

On Kolmogorov Structure Functions

Sam Epstein*

May 31, 2024

Abstract

All strings with low mutual information with the halting sequence will have flat Kolmogorov Structure Functions, in the context of Algorithmic Statistics. Assuming the Independence Postulate, strings with non-negligible information with the halting sequence are purely mathematical constructions, and cannot be found in the physical world.

1 Introduction

In statistics, one tries to determine a model (such as a parameter for a distribution) from data which is assumed to have noise. In the Minimum Description Principle [Gru07], the model that describes information with the shortest code is assumed to be the best model. The data is described as a two part code, where the first part is the model and the second part is the noise. In one of his last works, Kolmogorov suggested a two part code for individual strings $x \in \{0, 1\}^*$ based off Kolmogorov Complexity. The first part (the model) is a set D containing x , the second part (the noise) is the code of x given D , of size $\lceil \log |D| \rceil$. Other works examined probabilities and also total computable functions as models [Vit02]. Kolmogorov suggested the following *structure function* at the Tallinn conference in Estonia, 1973.

$$\mathbf{H}_k(x) = \{\log |S| : x \in S, \mathbf{K}(S) \leq k\}.$$

The function \mathbf{K} is the prefix Kolmogorov complexity. This definition is used for the following function, which is a central definition of *Algorithmic Statistics* [VS15, VS17, VV04],

$$k \mapsto k + \mathbf{H}_k(x) - \mathbf{K}(x).$$

This function's equivalence to several other definitions is the main theorem of Algorithmic Statistics [SSV24]. Furthermore, Theorem 1 of [VS17] showed that any shape of the structure function is possible.

The structure function is flat for all strings with low mutual information with the halting sequence. Assuming the *Independence Postulate*, [Lev84, Lev13], strings with non-negligible mutual information with the halting sequence are exotic, in that they cannot be found in nature. Such strings are purely mathematical constructions.

*samepst@jpththeorygroup.org

2 Bounds

We review the results of [GTV01], in particular Theorem of III.24, which I don't think is widely known in the literature. $\mathbf{m}(x)$ is the algorithmic probability. The amount of information that the halting sequence $\mathcal{H} \in \{0,1\}^\infty$ has about $x \in \{0,1\}^*$ is $\mathbf{I}(x; \mathcal{H}) = \mathbf{K}(x) - \mathbf{K}(x|\mathcal{H})$. We use $x <^+ y$, $x >^+ y$ and $x =^+ y$ to denote $x < y + O(1)$, $x + O(1) > y$ and $x = y \pm O(1)$, respectively. In addition, $x <^{\log} y$ and $x >^{\log} y$ denote $x < y + O(\log y)$ and $x + O(\log x) > y$, respectively. For $x, y \in \{0,1\}^*$, $x \sqsubseteq y$ if $y = xz$ for some $z \in \{0,1\}^*$. $[A] = 1$ if mathematical statement A is true, and $[A] = 0$ otherwise.

Let $S_k = \{x : \mathbf{K}(x) \leq k\}$. Let $N_k = |S_k|$ where $\log N_k =^+ k - \mathbf{K}(k)$, due to [GTV01]. Let I_k^x be the index of x in an enumeration of S_k . For $\mathbf{K}(x) = k$, let m_x be the longest joint prefix of I_k^x and N_k . So $m_x 0 \sqsubseteq I_k^x$ and $m_x 1 \sqsubseteq N_k$. Let $S_x = \{y : m_x 0 \sqsubseteq I_k^y\}$. So

$$\begin{aligned} \log |S_x| &=^+ k - \mathbf{K}(k) - \|m_x\| \\ \mathbf{K}(S_x) &<^+ \mathbf{K}(k) + \mathbf{K}(m_x) <^+ \mathbf{K}(k) + \|m_x\| + \mathbf{K}(\|m_x\|). \end{aligned}$$

Theorem 1 ([GTV01]).

$$\|m_x\| <^{\log} \mathbf{I}(x; \mathcal{H}).$$

Proof. Let $\nu(y) = c[\mathbf{K}(y) \leq k]\mathbf{m}(x)2^{\|m_x\|}/(\|m_x\|^2)$. For proper choice of c , ν is a semimeasure and computable relative to \mathcal{H} . So $\mathbf{K}(x|\mathcal{H}) <^+ -\log \nu(x) =^+ \mathbf{K}(x) - \|m_x\| + 2\log \|m_x\|$. \square

Corollary 1. For $x \in \{0,1\}^*$, $n = \mathbf{K}(x)$, for all $m \leq n$, $m \in \mathbb{W}$, there is a set $S \ni x$ such that $|S| = 2^m$ and $\mathbf{K}(S) + m <^{\log} n + \mathbf{I}(x; \mathcal{H})$.

Claim 1. Thus there exists a set $S \ni x$ such that $\mathbf{K}(S) < \mathbf{K}(\mathbf{K}(x)) + \mathbf{I}(x; \mathcal{H}) + O(\log \mathbf{I}(x; \mathcal{H}))$ and $\mathbf{K}(S) + \log |S| <^+ \mathbf{K}(x) + O(\log \mathbf{I}(x; \mathcal{H}))$. This fact combined with the following proposition characterizes the Kolmogorov Structure Function.

Proposition 1. Let $S \ni x$. For all $s < \log |S|$ there exists a set $S' \ni x$ such that $|S'| \leq |S|2^{-s}$ and $\mathbf{K}(S') <^+ \mathbf{K}(S) + s + \mathbf{K}(s)$.

References

- [Gru07] P. Grunwald. *The Minimum Description Length Principle*. The MIT Press, 2007.
- [GTV01] P. Gács, J. Tromp, and P. Vitányi. Algorithmic statistics. *Information Theory, IEEE Transactions on*, 47:2443 – 2463, 2001.
- [Lev84] L. A. Levin. Randomness conservation inequalities; information and independence in mathematical theories. *Information and Control*, 61(1):15–37, 1984.
- [Lev13] L. A. Levin. Forbidden information. *J. ACM*, 60(2), 2013.

- [SSV24] A. Semenov, A. Shen, and N. Vereshchagin. Kolmogorov’s Last Discovery? (Kolmogorov and Algorithmic Statistics). *Theory of Probability & Its Applications*, 68(4):582–606, 2024.
- [Vit02] P. Vitányi. Meaningful information. In *Algorithms and Computation*, pages 588–599, Berlin, Heidelberg, 2002. Springer Berlin Heidelberg.
- [VS15] N. Vereshchagin and A. Shen. *Algorithmic Statistics Revisited*, pages 235–252. Springer International Publishing, 2015.
- [VS17] N. Vereshchagin and A. Shen. *Algorithmic Statistics: Forty Years Later*, pages 669–737. Springer International Publishing, 2017.
- [VV04] N. Vereshchagin and P. Vitányi. Kolmogorov’s structure functions and model selection. *IEEE Transactions on Information Theory*, 50(12):3265–3290, 2004.