

# Logarithmic Space Verifiers on NP-complete

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## Abstract

P versus NP is considered as one of the most important open problems in computer science. This consists in knowing the answer of the following question: Is P equal to NP? A precise statement of the P versus NP problem was introduced independently by Stephen Cook and Leonid Levin. Since that date, all efforts to find a proof for this problem have failed. NP is the complexity class of languages defined by polynomial time verifiers  $M$  such that when the input is an element of the language with its certificate, then  $M$  outputs a string which belongs to a single language in P. Another major complexity classes are L and NL. The certificate-based definition of NL is based on logarithmic space Turing machine with an additional special read-once input tape: This is called a logarithmic space verifier. NL is the complexity class of languages defined by logarithmic space verifiers  $M$  such that when the input is an element of the language with its certificate, then  $M$  outputs 1. To attack the P versus NP problem, the NP-completeness is a useful concept. We demonstrate there is an NP-complete language defined by a logarithmic space verifier  $M$  such that when the input is an element of the language with its certificate, then  $M$  outputs a string which belongs to a single language in L.

**2012 ACM Subject Classification** Theory of computation  $\rightarrow$  Complexity classes; Theory of computation  $\rightarrow$  Problems, reductions and completeness

**Keywords and phrases** complexity classes, completeness, verifier, reduction, polynomial time, logarithmic space

## 1 Introduction

The  $P$  versus  $NP$  problem is a major unsolved problem in computer science [4]. This is considered by many to be the most important open problem in the field [4]. It is one of the seven Millennium Prize Problems selected by the Clay Mathematics Institute to carry a US\$1,000,000 prize for the first correct solution [4]. It was essentially mentioned in 1955 from a letter written by John Nash to the United States National Security Agency [1]. However, the precise statement of the  $P = NP$  problem was introduced in 1971 by Stephen Cook in a seminal paper [4]. In 2012, a poll of 151 researchers showed that 126 (83%) believed the answer to be no, 12 (9%) believed the answer is yes, 5 (3%) believed the question may be independent of the currently accepted axioms and therefore impossible to prove or disprove, 8 (5%) said either do not know or do not care or don't want the answer to be yes nor the problem to be resolved [7]. It is fully expected that  $P \neq NP$  [11]. Indeed, if  $P = NP$  then there are stunning practical consequences [11]. For that reason,  $P = NP$  is considered as a very unlikely event [11]. Certainly,  $P$  versus  $NP$  is one of the greatest open problems in science and a correct solution for this incognita will have a great impact not only in computer science, but for many other fields as well [1]. Whether  $P = NP$  or not is still a controversial and unsolved problem [1]. In this work, we show some results that might be helpful in facing one of the most important open problems in computer science.

## 2 Preliminaries

In 1936, Turing developed his theoretical computational model [13]. The deterministic and nondeterministic Turing machines have become in two of the most important definitions

related to this theoretical model for computation [13]. A deterministic Turing machine has only one next action for each step defined in its program or transition function [13]. A nondeterministic Turing machine could contain more than one action defined for each step of its program, where this one is no longer a function, but a relation [13].

Let  $\Sigma$  be a finite alphabet with at least two elements, and let  $\Sigma^*$  be the set of finite strings over  $\Sigma$  [3]. A Turing machine  $M$  has an associated input alphabet  $\Sigma$  [3]. For each string  $w$  in  $\Sigma^*$  there is a computation associated with  $M$  on input  $w$  [3]. We say that  $M$  accepts  $w$  if this computation terminates in the accepting state, that is  $M(w) = 1$  (when  $M$  outputs 1 on the input  $w$ ) [3]. Note that  $M$  fails to accept  $w$  either if this computation ends in the rejecting state, that is  $M(w) = 0$ , or if the computation fails to terminate, or the computation ends in the halting state with some output, that is  $M(w) = y$  (when  $M$  outputs the string  $y$  on the input  $w$ ) [3].

Another relevant advance in the last century has been the definition of a complexity class. A language over an alphabet is any set of strings made up of symbols from that alphabet [5]. A complexity class is a set of problems, which are represented as a language, grouped by measures such as the running time, memory, etc [5]. The language accepted by a Turing machine  $M$ , denoted  $L(M)$ , has an associated alphabet  $\Sigma$  and is defined by:

$$L(M) = \{w \in \Sigma^* : M(w) = 1\}.$$

We denote by  $t_M(w)$  the number of steps in the computation of  $M$  on input  $w$  [3]. For  $n \in \mathbb{N}$  we denote by  $T_M(n)$  the worst case run time of  $M$ ; that is:

$$T_M(n) = \max\{t_M(w) : w \in \Sigma^n\}$$

where  $\Sigma^n$  is the set of all strings over  $\Sigma$  of length  $n$  [3]. We say that  $M$  runs in polynomial time if there is a constant  $k$  such that for all  $n$ ,  $T_M(n) \leq n^k + k$  [3]. In other words, this means the language  $L(M)$  can be decided by the Turing machine  $M$  in polynomial time. Therefore,  $P$  is the complexity class of languages that can be decided by deterministic Turing machines in polynomial time [5]. A verifier for a language  $L_1$  is a deterministic Turing machine  $M$ , where:

$$L_1 = \{w : M(w, c) = 1 \text{ for some string } c\}.$$

We measure the time of a verifier only in terms of the length of  $w$ , so a polynomial time verifier runs in polynomial time in the length of  $w$  [3]. A verifier uses additional information, represented by the symbol  $c$ , to verify that a string  $w$  is a member of  $L_1$ . This information is called certificate.  $NP$  is the complexity class of languages defined by polynomial time verifiers [11].

► **Lemma 1.** *Given a language  $L_1 \in P$ , a language  $L_2$  is in  $NP$  if there is a deterministic Turing machine  $M$ , where:*

$$L_2 = \{w : M(w, c) = y \text{ for some string } c \text{ such that } y \in L_1\}$$

*and  $M$  runs in polynomial time in the length of  $w$ . In this way,  $NP$  is the complexity class of languages defined by polynomial time verifiers  $M$  such that when the input is an element of the language with its certificate, then  $M$  outputs a string which belongs to a single language in  $P$ .*

**Proof.** If  $L_1$  can be decided by the Turing machine  $M'$  in polynomial time, then the deterministic Turing machine  $M''(w, c) = M'(M(w, c))$  will output 1 when  $w \in L_2$ . Consequently,  $M''$  is a polynomial time verifier of  $L_2$  and thus,  $L_2$  is in  $NP$ . ◀

### 3 Hypothesis

A function  $f : \Sigma^* \rightarrow \Sigma^*$  is a polynomial time computable function if some deterministic Turing machine  $M$ , on every input  $w$ , halts in polynomial time with just  $f(w)$  on its tape [13]. Let  $\{0, 1\}^*$  be the infinite set of binary strings, we say that a language  $L_1 \subseteq \{0, 1\}^*$  is polynomial time reducible to a language  $L_2 \subseteq \{0, 1\}^*$ , written  $L_1 \leq_p L_2$ , if there is a polynomial time computable function  $f : \{0, 1\}^* \rightarrow \{0, 1\}^*$  such that for all  $x \in \{0, 1\}^*$ :

$$x \in L_1 \text{ if and only if } f(x) \in L_2.$$

An important complexity class is *NP-complete* [8]. A language  $L_1 \subseteq \{0, 1\}^*$  is *NP-complete* if:

- $L_1 \in NP$ , and
- $L' \leq_p L_1$  for every  $L' \in NP$ .

If  $L_1$  is a language such that  $L' \leq_p L_1$  for some  $L' \in NP\text{-complete}$ , then  $L_1$  is *NP-hard* [5]. Moreover, if  $L_1 \in NP$ , then  $L_1 \in NP\text{-complete}$  [5]. A principal *NP-complete* problem is *SAT* [6]. An instance of *SAT* is a Boolean formula  $\phi$  which is composed of:

1. Boolean variables:  $x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n$ ;
2. Boolean connectives: Any Boolean function with one or two inputs and one output, such as  $\wedge$ (AND),  $\vee$ (OR),  $\neg$ (NOT),  $\Rightarrow$ (implication),  $\Leftrightarrow$ (if and only if);
3. and parentheses.

A truth assignment for a Boolean formula  $\phi$  is a set of values for the variables in  $\phi$ . A satisfying truth assignment is a truth assignment that causes  $\phi$  to be evaluated as true. A formula with a satisfying truth assignment is a satisfiable formula. The problem *SAT* asks whether a given Boolean formula is satisfiable [6]. We define a *CNF* Boolean formula using the following terms:

A literal in a Boolean formula is an occurrence of a variable or its negation [5]. A Boolean formula is in conjunctive normal form, or *CNF*, if it is expressed as an AND of clauses, each of which is the OR of one or more literals [5]. A Boolean formula is in 3-conjunctive normal form or *3CNF*, if each clause has exactly three distinct literals [5].

For example, the Boolean formula:

$$(x_1 \vee \neg x_1 \vee \neg x_2) \wedge (x_3 \vee x_2 \vee x_4) \wedge (\neg x_1 \vee \neg x_3 \vee \neg x_4)$$

is in *3CNF*. The first of its three clauses is  $(x_1 \vee \neg x_1 \vee \neg x_2)$ , which contains the three literals  $x_1$ ,  $\neg x_1$ , and  $\neg x_2$ . Another relevant *NP-complete* language is *3CNF* satisfiability, or *3SAT* [5]. In *3SAT*, it is asked whether a given Boolean formula  $\phi$  in *3CNF* is satisfiable.

A logarithmic space Turing machine has a read-only input tape, a write-only output tape, and read/write work tapes [13]. The work tapes may contain at most  $O(\log n)$  symbols [13]. In computational complexity theory,  $L$  is the complexity class containing those decision problems that can be decided by a deterministic logarithmic space Turing machine [11].  $NL$  is the complexity class containing the decision problems that can be decided by a nondeterministic logarithmic space Turing machine [11].

A logarithmic space transducer is a Turing machine with a read-only input tape, a write-only output tape, and read/write work tapes [13]. The work tapes must contain at most  $O(\log n)$  symbols [13]. A logarithmic space transducer  $M$  computes a function  $f : \Sigma^* \rightarrow \Sigma^*$ , where  $f(w)$  is the string remaining on the output tape after  $M$  halts when it is started with

$w$  on its input tape [13]. We call  $f$  a logarithmic space computable function [13]. We say that a language  $L_1 \subseteq \{0, 1\}^*$  is logarithmic space reducible to a language  $L_2 \subseteq \{0, 1\}^*$ , written  $L_1 \leq_L L_2$ , if there exists a logarithmic space computable function  $f : \{0, 1\}^* \rightarrow \{0, 1\}^*$  such that for all  $x \in \{0, 1\}^*$ ,

$$x \in L_1 \text{ if and only if } f(x) \in L_2.$$

The logarithmic space reduction is frequently used for  $L$  and  $NL$  [11]. A Boolean formula is in 2-conjunctive normal form, or  $2CNF$ , if it is in  $CNF$  and each clause has exactly two distinct literals. There is a problem called  $2SAT$ , where we asked whether a given Boolean formula  $\phi$  in  $2CNF$  is satisfiable.  $2SAT$  is complete for  $NL$  [11]. Another special case is the class of problems where each clause contains  $XOR$  (i.e. exclusive or) rather than (plain)  $OR$  operators. This is in  $P$ , since an  $XOR SAT$  formula can also be viewed as a system of linear equations mod 2, and can be solved in cubic time by Gaussian elimination [9]. We denote the  $XOR$  function as  $\oplus$ . The  $XOR 2SAT$  problem will be equivalent to  $XOR SAT$ , but the clauses in the formula have exactly two distinct literals.  $XOR 2SAT$  is in  $L$  [2], [12].

We can give a certificate-based definition for  $NL$  [3]. The certificate-based definition of  $NL$  assumes that a logarithmic space Turing machine has another separated read-only tape [3]. On each step of the machine the machine's head on that tape can either stay in place or move to the right [3]. In particular, it cannot reread any bit to the left of where the head currently is [3]. For that reason this kind of special tape is called "read once" [3].

► **Definition 2.** A language  $L_1$  is in  $NL$  if there exists a deterministic logarithmic space Turing machine  $M$  with an additional special read-once input tape polynomial  $p : \mathbb{N} \rightarrow \mathbb{N}$  such that for every  $x \in \{0, 1\}^*$ ,

$$x \in L_1 \Leftrightarrow \exists u \in \{0, 1\}^{p(|x|)} \text{ such that } M(x, u) = 1$$

where by  $M(x, u)$  we denote the computation of  $M$  where  $x$  is placed on its input tape and  $u$  is placed on its special read-once tape, and  $M$  uses at most  $O(\log |x|)$  space on its read/write tapes for every input  $x$  where  $|\dots|$  is the bit-length function [3].  $M$  is called a logarithmic space verifier [3].

We state the following Hypothesis:

► **Hypothesis 3.** Given a language  $L_1 \in L$ , there is a language  $L_2$  in  $NP$ -complete with a deterministic Turing machine  $M$ , where:

$$L_2 = \{w : M(w, u) = y \text{ for some string } u \text{ such that } y \in L_1\}$$

when  $M$  runs in logarithmic space in the length of  $w$ ,  $u$  is placed on the special read-once tape of  $M$ , and  $u$  is polynomially bounded by  $w$ . In this way, there is an  $NP$ -complete language defined by a logarithmic space verifier  $M$  such that when the input is an element of the language with its certificate, then  $M$  outputs a string which belongs to a single language in  $L$ .

## 4 Results

We show a previous known  $NP$ -complete problem:

► **Definition 4.** *MONOTONE NAE 3SAT*

*INSTANCE:* A Boolean formula  $\phi$  in 3CNF such that each clause has no negation variables.

*QUESTION:* Is there a truth assignment for  $\phi$  such that each clause has at least one true literal and at least one false literal?

*REMARKS:* This is equivalent to the special case of the NP-complete problem known as SET SPLITTING when the sets in the input have exactly three elements and therefore,  $\text{MONOTONE NAE 3SAT} \in \text{NP-complete}$  [6].

We define a new problem:

► **Definition 5. MINIMUM EXCLUSIVE-OR 2-SATISFIABILITY**

*INSTANCE:* A positive integer  $K$  and a Boolean formula  $\phi$  that is an instance of XOR 2SAT such that each clause has no negation variables.

*QUESTION:* Is there a truth assignment in  $\phi$  such that at most  $K$  clauses are unsatisfiable?

*REMARKS:* We denote this problem as  $\text{MIN} \oplus 2\text{SAT}$ .

► **Theorem 6.**  $\text{MIN} \oplus 2\text{SAT} \in \text{NP-complete}$ .

**Proof.** It is trivial to see  $\text{MIN} \oplus 2\text{SAT} \in \text{NP}$  [11]. Given a Boolean formula  $\phi$  in 3CNF with  $n$  variables and  $m$  clauses such that each clause has no negation variables, we create three new variables  $a_{c_i}$ ,  $b_{c_i}$  and  $d_{c_i}$  for each clause  $c_i = (x \vee y \vee z)$  in  $\phi$ , where  $x$ ,  $y$  and  $z$  are positive literals, in the following formula:

$$P_i = (a_{c_i} \oplus b_{c_i}) \wedge (b_{c_i} \oplus d_{c_i}) \wedge (a_{c_i} \oplus d_{c_i}) \wedge (x \oplus a_{c_i}) \wedge (y \oplus b_{c_i}) \wedge (z \oplus d_{c_i}).$$

We can see  $P_i$  has at most one unsatisfiable clause for some truth assignment if and only if at least one member of  $\{x, y, z\}$  is true and at least one member of  $\{x, y, z\}$  is false for the same truth assignment. Hence, we can create the Boolean formula  $\psi$  as the conjunction of the  $P_i$  formulas for every clause  $c_i$  in  $\phi$ , such that  $\psi = P_1 \wedge \dots \wedge P_m$ . Finally, we obtain that

$$\phi \in \text{MONOTONE NAE 3SAT} \text{ if and only if } (\psi, m) \in \text{MIN} \oplus 2\text{SAT}.$$

Consequently, we prove  $\text{MONOTONE NAE 3SAT} \leq_p \text{MIN} \oplus 2\text{SAT}$  where we already know the language  $\text{MONOTONE NAE 3SAT} \in \text{NP-complete}$  [6]. To sum up, we show  $\text{MIN} \oplus 2\text{SAT} \in \text{NP-hard}$  and  $\text{MIN} \oplus 2\text{SAT} \in \text{NP}$  and thus,  $\text{MIN} \oplus 2\text{SAT} \in \text{NP-complete}$ . ◀

► **Theorem 7.** There is a deterministic Turing machine  $M$ , where:

$$\text{MIN} \oplus 2\text{SAT} = \{w : M(w, u) = y \text{ for some string } u \text{ such that } y \in \text{XOR 2SAT}\}$$

when  $M$  runs in logarithmic space in the length of  $w$ ,  $u$  is placed on the special read-once tape of  $M$ , and  $u$  is polynomially bounded by  $w$ .

**Proof.** Given a valid instance  $(\psi, K)$  for  $\text{MIN} \oplus 2\text{SAT}$  when  $\psi$  has  $m$  clauses, we can create a certificate array  $A$  which contains  $K$  different natural numbers in ascending order which represents the indexes of the clauses in  $\psi$  that we are going to remove from the instance. We read at once the elements of the array  $A$  and we reject whether this is not a valid certificate: That is when the numbers are not sorted in ascending order, or the array  $A$  does not contain exactly  $K$  elements, or the array  $A$  contains a number that is not between 1 and  $m$ . While we read the elements of the array  $A$ , we remove the clauses from the instance  $(\psi, K)$  for  $\text{MIN} \oplus 2\text{SAT}$  just creating another instance  $\phi$  for XOR 2SAT where the Boolean formula

$\phi$  does not contain the  $K$  different indexed clauses  $\psi$  represented by the numbers in  $A$ . Therefore, we obtain the array  $A$  is also a valid certificate when:

$$(\psi, K) \in MIN \oplus 2SAT \text{ if and only if } \phi \in XOR\ 2SAT.$$

Furthermore, we can make this verification in logarithmic space such that the array  $A$  is placed on the special read-once tape, because we read at once the elements in the array  $A$  and we assume the clauses in the input  $\psi$  are indexed from left to right. Hence, we only need to iterate from the elements of the array  $A$  to verify whether the array is a valid certificate and also remove the  $K$  different clauses from the Boolean formula  $\psi$  when we write the final clauses to the output. This logarithmic space verification will be the Algorithm 1. We assume whether a value does not exist in the array  $A$  into the cell of some position  $i$  when  $A[i] = \text{undefined}$ . In addition, we reject immediately when the following comparisons

$$A[i] \leq \max \vee A[i] < 1 \vee A[i] > m$$

hold at least into one single binary digit. Note, in the loop  $j$  from  $\min$  to  $\max - 1$ , we do not output any clause when  $\max - 1 < \min$ .

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**Algorithm 1** Logarithmic space verifier

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1: /*A valid instance for  $MIN \oplus 2SAT$  with its certificate*/
2: procedure  $VERIFIER((\psi, K), A)$ 
3:   /*Initialize minimum and maximum values*/
4:    $\min \leftarrow 1$ 
5:    $\max \leftarrow 0$ 
6:   /*Iterate for the elements of the certificate array  $A$ */
7:   for  $i \leftarrow 1$  to  $K + 1$  do
8:     if  $i = K + 1$  then
9:       /*There exists a  $K + 1$  element in the array*/
10:      if  $A[i] \neq \text{undefined}$  then
11:        /*Reject the certificate*/
12:        return 0
13:      end if
14:      /* $m$  is the number of clauses in  $\psi$ */
15:       $\max \leftarrow m + 1$ 
16:    else if  $A[i] = \text{undefined} \vee A[i] \leq \max \vee A[i] < 1 \vee A[i] > m$  then
17:      /*Reject the certificate*/
18:      return 0
19:    else
20:       $\max \leftarrow A[i]$ 
21:    end if
22:    /*Iterate for the clauses of the Boolean formula  $\psi$ */
23:    for  $j \leftarrow \min$  to  $\max - 1$  do
24:      /*Output the indexed  $j$  clause in  $\psi$ */
25:      output " $\wedge c_j$ "
26:    end for
27:     $\min \leftarrow \max + 1$ 
28:  end for
29: end procedure

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► **Theorem 8.** *The Hypothesis 3 is true.*

**Proof.** This is a consequence of Theorems 6 and 7.

## 5 Materials and Methods

This work is implemented into a GitHub Project programmed in Scala [14]. In this GitHub Project, we use the Assertion on the properties of the instances of each problem and the Unit Test for checking the correctness of every reduction [14]. We need to install JDK 8 in order to test the Scala Project [10]. In addition, we need to install SBT to run the unit test (we could run the unit test with the `sbt test` command) [10].

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