MA 519: Homework 5

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Problem 5.1 (Handout 7, # 6(d, f))

Find the variance of the following random variables

(d) $X = \#$ of tosses of a fair coin necessary to obtain a head for the first time.
(f) $X = \#$ matches observed in random sitting of 4 husbands and their wives in opposite sides of a linear table.
This is an example of the *matching problem.*

Solution. For part (d), let A_n denote the event "it takes n tosses of a fair coin to obtain a head for the first time." Note that the A_n form a disjoint sequence of events and that $\bigcup_{n=1}^{\infty} A_n = \Omega$. Using this fact, we can compute the mean

$$\mu = \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} n\left(\frac{1}{2^n}\right).$$

But what is the value of μ explicitly?

Consider the series

$$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} nx^n = x\left[\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} nx^{n-1}\right].$$

Set $f(x) := \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} nx^{n-1}$. Then, with a little calculus, we have

$$\int f\,dx = \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} x^n = -1 + \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} x^n = -1 + \frac{1}{1-x} = \frac{x}{1-x},$$

so

$$f(x) = \frac{d}{dx}\left[\frac{x}{1-x}\right] = \frac{1}{(1-x)^2}.$$

Now we can obtain the mean by evaluating $xf(x)$ at $1/2$,

$$\mu = (1/2)f(1/2) = \frac{(1/2)}{\big(1-(1/2)\big)^2} = \frac{(1/2)}{(1/2)^2} = \frac{1}{2} = 0.5$$

By the proposition in DasGupta's book,

$$\mathrm{Var}(X) = E(X^2) - \mu^2,$$

so the only thing we need to compute is the expectation $E(X^2)$. This is given by the series

$$E(X^2) = \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} n^2\left(\frac{1}{2^n}\right).$$

This can also be computed in a similar fashion, yielding

$$E(X^2) = 12.$$

Thus,

$$\mathrm{Var}(X) = 12 - 0.5 = 11.5.$$

∎

Problem 5.2 (Handout 7, # 8)

(*Nonexistence of variance*).

(a) Show that for a suitable positive constant c, the function $p(x) = c/x^3$, $x = 1, \ldots$, is a valid probability mass function (PMF).
(b) Show that in this case, the expectation of the underlying random variable exists, but the variance does not!

Solution. ■

Problem 5.3 (Handout 7, # 9)

In a box, there are 2 black and 4 white balls. These are drawn out one by one at random (without replacement).

(a) Let X be the draw at which the first black ball comes out. Find the mean the variance of X.
(b) Let X be the draw at which the second black ball comes out. Find the meman* the variance of X.

Solution. ∎

*What is a meman? How do you pronounce meman? Is it mee-man or muh-man?

Problem 5.4 (Handout 7, # 10)

Suppose X has a *discrete uniform distribution* on the set $\{1, \ldots, N\}$.
Find formulas for the mean and the variance of X.

Solution. ∎

Problem 5.5 (Handout 7, # 11)

(*Be Original*) Give an example of a random variable with mean 1 and variance 100.

Solution. ■

Problem 5.6 (Handout 7, # 13)

(*Be Original*). Suppose a random variable X has the property that its second and fourth moment are both 1.

What can you say about the nature of X?

Solution. ■

Problem 5.7 (Handout 7, # 14)

(*Be Original*). One of the following inequalities is true in general for all nonnegative random variables. Identify which one!

$$E(X)E(X^4) \geq E(X^2)E(X^3);$$
$$E(X)E(X^4) \leq E(X^2)E(X^2).$$

Solution. ■

Problem 5.8 (Handout 7, # 15)

Suppose X is the number of heads obtained in 4 tosses of a fair coin.

Find the expected value of the weird function

$$\log\bigl(2 + \sin(\tfrac{\pi}{4}x)\bigr).$$

Solution. ■

Problem 5.9 (Handout 7, # 16)

In a sequence of Bernoulli trials let X be the length of the run (of either successes or failures) started by the first trial.

(a) Find the distribution of X, $E(X)$, $\mathrm{Var}(X)$.

Solution. ■

Problem 5.10 (Handout 7, # 17)

A man with n keys wants to open his door and tries the keys independently and at random. Find the mean and variance of the number of trials

(a) if unsuccessful keys are not eliminated from further selections;
(b) if they are.

(Assume that only one key fits the door. The exact distributions are given in II, 7, but are not required for the present problem.)

Solution. ∎