

Pseudoentropy

PhD Dissertation Talk

University of Warsaw

May 23, 2023

This talk

- ✓ Overviews the goals, resources, and deliverables of my PhD project.
- ✓ Demonstrates/sketches interesting techniques used in the dissertation.
- ✓ Defends my position on the dissertation form, in view of reviews received 🛡️.
- ✗ Avoids complex definitions and proofs for brevity's sake (see the papers) ⌚.
- ✗ Does not assess my own academic KPIs (see the documentation) 😬.

Outline

- 1 Acknowledgments 🙏
- 2 Introduction 🏁
- 3 Detailed Overview 🔍
 - Preliminaries
 - Geometric Characterizations of Pseudoentropy 🪄 ⚙️
 - Unpredictability Pseudoentropy 🪄
 - Best Generic Attacks on Pseudoentropy ⚙️
 - Lower Bounds for Pseudoentropy Chain Rules and Transformations ⚙️
 - Simulating Auxiliary Information 💎
- 4 References 📖
- 5 Discussion 💬

Outline

1 Acknowledgments 🙏

2 Introduction 🏁

3 Detailed Overview 🔍

- Preliminaries
- Geometric Characterizations of Pseudoentropy 🖋️ ⚙️
- Unpredictability Pseudoentropy 🖋️
- Best Generic Attacks on Pseudoentropy ⚙️
- Lower Bounds for Pseudoentropy Chain Rules and Transformations ⚙️
- Simulating Auxiliary Information 💎

4 References 📖

5 Discussion 💬

Credits

I am particularly grateful:

- ❤️ for love, to my wife Aneta
- 💰 for funding and know-how, to my advisor Stefan Dziembowski
- 💡 for merit support, to my co-advisor Krzysztof Pietrzak
- 👏 for motivation and recognition, to dozens of people with whom I shared ideas: research collaborators, reviewers, audience 😊

Funding

My PhD research received support from numerous funding sources:



Ideas for Poland



WELCOME



TOCNeT










PRELUDIUM



+ several travel grants from various research institutions

Outline

- 1 Acknowledgments 
- 2 Introduction 
- 3 Detailed Overview 
 - Preliminaries
 - Geometric Characterizations of Pseudoentropy  
 - Unpredictability Pseudoentropy 
 - Best Generic Attacks on Pseudoentropy 
 - Lower Bounds for Pseudoentropy Chain Rules and Transformations 
 - Simulating Auxiliary Information 
- 4 References 
- 5 Discussion 

About Pseudoentropy



Introduced in [ILL89, HILL99] as a **computational variant of information-theoretic entropy**.



Recognized as a **useful tool and convenient language** in research around cryptography, computational complexity and information theory. Examples:



Pseudorandom generators from one-way functions [HILL99]






Computational Dense Model Theorem [RTTV08, Zha11], improving upon the result of Green-Tao-Ziegler



Promising but messy: suffers from **contextual definitions** and **insufficiently developed foundations**.

Goals

My PhD project set these goals:






-  **improve understanding of foundational properties** of pseudoentropy notions
-  **demonstrate further technical applications**
-  optionally, identify **new inspirational application areas**

Contribution

Works presented under the scope of this PhD project:

- ✓ **obtained characterizations and manipulation rules** for pseudoentropy notions, using **convex analysis as a toolbox**
- ✓ **simplified some of existing technical proofs**, for instance of Dense Model Theorem and of Computational Simulators
- ✓ **developed machine-learning inspired framework** for proving computational indistinguishability

My self-assesment:

-  these works contributed to the goals ,  and  respectively.
-  goals were set broadly, leaving still room for improvement

Outline

- 1 Acknowledgments 🙏
- 2 Introduction 🏁
- 3 Detailed Overview 🔍
 - Preliminaries
 - Geometric Characterizations of Pseudoentropy 🪄 ⚙️
 - Unpredictability Pseudoentropy 🪄
 - Best Generic Attacks on Pseudoentropy ⚙️
 - Lower Bounds for Pseudoentropy Chain Rules and Transformations ⚙️
 - Simulating Auxiliary Information 💎
- 4 References 📖
- 5 Discussion 💬

Outline

1 Acknowledgments 🙏

2 Introduction 🏁

3 Detailed Overview 🔍

• Preliminaries

- Geometric Characterizations of Pseudoentropy 🔍 ⚙️
- Unpredictability Pseudoentropy 🔍
- Best Generic Attacks on Pseudoentropy ⚙️
- Lower Bounds for Pseudoentropy Chain Rules and Transformations ⚙️
- Simulating Auxiliary Information 💎

4 References 📖

5 Discussion 💬

Background

- 🔑 Pseudoentropy at least k when the distribution behaves *nearly as well* as with information-theoretic (min)entropy k in *cryptographic games*.
- 🔑 Program-input games used in definitions
 - (a) Distinguish: discriminate between two distributions based on a sample.
 - (b) Predict: guess a sampled outcome
 - (c) Compress: successfully decode after decoding

Outline

1 Acknowledgments 🙏

2 Introduction 🏁




3 Detailed Overview 🔍

- Preliminaries
- **Geometric Characterizations of Pseudoentropy** 🛠️⚙️
- Unpredictability Pseudoentropy 🛠️
- Best Generic Attacks on Pseudoentropy ⚙️
- Lower Bounds for Pseudoentropy Chain Rules and Transformations ⚙️
- Simulating Auxiliary Information 💎

4 References 📖





5 Discussion 💬

Outline

-  Indistinguishability quantifies how close are two distributions under a given class of computationally bounded tests.
-  What is the geometrical meaning of indistinguishability?
-  Computational indistinguishability can be **characterized by inseparability by a class of feasible hyperplanes**. The margin of separation can be analytically characterized too!

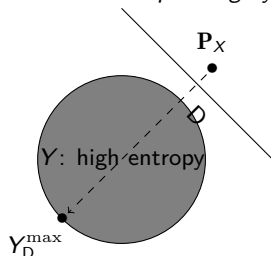
Contribution

The characterizations [Sko15a] has found the following applications:

-  Unifying unpredictability-based and indistinguishability-based pseudoentropy notions [SGP15]
-  Short proof of the Dense Model Theorem [Sko15b]
-  Further applications to key derivation [Sko17]
-  Simplifies other technical arguments [VZ12]

Technique (Sketch)

- In program-input indistinguishability games, it makes sense to **characterize the optimal input player Y** against a given program player D .
- View D as a *separating hyperplane*, maximize margin with high-entropy Y .



Symbol/Operator	Crypto	Geometry
X	candidate distribution	
$ED(Y)$	expectation	$D \cdot P_Y$ (dot-product)
D	distinguisher/program player	separating hyperplane
Y	input player	feasible point
$\epsilon = ED(Y) - ED(X)$	advantage	separation margin

Figure 1: Geometrical meaning of cryptographic indistinguishability.

- Closed-form solutions found** in interesting cases by **convex optimization**. For pseudoentropy of at least k bits against attackers \mathcal{D} with advantage ϵ :

$$\forall D \in \mathcal{D} : ED(X) \leq 2^{-k}|D| + \epsilon$$

instead of the standard depth-2 formula $\forall D \exists Y ED(X) \leq ED(Y) + \epsilon$.



Characterization depend on feasible distinguishers and the baseline entropy.

Outline

1 Acknowledgments 🙏

2 Introduction 🏁

3 Detailed Overview 🔍

- Preliminaries
- Geometric Characterizations of Pseudoentropy ✍️ ⚙️
- **Unpredictability Pseudoentropy** ✍️
- Best Generic Attacks on Pseudoentropy ⚙️
- Lower Bounds for Pseudoentropy Chain Rules and Transformations ⚙️
- Simulating Auxiliary Information 💎

4 References 📖

5 Discussion 💬

Outline

- 📖 Applications of pseudoentropy use different notions, most commonly unpredictability-based and indistinguishability-based.
- ? Are unpredictability and indistinguishability entropies different?
Note: usually, distinguishing is easier than predicting¹
- 👉 Surprisingly, **equivalent in high-entropy regimes!**

¹Think of discriminating between dogs and cats versus predicting the breed. ⏪ ⏩ ⏴ ⏵ ⏶ ⏷ ⏸ ⏹ ⏺ ⏻ ⏼ ⏽ ⏾ ⏿ 🔍 ↺ ↻

Contribution

The following result was obtained [SGP15]:

- 🔑 **equivalence of unpredictability and indistinguishability** pseudoentropy definitions in **high-entropy regimes**, namely $n - O(\log n)$ for n -bit strings,
- 🔑 **geometric characterizations as a workhorse** of the proof.

Technique (Sketch)

The proof strategy is to *constructively convert a distinguisher into a predictor*:

- (a) Indistinguishability fails: $\mathbf{ED}(X) \geq \mathbf{ED}(Y) + \epsilon$ for all Y of min-entropy k .
- (b) $\mathbf{ED}(X) \geq |\mathbf{D}|/2^k + \epsilon$ for boolean \mathbf{D} , by geometrical characterizations (!)
- (c) Sample \mathbf{A} from the image of \mathbf{D} , then $\mathbf{P}\{\mathbf{A} = X\} > 2^{-k} + \frac{\epsilon}{\#\mathbf{D}}$.
- (d) Approximate image sampling by *rejection sampling* ℓ times, then

$$\mathbf{P}\{\mathbf{A} = X\} > \left(2^{-k} + \frac{\epsilon}{\#\mathbf{D}}\right) \cdot \left(1 - \frac{\#\mathbf{D}}{2^n}\right)^\ell.$$

- (e) $\mathbf{P}\{\mathbf{A} = X\} > 2^{-k}$ when $\ell \approx 2^{n-k}/\epsilon$ independently of $\#\mathbf{D}$!



More sophisticated rejection-sampling handles X with auxiliary input Z .

Outline

1 Acknowledgments 🙏

2 Introduction 🏁

3 Detailed Overview 🔍

- Preliminaries
- Geometric Characterizations of Pseudoentropy 🪛 ⚙️
- Unpredictability Pseudoentropy 🪛
- **Best Generic Attacks on Pseudoentropy** ⚙️
- Lower Bounds for Pseudoentropy Chain Rules and Transformations ⚙️
- Simulating Auxiliary Information 💎

4 References 📖

5 Discussion 💬

Outline

- 📖 Applications of pseudoentropy assume strength parameters that propagate through reduction proofs.
- ? Can we characterize what quality parameters are non-trivial?
- 👉 Yes, by time-advantage tradeoffs!

Contribution

The following result was obtained:

- 🔑 generic attacks with time t succeed against pseudoentropy amount k with advantage $\epsilon = O\left(\sqrt{t/2^k}\right)$
- 🔑 the result generalizes the famous time-advantage tradeoffs against pseudorandomness [DTT10]

Outline

- 1 Acknowledgments 🙏
- 2 Introduction 🏁
- 3 Detailed Overview 🔍
 - Preliminaries
 - Geometric Characterizations of Pseudoentropy 🪄 ⚙️
 - Unpredictability Pseudoentropy 🪄
 - Best Generic Attacks on Pseudoentropy ⚙️
 - Lower Bounds for Pseudoentropy Chain Rules and Transformations ⚙️
 - Simulating Auxiliary Information 💎
- 4 References 📖
- 5 Discussion 💬

Outline

- 📖 Applications of pseudoentropy **heavily rely on manipulation rules**, particularly chain rules and transformations [BSW03, FOR12]. Their use **weakens security guarantees**.
- ? Can we improve known manipulation rules?
- 👉 No, not by black-box reductions!

Contribution

The following results were obtained:

- 🔑 **impossibility of better proofs** by black-box reductions!
- 🔑 the **probabilistic construction of an oracle**, of independent interest, inspired by earlier work limitations of dense model theorems [[Zha11](#)]

Outline

1 Acknowledgments 🙏

2 Introduction 🏁

3 Detailed Overview 🔍

- Preliminaries
- Geometric Characterizations of Pseudoentropy 🔧
- Unpredictability Pseudoentropy 🔧
- Best Generic Attacks on Pseudoentropy ⚙️
- Lower Bounds for Pseudoentropy Chain Rules and Transformations ⚙️
- **Simulating Auxiliary Information** 💎

4 References 📖

5 Discussion 💬

Outline



In security proofs it helps to model leakages as explicit functions of secrets.



What leakages can be modelled, without substantial loss in security, as functions of secrets?





Short leakages can be simulated!

Contribution

The following important results were obtained:

- 🔑 Construction of a simulator for m bits of leakage which makes only $2^{O(m)} \epsilon^{-2}$ calls to achieve ϵ -indistinguishability.
- 🏆 The reasoning, inspired by ML techniques, **builds on gradient descent** and was recognized with the *best student paper award at TCC*.

Outline

- 1 Acknowledgments 
- 2 Introduction 
- 3 Detailed Overview 
 - Preliminaries
 - Geometric Characterizations of Pseudoentropy  
 - Unpredictability Pseudoentropy 
 - Best Generic Attacks on Pseudoentropy 
 - Lower Bounds for Pseudoentropy Chain Rules and Transformations 
 - Simulating Auxiliary Information 
- 4 References 
- 5 Discussion 

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Outline

- 1 Acknowledgments 🙏
- 2 Introduction 🏁
- 3 Detailed Overview 🔍
 - Preliminaries
 - Geometric Characterizations of Pseudoentropy 🪄 ⚙️
 - Unpredictability Pseudoentropy 🪄
 - Best Generic Attacks on Pseudoentropy ⚙️
 - Lower Bounds for Pseudoentropy Chain Rules and Transformations ⚙️
 - Simulating Auxiliary Information 💎
- 4 References 📖
- 5 Discussion 💬

Addressing Reviewers Feedback

R: Editorial changes and reference requests.

M: Addressed, thanks for the feedback!

R: A book-style dissertation would be better than a mixture of conference works.

M: I discussed this form with senior researchers, but found *ineffective*:

- 🥕 Gain citations! 😞 *Time-consuming, better to keep writing papers.*
- 🥕 Get your PhD distinguished. 😞 *Prestigious conferences not enough?*
- 💧 Take your time to present it better! 😞 *Why to work harder? We count conference works when granting junior/senior professorships!*

R: Parts of lengthy works might not have been fully reviewed at conferences.

M: Same as in case of granted junior professorships, but we had extra reviewers 😊.