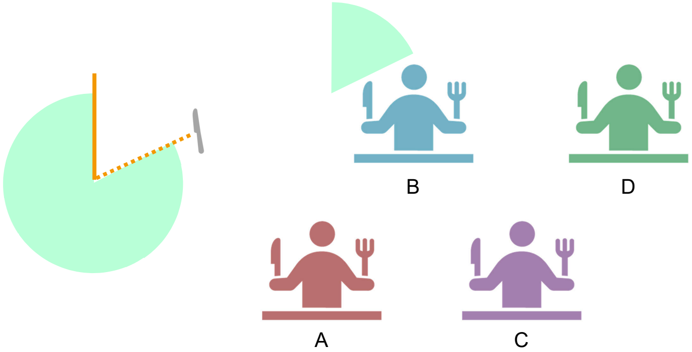

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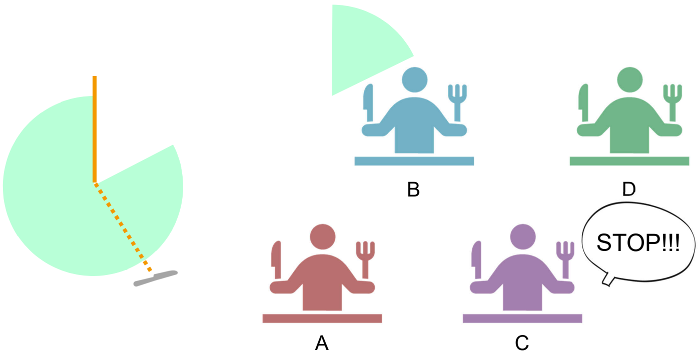

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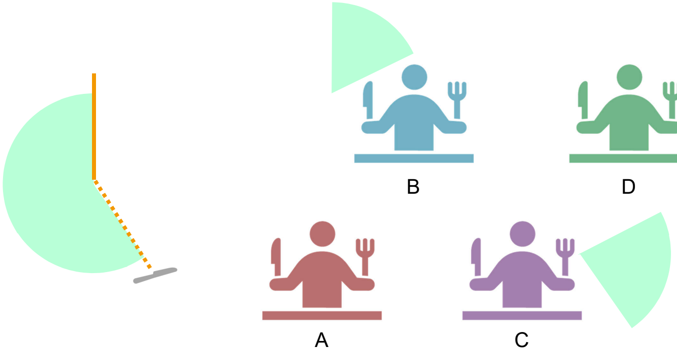

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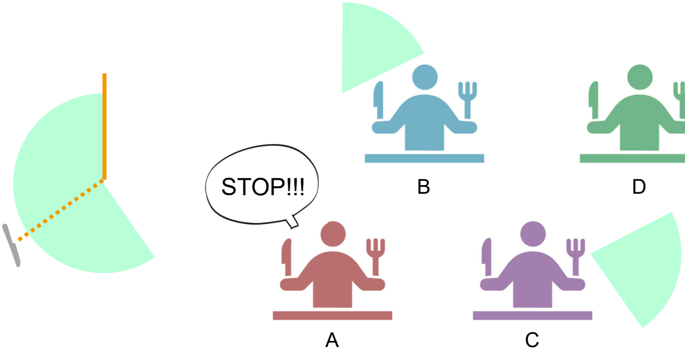

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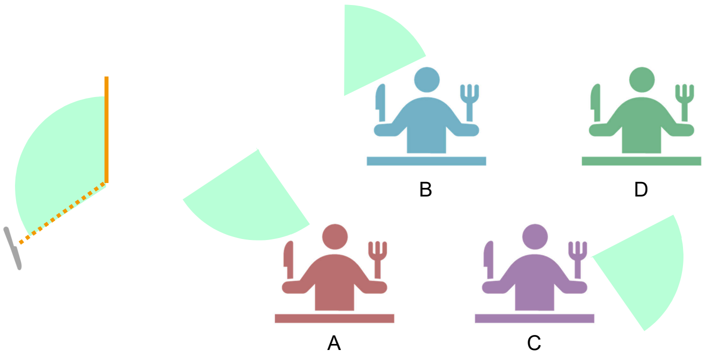

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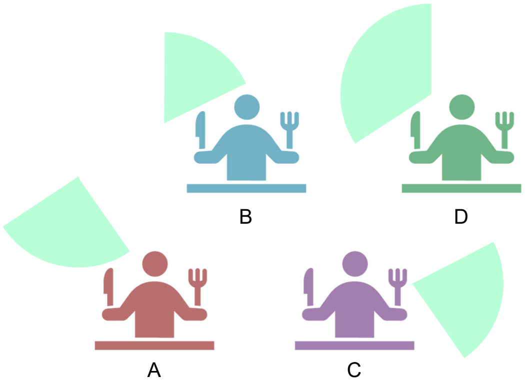

Proportional Cake Cutting: Moving-knife Protocol

Question

- Does Moving-knife protocol satisfy *proportionality*?
- Does Moving-knife protocol satisfy *envy-freeness*?

Proportional Cake Cutting: Moving-knife Protocol

Question

- Are the allocation outcomes identical between Last Diminisher and Moving-knife protocol?
- What is the relationship between the two mechanisms?

Proportional Cake Cutting: Even Paz

(Proposed by S. Even and A. Paz, in 1963.)

Input:

- A piece of cake $[x, y]$.
- n agents. (Assume $n = 2^k$ for simplicity)

Recursive procedure:

- If $n = 1$, give $[x, y]$ to the single agent.
- Otherwise:
  - Each agent mark a point z such that $v([x, z]) = v([z, y])$.
  - Let z^* be the (n/2)-th mark from the left.
  - Recurse on $[x, z^*]$ with the left n/2 agents, and on $[z^*, y]$ with the right n/2 agents.

Proportional Cake Cutting: Even Paz

- Even Paz protocol uses a divide-and-conquer strategy, it is possible to achieve a division in time $O(n \log n)$.

Theorem

The Even Paz protocol produces a proportional allocation.

Theorem

Any protocol returning a proportional allocation needs $\Omega(n \log n)$ queries. [Edmonds and Pruhs, 2006]

Envy-free Cake Cutting

A query: either asks an agent her value of some piece, or asks her to cut a piece that her valuation is some value.

- $n = 2$ agents: 2 queries (Divide and Choose).
- $n = 3$ agents: 14 queries (Selfridge and Conway, 1960).
- $n = 4$ agents: 171 queries (Amanatidis et al., 2018).

Theorem

Any protocol for finding an envy-free allocation requires $\Omega(n^2)$ queries.

Advanced Reading

- AGT Chapter 10.2
- *Computational Social Choice* by F. Brandt, V. Conitzer and U. Endriss