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# Pseudorandomness Program Open Problems

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## 1 Additive Combinatorics

## 2 Cryptography

### 2.1 Cryptography using Weak Sources of Randomness (Feb 6–Feb 9)

Open Problems presented by Yevgeniy Dodis at the Simons Working Group on Cryptography using Weak Sources of Randomness.

**IP-weak = IP**

Is **IP-weak = IP**? Note, only one weak source and must be conditional (e.g.,  $\text{IP} \neq \text{AM}$ ).

## Extraction from limited “bit-coin source”

source parameterized by  $\gamma$ ,  $n$  and  $b$ .

repeat the following steps until  $n$   $b$ -bit blocks output:

1. sample random  $b$ -bit  $X$
2. sample a coin which is 1 with probability  $1 - \gamma$ .
3. if coin=0, output  $X$  as next block and go to step 1.
4. if coin=1, ask attacker if he wants to block  $X$  or not
5. if block, don't output anything and go to step 1, else output  $X$  and go to step 1.

Goal: extract (for now 1)  $\varepsilon$ -unbiased bit from such  $X_1 \dots X_n$

Known: impossible if  $A$  can block unbounded number of times.

So let's limit number of blocked times by  $t$

Question 1:  $b = 1$ . given  $t, \varepsilon, \gamma$ , what is smallest  $n$  for which possible?

Question 2: given  $t, \varepsilon, \gamma$ , what is smallest alphabet  $b$  for which can set  $n = t + 1$ .

## 3 Expanders and Extractors

### 3.1 Expanders and Extractors Workshop (Jan 30–Feb 3)

Open Problems presented at the Simons Workshop on Expanders and Extractors.

Compiled by Noga Alon.

#### Partial Steiner systems of large girth, Nati Linial

Let us first recall that the *girth* of a graph  $G$  is the least integer  $g$  such that there is a set of  $g$  vertices in  $G$  that spans at least  $g$  edges. We seek an analogous notion for 3-uniform hypergraphs. In fact we only deal with *linear* hypergraphs  $H$  where every two hyperedges share at most one vertex. As defined by Erdős, the girth of  $H$  is the smallest integer  $g \geq 4$  such that there is a set of  $g$  vertices in  $H$  that spans at least  $g - 2$  hyperedges. He conjectured that there exist Steiner Triple Systems with arbitrarily high girth, but despite considerable attempts over the years, the state of our knowledge concerning this problem is quite bad. I therefore formulate a variant that may be more accessible:

Question: Does there exist  $c > 0$  and  $n$ -vertex 3-uniform hypergraphs with at least  $cn^2$  hyperedges and arbitrarily high girth?

#### Cliques in near Ramanujan Graphs, Noga Alon

An  $(n, d, \lambda)$ -graph is a  $d$ -regular graph on  $n$  vertices so that all eigenvalues but the top one are in absolute value at most  $\lambda$ . Let  $G$  be an  $(n, d, 100\sqrt{d})$ -graph. It is known that:

1. There is a constant  $c > 0$  so that if  $d \geq cn^{2/3}$  then  $G$  contains a triangle.
2. The statement in (1) is tight up to the constant  $c$ .
3. There is a constant  $c > 0$  so that if  $d \geq cn^{4/5}$  then  $G$  contains a copy of  $K_4$ .

**Open:** Is (3) tight up to the value of  $c$ ? That is, is there an  $(n, d, 100\sqrt{d})$ -graph containing no  $K_4$ , where  $d = \Omega(n^{4/5})$ ? It is not even known whether or not there is such a graph with  $n^{2/3} = o(d)$ .

## On the extractable entropy from zero-fixing sources, Gil Cohen

Let  $n \geq k \geq 0$  be integers. An  $n$ -bit random variable  $X$  is called a  $k$ -zero-fixing source if there exists a subset of indices  $R \subseteq [n]$  such that the marginal of  $X$  when projected to  $R$  is uniformly distributed, and the remaining bits of  $X$  are fixed to zero. The parameter  $k$  is called the entropy of  $X$ . Let  $m = m(n, k)$  be the largest integer for which there exists a function  $\text{Ext}_k : \{0, 1\}^n \rightarrow \{0, 1\}^m$  with the following property: for any  $k$ -zero-fixing source  $X$ ,  $\text{Ext}_k(X)$  is within statistical distance  $1/5$  from uniform (here  $1/5$  is an arbitrary choice of a small constant.) We stress that  $\text{Ext}_k$  does not get the description of the source  $X$  (namely, the set  $R$ ) but rather a single sample from  $X$ . Such a function  $\text{Ext}_k$  is called an *extractor for  $k$ -zero-fixing sources*. We would like to have a better understanding of the function  $m(n, k)$  that, informally speaking, captures the amount of extractable entropy from zero-fixing sources. Clearly,  $m(n, k) \leq k$ . By a straightforward counting argument, for any  $k > \log_2 \log n + \log_2 \log \log n + \Omega(1)$ ,  $m(n, k) = k - O(1)$ . That is, when the entropy  $k$  is high enough, one can extract essentially all the entropy from the source. What about smaller entropies? For any  $k$ ,  $m(n, k) \geq 0.5 \log_2 k - O(1)$  as can be seen by considering the function that takes the Hamming weight of the input  $X$  modulo  $\Theta(\sqrt{k})$  [kamp2006deterministic][reshef2013extractors]. That is to say, a logarithmic amount of entropy is always extractable. Interestingly, this simple function is optimal for small enough  $k$ . Put formally,  $m(n, (\log^* n)^{2/3}) \leq 0.5 \log_2 k + O(1)$  [cohen2015zero]. The natural open problem is to understand the behavior of  $m(n, k)$  and close the gap between  $k = \Omega(\log \log n)$  and  $k = O((\log^* n)^{2/3})$ . In particular, it is not clear if  $m(n, k)$  has a threshold behavior, namely, if there exists a function  $\tau(n)$  such that for  $k = \omega(\tau(n))$ ,  $m(n, k) = k - O(1)$  whereas for  $k = o(\tau(n))$ ,  $m(n, k) \leq 0.5 \log_2 k + O(1)$ .

## Beating the expander mixing lemma for small sets, David Zuckerman

The expander mixing lemma asserts that in a  $d$ -regular graph  $G$  on  $n$  nodes, for sets  $S$  and  $T$  of size  $k$ , we have

$$|e(S, T) - dk^2/n| < \lambda k,$$

where  $\lambda = \max(\lambda_2, -\lambda_n)$  is the largest nontrivial eigenvalue in absolute value. Even for optimal  $\lambda = O(\sqrt{d})$ , this is useless when  $k < c\sqrt{n}$ . On the other hand, when  $d > (n/k) \log(n/k)$ , most  $d$ -regular graphs achieve an upper bound of  $O(k \sqrt{(dk/n) \log(n/k)})$ . This is better than the expander mixing lemma for  $k = o(n)$ .

The problem is to give an upper bound  $f(G, k)$  that is better than  $\lambda k$  for some interesting graphs or for most or even many graphs. For dense graphs, this corresponds to two-source extractors. Bounds on line-point incidence graphs are also known. It would be extremely interesting to have a general method.

## Spectral radius problem for free groups, Emmanuel Breuillard

If  $\mu$  is a probability measure on a non-abelian free group  $F$ , let  $\sigma(\mu) := \|T_\mu\|$  be the norm of the convolution operator on  $\ell^2(F)$

$$T_\mu : f \mapsto \mu * f,$$

where  $\mu * f(x) = \sum_{g \in G} f(g^{-1}x) \mu(g)$ .

Is it true that for every  $\epsilon > 0$  there is  $\delta > 0$  such that for all probability measures  $\mu$  on  $F$ , the condition  $\sigma(\mu) > \epsilon$  implies that there is a coset  $xH$  of a cyclic subgroup  $H$  of  $F$  such that  $\mu(xH) > \delta$ ?

## Explicit Coding Power Series, Anup Rao

We are interested in giving an explicit description of a formal power-series over a finite field  $F$  with some nice properties. The motivation comes from several applications related to coding.

We say that a power series  $P(X) = p_0 + p_1X + \dots$  is  $\epsilon$ -sparse if there is a finite  $k$  such that of the first  $k$  coefficients of  $P(X)$ , at most  $\epsilon k$  of them are non-zero.

Definition:  $P(X)$  is an  $\epsilon$ -coding power series if for every polynomial  $g(X)$  with 0/1 coefficients, the power series  $(1 + Xg(X))P(X)$  is not  $\epsilon$ -sparse.

Fact: For every  $\epsilon > 0$ , there is a finite field  $F$  for which a random power series  $P(X)$  will be a coding power series with positive probability.

Open Problem: Give an explicit example of a coding power-series.

## References

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