

Pseudorandom Generators in Proof Complexity

*Based on the 2001 article of the same name by
Alekhovich, Ben-Sasson, Razborov, & Wigderson*

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Pseudorandom Generators

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Definition (Generator)

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A deterministic generator is *pseudorandom* if no efficient algorithm can differentiate between the probability distributions of $G_n(\vec{x})$ and \vec{y} , where \vec{x} and \vec{y} are truly random.

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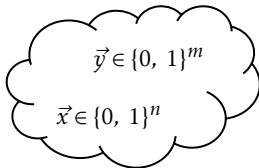
Definition (Hardness)

Let P be a proof system. Let $b \in \{0, 1\}^m$ be arbitrary. A generator is *hard for P* if P cannot prove in polynomial size that $b \notin \text{Im}(G_n)$.

Pseudorandom G_n

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Uniformly
Random (God)

$$P(G_n(\vec{x})) = 1$$



$$P(\vec{y}) = 1$$

(I'm a polynomial algorithm)

Hardness of G_n

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$$\exists \vec{x} : P(G_n(\vec{x})) = b$$

(I'm a polynomial P -proof)

Motivation 1

► If no proof system can deduce the **most basic property** of G_n efficiently (notably, what is in its image), then it certainly can't **distinguish** between the image of G_n and a proper random distribution efficiently.

Hard in Especially Strong System $P \stackrel{?}{\implies}$ Pseudorandom

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Hard for Especially Strong System $P \stackrel{?}{\implies}$ Pseudorandom

- Conversely, if G_n is pseudorandom, it is hard for most proof systems (if there existed an algorithm that could efficiently prove $b \notin \text{Im}(G_n)$, we could use this to distinguish G_n from random, and break the generator).

Pseudorandom $\stackrel{?}{\implies}$ Hard for all P

Motivation 2

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- The existence of hard generators for P (in particular, when $m > n$) provides lower bounds for a class of tautologies in P .

Tseitin Generators

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Example

Tseitin tautologies provide a good context for constructing hard generators. Let G be a connected graph, with $|E| = n$ and $|V| = m$. Let \vec{x} be a vector of variables on E . Enumerate V arbitrarily v_1, \dots, v_m . Then we have the generator

$$T_G : \{0, 1\}^n \rightarrow \{0, 1\}^m \quad \vec{x} \mapsto \begin{bmatrix} \oplus_{e \ni v_1} x_e \\ \vdots \\ \oplus_{e \ni v_m} x_e \end{bmatrix}$$

where \oplus is the typical XOR (i.e. $\equiv_2 1$). One can show that $\vec{\sigma} \in \{0, 1\}^m$ is *not* in the image of $T_G \iff \bigoplus_{i=1}^m \sigma_i = 1$ (i.e. “odd”). When is it hard, then, for a proof system to show $\vec{\sigma} \notin \text{Im}(T_G)$?

T_G hard \equiv Tseitin hard to refute

Example (cont.)

Fix $\vec{\sigma}$ which is *odd*. Then

$$T_G(\vec{x}) = \vec{\sigma}$$

cannot happen, since $\vec{\sigma} \notin \text{Im}(T_G)$. In other words, there is no satisfying assignment to \vec{x} : $T_G(\vec{x}) = \vec{\sigma}$, and so the tautologies

$$\bigoplus_{e \ni v_1} x_e = \sigma_1$$

$$\vdots$$

$$\bigoplus_{e \ni v_m} x_e = \sigma_m$$

are unsatisfiable.

We know of some good (exponential) lower bounds on refuting the Tseitin tautologies, e.g. in resolution. We conclude that, in these systems, T_G is a hard generator, since the choice of mapping $\vec{\sigma}$ is arbitrary when proving such lower bounds.

Main Example: Nisan-Wigderson Generators

Let $g_i : \vec{x} \rightarrow \{0, 1\}$ be a function on n -dimensional vector of variables $\langle x_1, \dots, x_n \rangle$. We call each g_i a **base function**.

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(Caveat: Fix a binary matrix A of dimensions $m \times n$. We impose that g_i depend only on variables x_j for which the j -th entry in the i -th row is 1.)

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Then define

$$G_n(\vec{x}) = \langle g_1(\vec{x}), \dots, g_m(\vec{x}) \rangle$$

These are believed to be pseudorandom in certain contexts.

Subject to conditions on A and g_i , we will show that these are hard for some standard proof systems.

Propositionalizing NW Generators

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Definition (Matrix Restriction)

$$J_i(A) = \{j \in [n] : a_{ij} = 1\} \quad X_i(A) = \{x_j : j \in J_i(A)\}$$

Above, we related the hardness of T_n to the Tseitin tautologies. We are interested now in the hardness of NW generators, i.e. refuting the tautologies

$$\begin{cases} g_1(\vec{x}) = 1 \\ \vdots \\ g_m(\vec{x}) = 1 \end{cases} \quad \text{Vars}(g_i) \subseteq X_i(A) \quad (1)$$

in some common proof systems.

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in some common proof systems.

(Caveat: we later impose hardness conditions on g_i . By allowing these conditions to be satisfied by $g_i \iff$ they are satisfied by $\overline{g_i}$, it is sufficient to consider (1), i.e. $b = \langle 1, \dots, 1 \rangle$, for the sake of refuting $\vec{b} \notin \text{Im}(G_n)$ for any \vec{b} .)

Background Definitions

We're interested in propositionalizing (1). In our paper, circuit-based, linear, and functional encodings are provided. We will focus on the latter.

Definition (Extension Variable)

Fix $i \in [m]$. Let f be a boolean function for which $\text{Vars}(f) \subseteq X_i(A)$. Then y_f is an *extension variable* for f .

Denote by $\text{Vars}(A) = \{y_f : \exists i \in [m] : \text{Vars}(f) \subseteq X_i(A)\}$ all possible extension variables (and hence functions) on the variables $X_i(A) : i \in [m]$.

Example

Let $A = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 1 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 1 & 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$. Then $\text{Vars}(A)$ is in correspondence with all boolean functions on a subset of $\{x_1, x_3\}$ or $\{x_2\}$.

More definitions...

Definition ($\text{Vars}(A) \rightarrow \vec{x}$)

Let $C = y_{f_1}^{\varepsilon_1} \vee \dots \vee y_{f_k}^{\varepsilon_k}$ be a clause on $\text{Vars}(A)$. Then

$$\|C\| := f_1^{\varepsilon_1} \vee \dots \vee f_k^{\varepsilon_k}$$

is a boolean function on the variables \vec{x} .

Example

With A as above, let $f_1 = x_1 \wedge \overline{x_3}$ and $f_2 = x_2$. Let $C = \overline{y_{f_1}} \vee y_{f_2}$. Then

$$\|C\| = \overline{x_1 \wedge \overline{x_3}} \vee x_2 = \overline{x_1} \vee x_3 \vee x_2$$

The Functional Encoding

Let g_1, \dots, g_m be functions on \vec{x} which constitute a generator G_n . Note that $\text{Vars}(g_i) \subseteq X_i(A)$. We encode (1) as follows:

Definition (Functional Encoding of NW Generator Hardness)

Fix A . Let $\tau(A, G_n)$ denote the collection of clauses of the form $C = y_{f_1}^{\varepsilon_1} \vee \dots \vee y_{f_k}^{\varepsilon_k}$ for which

$$\text{Vars}(f_i) \subseteq X_i(A) \quad i = 1, \dots, k \quad \text{and} \quad g_i \models \|C\|$$

$\tau(A, G_n)$ is the *functional encoding of (1)*.

The Functional Encoding is Correct

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Theorem ($\tau(A, G_n)$ Corresponds with (1))

$\tau(A, G_n)$ is satisfiable \iff (1) has a mapping that satisfies it.

Proof.

(\Leftarrow) Let \vec{x}_0 be a solution to the system

$$\begin{cases} g_1(\vec{x}_0) = 1 \\ \vdots \\ g_m(\vec{x}_0) = 1 \end{cases}$$

Consider $f_y \in \text{Vars}(A)$. Let $\rho : \text{Vars}(A) \rightarrow \{0, 1\}$ be the truth assignment $y_f \mapsto f(\vec{x}_0)$. Let $C \in \tau(A, G_n)$, i.e.

$$C = y_{f_1}^{\varepsilon_1} \vee \dots \vee y_{f_k}^{\varepsilon_k} \quad \text{with} \quad \text{Vars}(f_j) \subseteq X_i(A) \quad \forall j, \text{ some } i$$

Since $g_i \models \|C\|$, and $g_i(\vec{x}_0) = 1$, we have $\|C\| = f_1^{\varepsilon_1} \vee \dots \vee f_k^{\varepsilon_k} = 1$, so $\exists i : f_i^{\varepsilon_i}(\vec{x}_0) = 1$. Therefore, ρ will satisfy $y_{f_i}^{\varepsilon_i}$, and hence C . □

The Functional Encoding is Correct

Proof.

(\implies) Let ρ be an assignment on $\text{Vars}(A)$ satisfying $\tau(A, G_n)$. Define

$$\vec{x}_0 = \begin{bmatrix} y_{x_1} \\ \vdots \\ y_{x_n} \end{bmatrix}$$

Note that the formula x_i belong to $\text{Vars}(A)$ so long as we have no zero columns in A (we will impose this later). One can show by induction that $\rho(y_f) = f(\vec{x}_0)$ as above. Since $\text{Vars}(g_i) \subseteq X_i(A)$ and clearly $g_i \models g_i$, we have $g_i \in \tau(A, G_n)$ as a clause. ρ is satisfying for $\tau(A, G_n)$, so $\rho(g_i) = 1$ (as a bit assignment). But then $\rho(g_i) = g_i(\vec{x}_0) = 1$, as desired. \square

Main Result: $\tau(A, G_n)$ Width Bounds in Resolution

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Without yet defining $r, s, c \in \mathbb{R}$, (r, s, c) -expanders, or ℓ -robustness, we state the following theorem:

Theorem (Width of $\tau(A, G_n)$ in Resolution)

Let $A \in M_{m \times n}(\{0, 1\})$ be an (r, s, c) -expander, and let g_i be ℓ -robust for $i = 1, \dots, m$. Let $c + \ell \geq s + 1$. Then

$$w_{\text{Res}}(\tau(A, G_n)) > \frac{r(c + \ell - s)}{2\ell} = \Omega(r)$$

The foreign terms constitute the “hardness conditions” on A and g_i . We will define the following

- 1 (r, s, c) -expanders: these are sparse matrices which generalize well-connectedness for graphs. In such a way, tight groupings of variables between base functions are discouraged, preventing localized contradictions.
- 2 ℓ -robust functions g_i resist partial assignments.

Hardness of $A \leftrightarrow (r, s, c)$ -expanders

Definition $((r, s, c)$ -expanders)

Let $A \in M_{m \times n}(\{0, 1\})$. For a set of rows $I \subseteq [m]$, let $\partial_A(I)$ (called the *boundary* of I) denote all columns which, when restricted to I , contain one “1.”

Then, A is called an (r, s, c) -*expander* if $|J_i(A)| \leq s$ and, for all choices I as above, $|I| \leq r \implies |\partial_A(I)| \geq c|I|$.

What does this say: first, the number of 1s in any given row is bounded (by s). This allows sparseness.

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What does this say: first, the number of 1s in any given row is bounded (by s). This allows sparseness. Secondly, up to a selectivity threshold (r), we may lower bound the density (c) of boundary columns in I by a linear factor. For instance, a $(1, 2, .5)$ -expander could look like:

$$\begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 1 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 1 & 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

Hardness of $g_i \leftrightarrow \ell$ -robustness

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Our hardness condition on g_i (and its motivation) is more straight-forward:

Definition (ℓ -robustness)

A function g_i is called ℓ -robust if every assignment ρ such that $g_i(\rho) \in \{0, 1\}$ (i.e. not \star) satisfies $|\rho| \geq \ell$.

In other words, no short assignments satisfy or *dissatisfy* ℓ . For instance...

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Example

$x_1 \oplus x_2 \oplus \dots \oplus x_n$ is n -robust, since we need to map *all* variables to determine if the sum is $\equiv_2 1$.

Conversely, $\ell_1 \vee \dots \vee \ell_n$ is only 1-robust (take the assignment $\ell_1 = 1$).

By selecting robust (i.e. large enough ℓ) functions, we increase the number of variable assignments a prover would need to check implicitly (no shortcuts).

Proof of Theorem: Measure

Theorem (Width of $\tau(A, G_n)$ in Resolution)

Let $A \in M_{m \times n}(\{0, 1\})$ be an (r, s, c) -expander, and let g_i be ℓ -robust for $i = 1, \dots, m$. Let $c + \ell \geq s + 1$. Then

$$w_{\text{Res}}(\tau(A, G_n)) > \frac{r(c + \ell - s)}{2\ell}$$

Proof. We will first define a measure μ on clauses.

Definition (μ)

For a clause C in $\text{Vars}(A)$, $\mu(C)$ is the size of a minimal $I \subseteq [m]$ such that:

- (a) $\forall v_f^\varepsilon \in C \exists i \in I : \text{Vars}(f) \subseteq X_i(A)$
- (b) $\{g_i \mid i \in I\} \models \|C\|$

Remark. μ is sub-additive: if C_0 and C_1 resolve to C then $\mu(C) \leq \mu(C_0) + \mu(C_1)$. Furthermore, $\mu(C) = 1$ for $C \in \tau(A, G_n)$.

Proof of Theorem: Roadmap

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Theorem (Width of $\tau(A, G_n)$ in Resolution)

Let $A \in M_{m \times n}(\{0, 1\})$ be an (r, s, c) -expander, and let g_i be ℓ -robust for $i = 1, \dots, m$. Let $c + \ell \geq s + 1$. Then

$$w_{\text{Res}}(\tau(A, G_n)) > \frac{r(c + \ell - s)}{2\ell}$$

- 1 We'll first establish a connection between $\mu(C)$ and $w(C)$: medium- μ clauses are wide.
- 2 We'll then show that $\mu(\perp)$ is large, and therefore, by our remark, that any resolution refutation of τ must contain a medium- μ clause which is wide.

Proof of Theorem: Claim #1

For a clause C in $\text{Vars}(A)$, $\mu(C)$ is the size of a minimal $I \subseteq [m]$ such that:

$$(a) \forall y_f^\varepsilon \in C \exists i \in I : \text{Vars}(f) \subseteq X_i(A) \quad (b) \{g_i \mid i \in I\} \models \|C\|$$

Claim (#1)

For a clause C with $\frac{r}{2} < \mu(C) \leq r$, $w(C) > \frac{r(c+\ell-s)}{2\ell}$.

Proof.

Let I satisfy $\mu(C)$. Let $I_0 \subseteq I$ be minimal such that (a) still holds. Then, for, $I_1 := I \setminus I_0$, $\{g_i : i \in I \setminus k\} \not\models \|C\|$ for any $k \in I_1$.

Fix $k \in I_1$. We make the sub-claim that $|J_k(A) \cap \partial_A(I)| \leq s - \ell$. Let α be an assignment such that $g_i(\alpha) = 1 \forall i \in I \setminus k$, but $\|C\|(\alpha) = 0$. (This exists by the above). Then

$$\rho(x_i) := \begin{cases} \alpha(x_i) & i \notin \partial_A(I) \cap J_k(A) \\ \star & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

Proof of Theorem: Claim #1

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cont.

$$\rho(x_i) := \begin{cases} \alpha(x_i) & i \notin \partial_A(I) \cap J_k(A) \\ \star & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

Let $i \neq k$ be arbitrary. We claim that, if $x_s \in \text{Vars}(g_i)$, then $s \notin \partial_A(I) \cap J_k(A)$, and hence ρ is defined totally on each g_i . Let $x_s \in \text{Vars}(g_i)$. Suppose $s \in \partial_A(I)$. Then s is a column in which only one “1” exists. But $s \in J_i(A)$, so $s \notin J_k(A)$ for any $k \neq i$ (since this would constitute a second “1”). A similar argument shows that variables $x_s \in \|C\|$ are such that $s \notin \partial_A(I) \cap J_k(A)$, with the additional rationale that $k \notin I_0$.

$\implies g_i|\rho = 1$ and $C|\rho = 0$. By (b), $g_k|\rho = 0$. But g_k is ℓ -robust:

$$\implies \#J_k(A) \setminus [\partial_A(I) \cap J_k(A)] \geq \ell$$

$$\implies s - |\partial_A(I) \cap J_k(A)| \geq \ell \implies |\partial_A(I) \cap J_k(A)| \leq s - \ell$$

Proof of Theorem: Claim #1

cont.

To restate: so far, we have, for any $k \in I_1$, the inequality

$$|\partial_A(I) \cap J_k(A)| \leq s - \ell$$

Hence, we sum up

$$\begin{aligned} c|I| &\leq |\partial_A(I)| && \text{by } (r, s, c)\text{-properties of } A \\ &\leq \sum_{i \in I_0} |J_i(A) \cap \partial_A(I)| + \sum_{i \in I_1} |J_i(A) \cap \partial_A(I)| \\ &\leq \sum_{i \in I_0} |J_i(A)| + (s - \ell)|I_1| && \text{by sub-claim above} \\ &\leq s|I_0| + (s - \ell)|I_1| && \text{by prop of } A \text{ (sparseness)} \\ &= (s - \ell)|I| + \ell|I_0| \\ &\leq (s - \ell)|I| + \ell \cdot w(C) \end{aligned}$$

Proof of Theorem: Claim #1

cont.

In this last step, we use $|I_0| \leq w(C)$. Recall that $I_0 \subseteq I$ is minimal such that

$$(a) \quad \forall y_f^\varepsilon \in C \exists i \in I : \text{Vars}(f) \subseteq X_i(A)$$

But then $I_0 \subseteq \{i : \text{Vars}(f) \subseteq X_i \text{ for some } f \leftrightarrow y_f^\varepsilon \in C\}$, and the magnitude of this set is bounded by $\{f \leftrightarrow y_f^\varepsilon\}$, which is bounded by $w(C)$.

To restate: $c|I| \leq (s - \ell)|I| + \ell \cdot w(C)$. But $|I| = \mu(C) > \frac{r}{2}$ by assumption, so $w(C) \geq \frac{(c+\ell-s)|I|}{\ell} > \frac{r(c+\ell-s)}{2\ell}$. □

This is the bulk of our theorem! Now that we have shown that medium- μ clauses attain our width bound, we just need to show they exist in a resolution proof.

Proof of Theorem: Claim #2

Claim (#2)

Any resolution refutation Π of τ contains a clause C with $\frac{r}{2} < \mu(C) \leq r$.

Proof.

We first show $\mu(\perp) > r$. Suppose not: $\mu(\perp) \leq r$.

Then we arrive at the same inequalities, i.e. $c \cdot |I| \leq (s - \ell)|I| + \ell|I_0|$

This time, I_0 is empty, and we get $c \leq s - \ell$. But the expansion property was that $c \geq s - \ell + 1$ ✖

Now, since Π derives \perp from clauses C_i in τ with $\mu(C_i) = 1$, and μ is sub-additive, we are done. □

Putting It All Together

Adding Claim 1 with Claim 2 completes our lower bound on resolution width:

$$w_{\text{Res}}(\tau(A, G_n)) > \frac{r(c + \ell - s)}{2\ell}$$

□

Later in the paper, it is shown that nearly all matrices satisfy $c > 0.9s$, and that most functions satisfy $\ell > 0.9s$. Observe that when this is true, our bound is linear in r .

$$w_{\text{Res}}(\tau(A, G_n)) = \Omega(r)$$

Note that r is bounded above by m , but can be taken to be roughly $\frac{n}{s}$. This width lower-bound to a strong size-lower bound by the known relation from class. In Section 4 of the paper, the method of random restriction in Polynomial Calculus is used to extend a width lower bound to a size one. The results are *stronger* bounds on the *weaker* linear encoding.

Corollary: Size Lower Bound

Corollary

Let $\varepsilon > 0$ be an arbitrary fixed constant, A be an $(r, s, \varepsilon s)$ -expander of size $(m \times n)$, and g_1, \dots, g_m be $(1 - \varepsilon/2)s$ -robust functions. Then every resolution refutation of $\tau(A, \vec{g})$ must have size $\exp(\Omega(\frac{r^2}{m \cdot 2^{2s}}))/2^s$

Concluding Remarks

- We have strong lower bounds for both resolution and algebraic systems in refuting (1), and the authors believe the same for stronger systems.
- These strong lower bounds on proving these tautologies imply even stronger lower bounds on breaking the generator itself, further affirming the strength of Nisan's and Wigderson's construction.
- For proof systems P with the Efficient Interpolation Property, there is an easy way of converting any computationally secure generator to another generator which is hard for P . But in general no such method exists.