

# Topological complexity of enumerative problems in algebraic geometry

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# Overview

- 1 Backgrounds
- 2 The topological complexity of enumerative problems
- 3 Finding lower bounds by pullbacks
- 4 The cohomology of  $\mathrm{PU}(4)/K$

# Backgrounds

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Enumerative problems in algebraic geometry (over  $\mathbb{C}$ ):

- ① a generic degree  $d$ -polynomial has  $d$  roots;
- ② a generic quartic plane curve has 24 inflection points;
- ③ a smooth quartic plane curve has 28 bitangent lines;
- ④ a smooth cubic curve contains 27 lines;
- ⑤ ...

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A positive integer, which we call the *topological complexity* may be assigned to each of the enumerative problems in algebraic geometry.

# Backgrounds

In 1987, S. Smale [5] considered the topological complexity of finding the  $d$  roots of a generic degree- $d$  polynomial:

Poly( $d$ )

Given a generic complex polynomial of degree  $d$ , leading coefficients 1 and  $\epsilon > 0$ , Find all roots of  $f$  within  $\epsilon$ .

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Smale [5] first proved a lower bound for the topological complexity of the problem of finding roots of a polynomial  $f(z) = 0$ . Smale's lower bounds were later improved by Vassiliev [6], De Concini-Procesi-Salvetti [3], and Arone [1].

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# The topological complexity of enumerative problems

Similar questions may be asked about solutions to enumerative problems for high-dimensional objects such as curves and surfaces, which is mostly unknown. A first step in this direction is the work [2] by Weiyan Chen and Zheyuan Wan, concerning the topological complexity of finding inflection points on cubic plane curves. In this talk, we consider **the lower bounds of the topological complexity** of the following problems:

- **Line( $\epsilon$ )**: Given any cubic surface defined by a homogeneous polynomial  $F(x, y, z, w)$  of degree 3, find all of its 27 lines  $(l_1, \dots, l_{27})$  within  $\epsilon$ .
- **Bitangent( $\epsilon$ )**: Given any quartic curve defined by a homogeneous polynomial  $F(x, y, z)$  of degree 4, find all of its 28 bitangent lines  $(l_1, \dots, l_{28})$  within  $\epsilon$ .
- **Flex( $\epsilon$ )**: Given any quartic curve defined by a homogeneous polynomial  $F(x, y, z)$  of degree 4, find all of its 24 inflection points  $(p_1, \dots, p_{28})$  within  $\epsilon$ .

## Theorem

When  $\epsilon$  is sufficiently small, we have

- ① the topological complexity of the problem **Line**( $\epsilon$ ) is at least 15,
- ② the topological complexity of the problem **Bitangent**( $\epsilon$ ) is at least 8,
- ③ the topological complexity of the problem **Flex**( $\epsilon$ ) is at least 8.

# Boader context

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- find = express in algebraic functions (Hilbert's 13th problem)  
complexity  $\sim$  resolvent degrees (Brauer 1975)
- find = approximate using an algorithm  
complexity  $\sim$  topological complexity (Smale 1987)

# The topological construction associated to the enumerative problems

There are various parameter spaces associated to the three enumerative problems. For instance, for the problem **Line**( $\epsilon$ ), consider

$$B_{\text{line}} := \{\text{nonsingular homogeneous cubic polynomials } F(x, y, z, w)\} / \mathbb{C}^{\times}$$

$$E_{\text{line}} := \{(F, l_1, \dots, l_{27}) : l_i \text{'s are the 27 lines on the cubic surface } F \in B_{\text{line}}\}$$

The space  $B_{\text{line}}$  is an open submanifold of  $\mathbb{C}P^{19}$  consisting of all homogeneous cubic polynomials in four variables.

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The projection  $E_{\text{line}} \rightarrow B_{\text{line}}$  given by  $(F, l_1, \dots, l_{27}) \mapsto F$  is a normal  $S_{27}$ -cover, where  $S_{27}$  acts on  $E_{\text{line}}$  by permuting the ordering of the 27 lines.

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Similarly, we have a  $S_{28}$ -cover  $E_{\text{btg}} \rightarrow B_{\text{btg}}$  associated to the problem **Bitangent**( $\epsilon$ ) and another  $S_{28}$ -cover  $E_{\text{flex}} \rightarrow B_{\text{flex}}$  associated to the problem **Flex**( $\epsilon$ ).

# The topological construction associated to the enumerative problems

## Definition ([4])

The *Schwarz genus* of a covering  $E \rightarrow B$ , denoted by  $g(E \rightarrow B)$  or simply  $g(E)$ , is the minimum size of an open cover of  $B$  consisting of open sets such that there exists a continuous section of the covering map  $E \rightarrow B$  over each open set.

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## Theorem

*The topological complexity of the problem **Line**( $\epsilon$ ) is  $g(E_{line} \rightarrow Bl) - 1$ . Similar equations holds for the problems **Bitangent**( $\epsilon$ ) and **Flex**( $\epsilon$ ).*

# The topological construction associated to the enumerative problems

## Proposition ([4], p.71)

Let  $i^*E \rightarrow B'$  denote the pullback of a cover  $E \rightarrow B$  along a continuous map  $i : B' \rightarrow B$ . Then  $g(i^*E \rightarrow B') \leq g(E \rightarrow B)$ .

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## Proposition ([4], p.76)

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## Proposition (Disconnected covers)

Consider a cover  $E \rightarrow B$  with path-components  $E = \bigcup_{i \in I} E_i$  where each  $E_i \rightarrow B$  is also a cover. Suppose that there exists an  $m \in I$  such that for any  $i \in I$ , there exists morphism of coverings  $E_i \rightarrow E_m$ . Then  $g(E) = g(E_m)$ .

# The topological construction associated to the enumerative problems

## Proposition ([4], p.98)

Suppose that  $E \rightarrow B$  is a principal  $\Gamma$ -bundle with a classifying map  $cl : B \rightarrow B\Gamma$  where  $B\Gamma$  is the classifying space of  $\Gamma$ . Then we have

$$g(E \rightarrow B) \geq \min\{k : H^i(B\Gamma; A) \xrightarrow{cl^*} H^i(B; A) \text{ is zero for any } i \geq k\}$$

for any  $\Gamma$ -module  $A$ . The integer on the right hand side of the inequality above is called the *homological A-genus* of the cover  $E \rightarrow B$ .

# The topological construction associated to the enumerative problems

## Summary

Let  $TC(P)$  be the topological complexity of an enumerative problem  $P$ . Let  $E_P \rightarrow B_P$  be the covering space associated to the problem  $P$ . Let  $E \rightarrow B$  be a pullback of  $E_P \rightarrow B_P$ . Let  $g(-)$  and  $g_A(-)$  be the Schwarz genus and  $A$ -genus, respectively. Then we have

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$$TC(P) = g(E_P \rightarrow B_P) - 1 \geq g(E \rightarrow B) - 1 \geq g_A(E \rightarrow B) - 1.$$

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Let  $TC(P)$  be the topological complexity of an enumerative problem  $P$ . Let  $E_P \rightarrow B_P$  be the covering space associated to the problem  $P$ . Let  $E \rightarrow B$  be a pullback of  $E_P \rightarrow B_P$ . Let  $g(-)$  and  $g_A(-)$  be the Schwarz genus and  $A$ -genus, respectively. Then we have

$$TC(P) = g(E_P \rightarrow B_P) - 1 \geq g(E \rightarrow B) - 1 \geq g_A(E \rightarrow B) - 1.$$

Next, we look for a pullback  $E \rightarrow B$  such that we can calculate  $g_A(E \rightarrow B)$ .

## Finding lower bounds by pullbacks

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The space  $B_{\text{line}}$  is an open submanifold of  $\mathbb{C}P^{19}$  consisting of all homogeneous cubic polynomials in four variables. The projective unitary group  $\text{PU}(4)$  acts on  $B_{\text{line}}$  by acting on the variables  $(x, y, z, w)$ .

# Finding lower bounds by pullbacks

We consider the Fermat cubic surface

$$F(x, y, z, w) = x^3 + y^3 + z^3 + w^3.$$

Consider the following subgroup  $K \leq \mathrm{PU}_4$  preserving the Fermat cubic surface  $F$ :

$$K := \left\langle \begin{bmatrix} e^{2\pi i/3} & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix}, \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & e^{2\pi i/3} & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix}, \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & e^{2\pi i/3} & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \right\rangle$$
$$\cong (\mathbb{Z}/3\mathbb{Z})^3,$$
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which leaves  $F(x, y, z, w)$  fixed.

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## Lemma

*The action of  $K$  on the set of 27 lines on the Fermat cubic surface is faithful. In other words, the induced group homomorphism  $K \rightarrow S_{27}$  is injective.*

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*The action of  $K$  on the set of 27 lines on the Fermat cubic surface is faithful. In other words, the induced group homomorphism  $K \rightarrow S_{27}$  is injective.*

Therefore, we have an injective map

$$\eta: PU(4)/K \rightarrow B_{\text{line}}, [\sigma] \mapsto \sigma F.$$

# Finding lower bounds by pullbacks

## Proposition (Chen-G., 2024)

The total space of the pullback of  $\eta$  is homeomorphic to a disjoint union of copies of  $\mathrm{PU}(4)$ :

$$\eta^* E_{\text{line}} \cong \bigcup_{S_{27}/K} \mathrm{PU}_4$$

where the components are in bijection with  $K$ -cosets in  $S_{27}$ . In particular, we have

$$g(\eta^* E_{\text{line}} \rightarrow \mathrm{PU}(4)/K) = g(\mathrm{PU}(4)\phi\mathrm{PU}(4)/K),$$

where  $\phi$  is the quotient map, and a principal  $K$ -bundle.

# Finding lower bounds by pullbacks

Theorem (Chen-G, 2025)

*The homomorphism*

$$\phi^*: H^*(\mathrm{PU}(4)/K; \mathbb{F}_3) \rightarrow H^*(\mathrm{PU}(4); \mathbb{F}_3)$$

*is surjective.*

# Finding lower bounds by pullbacks

## Theorem (Chen-G, 2025)

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## Corollary

$$g(E_{line} \rightarrow B_{line}) \geq 16.$$

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## Corollary

$$g(E_{line} \rightarrow B_{line}) \geq 16.$$

## Theorem (Chen-G., 2025)

*The topological complexity of the problem **Line**( $\epsilon$ ) is no less than 15.*

# The cohomology of $\mathrm{PU}(4)/K$

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We have a short exact sequence of Lie groups

$$1 \rightarrow K \rightarrow \mathrm{PU}(4) \rightarrow \mathrm{PU}(4)/K \rightarrow 1,$$

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where  $cl$  is the classifying map of the principal  $K$ -bundle  $\mathrm{PU}(4) \rightarrow \mathrm{PU}(4)/K$ , and  $\varphi$  is the map induced by the inclusion  $K \rightarrow \mathrm{PU}(4)$ .

# The cohomology of $\mathrm{PU}(4)/K$

Consider the map  $BK \xrightarrow{\varphi} B\mathrm{PU}(4)$ . We have

$$H^*(B\mathrm{PU}(4); \mathbb{F}_3) \cong \mathbb{F}_3[\epsilon_4, \epsilon_6, \epsilon_8], \quad \deg \epsilon p l_i = i,$$

and

$$H^*(BK; \mathbb{F}_3) \cong \mathbb{F}_3[\xi_1, \xi_2, \xi_3] \otimes \Lambda_{\mathbb{F}_3}[u_1, u_2, u_3],$$

where  $\deg \xi_i = 2$ ,  $\deg u_i = 1$ .

$$\varphi^*(\epsilon_4) = 3\sigma_1^2 - 8\sigma_2,$$

$$\varphi^*(\epsilon_6) = \sigma_1^3 - 4\sigma_1\sigma_2 + 8\sigma_3,$$

$$\varphi^*(\epsilon_8) = 3\sigma_1^4 - 16\sigma_1^2\sigma_2 + 64\sigma_1\sigma_3 - 256\sigma_4,$$

where  $\sigma_1 = \xi_1 + \xi_2 + \xi_3$ ,  $\sigma_2 = \xi_1\xi_2 + \xi_2\xi_3 + \xi_3\xi_1$ , and  $\sigma_3 = \xi_1\xi_2\xi_3$ .

# The cohomology of $\mathrm{PU}(4)/K$

The homomorphism  $\varphi^*: H^*(B\mathrm{PU}(4); \mathbb{F}_3) \rightarrow H^*(BK; \mathbb{F}_3)$  makes  $H^*(BK; \mathbb{F}_3)$  into a  $H^*(B\mathrm{PU}(4); \mathbb{F}_3)$ -module.

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The Eilenberg-Moore spectral sequence for  $\mathrm{PU}(4)/K \xrightarrow{cl} BK \xrightarrow{\varphi} B\mathrm{PU}(4)$  is of the form

$$E_2 = \mathrm{Tor}_{H^*((B\mathrm{PU}(4); \mathbb{F}_3))}(\mathbb{F}_3, H^*(BK; \mathbb{F}_3)) \Rightarrow H^*(\mathrm{PU}(4)/K; \mathbb{F}_3).$$

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Using the Koszul resolution of  $\mathbb{F}_3$ , we compute the  $E_2$ -page, concentrated in homological degree 0, and collapses at the  $E_2$ -page.

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The lower bounds of the topological complexity of **Bitangent**( $\epsilon$ ) and **Flex**( $\epsilon$ ) are obtained in similar ways.

# Further Questions

- Better approximations of the lower bounds of the aforementioned problems. This may involve understanding the cohomology of  $B_{\text{line}}$ ;

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- Better approximations of the lower bounds of the aforementioned problems. This may involve understanding the cohomology of  $B_{\text{line}}$ ;
- enumerative Problems in higher dimensions;
- geometric interpretations of the cohomology classes of  $BPU(n)$ .

# Thank You!



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