

# Ramsey Numbers of Books and Quasirandomness

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## Abstract

The *book graph*  $B_n^{(k)}$  consists of  $n$  copies of  $K_{k+1}$  joined along a common  $K_k$ . The Ramsey numbers of  $B_n^{(k)}$  are known to have strong connections to the classical Ramsey numbers of cliques. Recently, the first author determined the asymptotic order of these Ramsey numbers for fixed  $k$ , thus answering an old question of Erdős, Faudree, Rousseau, and Schelp. In this paper, we first provide a simpler proof of this theorem. Next, answering a question of the first author, we present a different proof that avoids the use of Szemerédi’s regularity lemma, thus providing much tighter control on the error term. Finally, we prove a conjecture of Nikiforov, Rousseau, and Schelp by showing that all extremal colorings for this Ramsey problem are quasirandom.

## 1 Introduction

Given two graphs  $H_1$  and  $H_2$ , their *Ramsey number*  $r(H_1, H_2)$  is the minimum  $N$  such that any red/blue coloring of the edges of the complete graph  $K_N$  contains a red copy of  $H_1$  or a blue copy of  $H_2$ . Ramsey’s theorem asserts that  $r(H_1, H_2)$  is finite for all graphs  $H_1$  and  $H_2$ . In the special case where  $H_1$  and  $H_2$  are the same graph  $H$ , we write  $r(H)$  rather than  $r(H, H)$ . Though Ramsey proved his theorem nearly a century ago, our understanding of the numbers  $r(H)$  is still rather limited. Even for the basic case of identical cliques, the bounds  $\sqrt{2}^r \leq r(K_r) \leq 4^r$  have remained almost unchanged since 1947 (more precisely, there have been no improvements to the exponential constants  $\sqrt{2}$  and 4).

One possible approach to improving the upper bound on  $r(K_r)$  is as follows. Fix some  $k < r$  and suppose we are given an edge coloring of  $K_N$  with no monochromatic copy of  $K_r$ . Suppose some blue  $K_k$  has at least  $n = r(K_r, K_{r-k})$  extensions to a monochromatic  $K_{k+1}$ . Then, by the definition of  $n$ , among these  $n$  vertices, we must find either a red  $K_r$  or a blue  $K_{r-k}$ , which can be combined with our original blue  $K_k$  to yield a blue  $K_r$ . This contradicts our assumption that the coloring has no monochromatic  $K_r$  and, therefore, every monochromatic  $K_k$  must have fewer than  $n$  monochromatic extensions to a  $K_{k+1}$ . Equivalently, if we define the *book graph*  $B_n^{(k)}$  to consist of  $n$  copies of  $K_{k+1}$  joined along a common  $K_k$  (called the *spine* of the book), then we have shown that a coloring with no monochromatic  $K_r$  must also not contain a monochromatic  $B_n^{(k)}$ , where  $n = r(K_r, K_{r-k})$ . In other words,

$$r(K_r) \leq r(B_n^{(k)}).$$

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Therefore, one could hope to improve the upper bound on  $r(K_r)$  by finding good upper bounds on  $r(B_n^{(k)})$ . Such an approach, combined with other techniques coming from the theory of quasirandom graphs, was used by the first author [2] to obtain the first superpolynomial improvement to the upper bound of  $4^r$ .

These observations suggest that one should study the Ramsey numbers  $r(B_n^{(k)})$  and, indeed, such a study was initiated about four decades ago by Erdős, Faudree, Rousseau, and Schelp [6] and by Thomason [21]. Both papers prove a lower bound of the form

$$r(B_n^{(k)}) \geq 2^k n - o_k(n),$$

which follows by considering a uniformly random coloring of  $K_N$ ; in such a coloring, a fixed monochromatic  $K_k$  has, in expectation,  $2^{-k}(N - k)$  monochromatic extensions and the desired bound follows from applying the Chernoff bound and then the union bound. Alternatively, one can check (e.g., [21, Theorem 6(i)]) that a Paley graph of order  $q = 2^k(n - \Omega_k(\sqrt{n}))$  contains no  $B_n^{(k)}$ , yielding a lower bound of the same form.

Erdős, Faudree, Rousseau, and Schelp [6] asked whether this lower bound or a simple upper bound of the form  $4^k n$  is asymptotically tight, while Thomason [21] conjectured that the lower bound should be asymptotically correct. In fact, he made the stronger conjecture that, for all  $n$  and  $k$ ,

$$r(B_n^{(k)}) \leq 2^k(n + k - 2) + 2.$$

If true, this would yield a huge improvement on the upper bound for  $r(K_r)$ . Indeed,  $B_1^{(r-1)} = K_r$ , so we would immediately have  $r(K_r) \leq r2^{r-1}$ . In fact, if one could prove that  $r(B_n^{(k)})$  asymptotically matches the lower bound given by the random construction *and* one had sufficiently strong control on the error term in this asymptotic, one might hope for an exponential improvement on  $r(K_r)$ . The first part of this plan was carried out by the first author [3], who answered the question of Erdős, Faudree, Rousseau, and Schelp and proved an approximate version of Thomason's conjecture.

**Theorem 1** (Conlon [3]). *For any  $k \geq 1$ ,*

$$r(B_n^{(k)}) = 2^k n + o_k(n).$$

Unfortunately, the error term  $o_k(n)$  decays extremely slowly. More specifically, to obtain the upper bound  $2^k n + \varepsilon n$  for some  $\varepsilon > 0$ , the argument in [3] requires  $n$  to be at least a tower of twos whose height is a function of  $k$  and  $1/\varepsilon$ . The first author raised the natural question of whether such a dependence is necessary. Our first main result shows that it is not.

**Theorem 2.** *For any  $k \geq 3$ ,*

$$r(B_n^{(k)}) = 2^k n + O_k\left(\frac{n}{(\log \log \log n)^{1/25}}\right).$$

That is, if one wishes to obtain the upper bound  $2^k n + \varepsilon n$ , then one “only” needs  $n$  to be triple exponential in  $1/\varepsilon$ . While this eliminates the tower-type dependence of Theorem 1, it is still far from strong enough to give an exponential improvement to  $r(K_r)$  via the approach outlined above.

A second major direction of research in graph Ramsey theory regards the structure of Ramsey colorings, that is, colorings of  $K_N$  with no monochromatic  $K_r$ , where  $N$  is “close” to the Ramsey number  $r(K_r)$ . More specifically, we say that an edge coloring of  $K_N$  is *C-Ramsey* if it contains

no monochromatic  $K_r$  with  $r \geq C \log N$ . Since our best lower bounds for  $r(K_r)$  come from random constructions, there have been many attempts to show that such  $C$ -Ramsey colorings exhibit properties that are typical for random colorings. For instance, Erdős and Szemerédi [7] proved that such colorings must have both red and blue densities bounded away from 0; Prömel and Rödl [17] proved that both the red and blue graphs contain induced copies of all “small” graphs (see also [8] for a simpler proof with better bounds); Jenssen, Keevash, Long, and Yepremyan [12] proved that both the red and blue graphs contain induced subgraphs exhibiting vertices with  $\Omega(N^{2/3})$  distinct degrees; and Kwan and Sudakov [14] proved that both the red and blue graphs contain  $\Omega(N^{5/2})$  induced subgraphs with distinct numbers of vertices and edges.

Following Chung, Graham, and Wilson [1], themselves building on work of Thomason [22], we say that an edge coloring of  $K_N$  is  $\theta$ -quasirandom if, for any pair of disjoint vertex sets  $X$  and  $Y$ ,

$$\left| e_B(X, Y) - \frac{1}{2}|X||Y| \right| \leq \theta N^2,$$

where  $e_B(X, Y)$  denotes the number of blue edges between  $X$  and  $Y$ . Note that since the colors are complementary, we could just as well have used red edges. The importance of this definition is that, for  $\theta$  sufficiently small, it implies that the graph has other natural random-like properties, such as that of containing roughly the “correct” number of monochromatic copies of all graphs of any fixed order. In light of the research described above, it is natural to ask whether Ramsey colorings are quasirandom. Unfortunately, this is not the case, as may easily be seen by considering a random coloring where each edge of  $K_N$  is colored red with probability  $\frac{3}{4}$  and blue with probability  $\frac{1}{4}$ . Nevertheless, Sós [19] conjectured that true extremal colorings are quasirandom. More precisely, she conjectured that for every  $\theta > 0$  there is some  $r_0$  such that, for all  $r \geq r_0$ , all edge colorings on  $r(K_r) - 1$  vertices with no monochromatic  $K_r$  are  $\theta$ -quasirandom.

A proof of Sós’s conjecture seems completely out of reach at present, if only because it would seem to require an asymptotic determination of the Ramsey number  $r(K_r)$ . However, an analogous conjecture for book Ramsey numbers was made by Nikiforov, Rousseau, and Schelp [16] and, given that we now understand the asymptotic behavior of  $r(B_n^{(k)})$  for all fixed  $k$ , we might hope that this conjecture is within range. For  $k = 2$ , where the asymptotic behavior has been long known [18], the conjecture was proved by Nikiforov, Rousseau, and Schelp [16] themselves. Our second main result establishes their conjecture in full generality.

**Theorem 3.** *For any  $k \geq 3$  and any  $0 < \theta < \frac{1}{2}$ , there is some  $c = c(\theta, k) > 0$  such that if a 2-coloring of  $K_N$  is not  $\theta$ -quasirandom for  $N$  sufficiently large, then it contains a monochromatic  $B_n^{(k)}$  with  $n = (2^{-k} + c)N$ .*

Theorem 3 will follow from the following stronger result, which says that in a non-quasirandom coloring, a constant fraction of the monochromatic  $K_k$  form the spine of one of these large books.

**Theorem 4.** *For any  $k \geq 3$  and any  $0 < \theta < \frac{1}{2}$ , there is some  $c_1 = c_1(\theta, k) > 0$  such that if a 2-coloring of  $K_N$  is not  $\theta$ -quasirandom for  $N$  sufficiently large, then it contains at least  $c_1 N^k$  monochromatic  $K_k$ , each of which has at least  $(2^{-k} + c_1)N$  extensions to a monochromatic  $K_{k+1}$ .*

Moreover, in Theorem 7, we prove a converse to this result, which, when combined with Theorem 4, implies the following result.

**Theorem 5.** *Fix  $k \geq 2$ . A 2-coloring of the edges of  $K_N$  is  $o(1)$ -quasirandom if and only if all but  $o(N^k)$  monochromatic  $K_k$  have at most  $(2^{-k} + o(1))N$  extensions to a monochromatic  $K_{k+1}$ .*

This adds to the long list of properties known to be equivalent to quasirandomness.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. In Section 2, we collect some fairly standard results related to Szemerédi’s regularity lemma which will be important in our proofs. In Section 3, we present a simplified proof of Theorem 1. Most of the ideas in this proof are already present in [3], but the presentation here is simpler. Moreover, various ideas and results from Section 3 will be adapted and reused later in the paper. In Section 4, we prove Theorem 2, which improves the error term in Theorem 1. We then present our quasirandomness results in Section 5, including the proof of Theorem 4 and its converse. We conclude with some further remarks, though there is also an appendix where we consign the proofs of certain technical lemmas.

## 1.1 Notation and Terminology

If  $X$  and  $Y$  are two vertex subsets of a graph, let  $e(X, Y)$  denote the number of pairs in  $X \times Y$  that are edges. We will often normalize this and consider the *edge density*,

$$d(X, Y) = \frac{e(X, Y)}{|X||Y|}.$$

If we consider a red/blue coloring of the edges of a graph, then  $e_B(X, Y)$  and  $e_R(X, Y)$  will denote the number of pairs in  $X \times Y$  that are blue and red edges, respectively. Similarly,  $d_B$  and  $d_R$  will denote the blue and red edge densities, respectively. Finally, for a vertex  $v$  and a set  $Y$ , we will sometimes abuse notation and write  $d(v, Y)$  for  $d(\{v\}, Y)$  and similarly for  $d_B$  and  $d_R$ .

An *equitable partition* of a graph  $G$  is a partition of the vertex set  $V(G) = V_1 \sqcup \cdots \sqcup V_m$  with  $||V_i| - |V_j|| \leq 1$  for all  $1 \leq i, j \leq m$ . A pair of vertex subsets  $(X, Y)$  is said to be  $\varepsilon$ -*regular* if, for every  $X' \subseteq X$ ,  $Y' \subseteq Y$  with  $|X'| \geq \varepsilon|X|$ ,  $|Y'| \geq \varepsilon|Y|$ , we have

$$|d(X, Y) - d(X', Y')| \leq \varepsilon.$$

Note that we do not require  $X$  and  $Y$  to be disjoint. In particular, we say that a single vertex subset  $X$  is  $\varepsilon$ -*regular* if the pair  $(X, X)$  is  $\varepsilon$ -regular. We will often need a simple fact, known as the *hereditary property* of regularity, which asserts that for any  $0 < \alpha \leq \frac{1}{2}$ , if  $(X, Y)$  is  $\varepsilon$ -regular and  $X' \subseteq X$ ,  $Y' \subseteq Y$  satisfy  $|X'| \geq \alpha|X|$ ,  $|Y'| \geq \alpha|Y|$ , then  $(X', Y')$  is  $(\varepsilon/\alpha)$ -regular.

All logarithms are base 2 unless otherwise stated. For the sake of clarity of presentation, we systematically omit floor and ceiling signs whenever they are not crucial. In this vein, whenever we have an equitable partition of a vertex set, we will always assume that all of the parts have exactly the same size, rather than being off by at most one. Because the number of vertices in our graphs will always be “sufficiently large”, this has no effect on our final results.

## 2 Some regularity tools

The main regularity result we will need is the following, which is a slight strengthening of the usual version of Szemerédi’s regularity lemma.

**Lemma 1.** *For every  $\varepsilon > 0$  and  $M_0 \in \mathbb{N}$ , there is some  $M = M(\varepsilon, M_0) > M_0$  such that for every graph  $G$ , there is an equitable partition  $V(G) = V_1 \sqcup \cdots \sqcup V_m$  into  $M_0 \leq m \leq M$  parts so that the following hold:*

1. *Each part  $V_i$  is  $\varepsilon$ -regular and*

2. For every  $1 \leq i \leq m$ , there are at most  $\varepsilon m$  values  $1 \leq j \leq m$  such that the pair  $(V_i, V_j)$  is not  $\varepsilon$ -regular.

Note that this strengthens Szemerédi's regularity lemma in two ways: first, it ensures that every part of the partition is  $\varepsilon$ -regular with itself and, second, it imposes some structure on the fewer than  $\varepsilon m^2/2$  irregular pairs, ensuring that they are reasonably well-distributed.

In order to prove Lemma 1, we will need some other results. The first asserts that every graph contains a reasonably large  $\varepsilon$ -regular subset.

**Lemma 2** (Conlon–Fox [4, Lemma 5.2]). *Given  $0 < \varepsilon < \frac{1}{2}$ , let  $\delta = 2^{-\varepsilon^{-(10/\varepsilon)^4}}$ . Then, for every graph  $G$ , there is an  $\varepsilon$ -regular subset  $W \subseteq V(G)$  with  $|W| \geq \delta|V(G)|$ .*

The next lemma asserts that inside an  $\varepsilon$ -regular set of vertices, we may find a subset of any specified cardinality whose regularity is not much worse, provided we don't restrict to too small a cardinality. The proof of this lemma may be found in the appendix.

**Lemma 3.** *Fix  $0 < \varepsilon < \frac{1}{5}$  and let  $t \geq \varepsilon^{-4}$  be an integer. Let  $G$  be a graph on at least  $t$  vertices and suppose that  $V(G)$  is  $\varepsilon$ -regular. Then there is a subset  $U \subseteq V(G)$  with  $|U| = t$  such that  $U$  is  $(10\varepsilon)^{1/3}$ -regular. In fact, a randomly chosen  $U \in \binom{V(G)}{t}$  will be  $(10\varepsilon)^{1/3}$ -regular with probability tending to 1 as  $\varepsilon \rightarrow 0$ .*

Using the previous two lemmas, we can prove that any graph may be equitably partitioned into  $\varepsilon$ -regular subsets. We will use this result instead of Lemma 1 as the main partitioning lemma in the proof of Theorem 2.

**Lemma 4.** *Fix  $0 < \varepsilon < \frac{1}{100}$  and suppose that  $G$  is a graph on  $n \geq 2^{1/\varepsilon^{(10/\varepsilon)^{15}}}$  vertices. Then  $G$  has an equitable partition  $V(G) = V_1 \sqcup \dots \sqcup V_K$  such that each  $V_i$  is  $\varepsilon$ -regular, where  $K = K(\varepsilon)$  is a constant depending only on  $\varepsilon$  satisfying  $2^{1/\varepsilon^{(10/\varepsilon)^{12}}} \leq K(\varepsilon) \leq 2^{1/\varepsilon^{(10/\varepsilon)^{15}}}$ .*

**Remark.** Unlike Szemerédi's regularity lemma, Lemma 4 makes no assertion about regularity between the parts, only that they are all  $\varepsilon$ -regular with themselves. Lemma 4 is very similar to [4, Lemma 5.7], which is also proven by repeatedly applying Lemma 2. However, our lemma is stronger both in guaranteeing that the partition is equitable and in having the number of parts be a fixed constant depending only on  $\varepsilon$ , rather than lying in some range.

*Proof of Lemma 4.* Let  $n = |V(G)|$ . Let  $\varepsilon_0 = \varepsilon^3/10^4$ , let  $\delta_0 = \delta(\varepsilon_0) = 2^{-\varepsilon_0^{-(10/\varepsilon_0)^4}}$  be the parameter from Lemma 2, and set  $\delta_1 = \varepsilon^2\delta_0/10$ . Note that by our assumption on  $n$ , we have that  $n \geq \varepsilon_0^{-4}\delta_1^{-1}$ .

We will iteratively construct a sequence of disjoint  $(\varepsilon/10)$ -regular vertex subsets  $U_1, U_2, \dots$  with  $|U_i| = \delta_1 n$  for all  $i$ . To begin the sequence, we apply Lemma 2 to find a set  $W_1 \subseteq V(G)$  with  $|W_1| \geq \delta_0 n$  that is  $\varepsilon_0$ -regular. We now apply Lemma 3 with  $t = \delta_1 n$  to  $W_1$  to find an  $(\varepsilon/10)$ -regular subset  $U_1 \subseteq W_1$  with  $|U_1| = \delta_1 n$ . Note that we may apply Lemma 3 since, by our assumption on  $n$ , we have that  $t \geq \varepsilon_0^{-4}$ .

Suppose now that we have defined disjoint sets  $U_1, \dots, U_i$  with  $i \leq (1 - \varepsilon^2/10)/\delta_1$ . Let  $V_{i+1} = V \setminus (U_1 \cup \dots \cup U_i)$ . Then we apply Lemma 2 to  $V_{i+1}$  to find an  $\varepsilon_0$ -regular subset  $W_{i+1} \subseteq V_{i+1}$  with

$$|W_{i+1}| \geq \delta_0 |V_{i+1}| = \delta_0(1 - i\delta_1)n \geq \delta_0 \left(1 - \frac{1 - \varepsilon^2/10}{\delta_1} \delta_1\right)n = \frac{\varepsilon^2\delta_0 n}{10} = \delta_1 n.$$

Therefore, we may apply Lemma 3 to  $W_{i+1}$  to find an  $(\varepsilon/10)$ -regular subset  $U_{i+1} \subseteq W_{i+1}$  with  $|U_{i+1}| = \delta_1 n$ , so continuing the sequence.

This process stops once we have  $K := \lfloor (1 - \varepsilon^2/10)/\delta_1 \rfloor + 1$  sets  $U_1, U_2, \dots, U_K$ . At that point, we will have placed at least a  $(1 - \varepsilon^2/10)$ -fraction of the vertices into one of the sets  $U_1, \dots, U_K$ . The remaining vertices we arbitrarily and equitably partition into sets  $Z_1, \dots, Z_K$ , where

$$|Z_i| \leq \frac{\varepsilon^2 n/10}{K} \leq \frac{\varepsilon^2/10}{1 - \varepsilon^2/10} (\delta_1 n) < \frac{\varepsilon^2}{9} |U_i|.$$

Finally, we set  $V_i = U_i \cup Z_i$  to obtain an equitable partition of  $V(G)$ . Lemma 5.6 in [4] shows that if  $(X, Y)$  is an  $\alpha$ -regular pair of vertices and  $Z$  is a set of vertices disjoint from  $Y$  with  $|Z| \leq \beta|Y|$ , then  $(X, Y \cup Z)$  is  $(\alpha + \beta + \sqrt{\beta})$ -regular. Applying this fact to  $(U_i, U_i)$  twice with  $\beta = \varepsilon^2/9$  shows that  $V_i$  is  $(\varepsilon/10 + 2(\varepsilon^2/9) + 2(\varepsilon/3))$ -regular and thus  $\varepsilon$ -regular.  $\square$

*Proof of Lemma 1.* Let  $\varepsilon_1 = \varepsilon/2$  and  $\varepsilon_2 = \varepsilon^2/128$  and let  $K_1 = K(\varepsilon_1) \leq 2^{1/\varepsilon_1^{(10/\varepsilon_1)^{15}}}$  be the parameter from Lemma 4. Finally, let  $\eta = \min\{\varepsilon_1/K_1, \varepsilon \cdot \varepsilon_2\} > 0$ . The usual form of Szemerédi's regularity lemma (e.g., [13, Theorem 2]) says that there is some  $L = L(\eta, M_0) > M_0$  such that we can find an equitable partition  $V(G) = W_1 \sqcup \dots \sqcup W_\ell$  with  $M_0 \leq \ell \leq L$  where all but at most  $\eta \binom{\ell}{2}$  pairs of parts  $(W_i, W_j)$  are  $\eta$ -regular. We now apply Lemma 4 to each  $W_i$  to get an equitable partition  $W_i = U_{i1} \sqcup \dots \sqcup U_{iK_1}$  such that each part is  $\varepsilon_1$ -regular. Since the  $W_i$  formed an equitable partition and each  $W_i$  is cut up into the same number  $K_1$  of parts, the resulting partition of  $V(G)$  is equitable. Moreover, since each  $U_{ij}$  is at least a  $1/K_1$ -fraction subset of  $W_i$ , the hereditary property of regularity implies that if  $(W_{i_1}, W_{i_2})$  was  $\eta$ -regular, then  $(U_{i_1 j_1}, U_{i_2 j_2})$  is  $\eta K_1$ -regular for all  $j_1, j_2$ . Therefore, all but an  $\eta$ -fraction of the pairs  $(U_{i_1 j_1}, U_{i_2 j_2})$  are  $\eta K_1$ -regular. By our choice of  $\eta$ , we know that  $\eta K_1 \leq \varepsilon_1$ . So we have found an equitable partition where each part is  $\varepsilon_1$ -regular and all but an  $\varepsilon_1$ -fraction of the pairs are  $\varepsilon_1$ -regular.

We will now rename the parts as  $U_1, \dots, U_m$ , where  $m = K_1 \ell$ , since we no longer need to track which  $W$  part each  $U$  part came from. We are almost done, except that the irregular pairs might still be badly distributed: some  $U_i$  might be involved in more than  $\varepsilon m$  irregular pairs. However, since there are at most  $\eta m^2$  irregular pairs, the number of such “bad”  $U_i$  is at most  $(\eta/\varepsilon)m \leq \varepsilon_2 m$ . Therefore, at most an  $\varepsilon_2$ -fraction of the vertices are contained in a bad  $U_i$ . We now equitably, but otherwise arbitrarily, distribute these vertices into the remaining at least  $(1 - \varepsilon_2)m$  parts to obtain a new partition  $V_1, \dots, V_{m'}$ , where  $V_i$  is obtained from  $U_i$  by adding to it at most  $\beta|U_i|$  vertices, where  $\beta = \frac{\varepsilon_2}{1 - \varepsilon_2} < 2\varepsilon_2$ . We again apply Lemma 5.6 from [4]. In fact, we will only need a slightly weaker bound, namely, that if  $(X, Y)$  is an  $\alpha$ -regular pair of vertices and  $Z$  is a set of vertices disjoint from  $Y$  with  $|Z| \leq \beta|Y|$ , then  $(X, Y \cup Z)$  is  $(\alpha + 2\sqrt{\beta})$ -regular. Therefore, by applying this fact twice, we see that if  $(U_i, U_j)$  was an  $\varepsilon_1$ -regular pair of good parts, then  $(V_i, V_j)$  is  $(\varepsilon_1 + 4\sqrt{\beta})$ -regular. Moreover,

$$\varepsilon_1 + 4\sqrt{\beta} < \varepsilon_1 + 4\sqrt{2\varepsilon_2} = \frac{\varepsilon}{2} + 4\sqrt{\frac{\varepsilon^2}{64}} = \varepsilon.$$

By the exact same computation, we see that each  $V_i$  is  $\varepsilon$ -regular, since each  $U_i$  was  $\varepsilon_1$ -regular. Therefore,  $V_1, \dots, V_{m'}$  is the desired partition.  $\square$

Another important tool will be a standard counting lemma (see, e.g., [23, Theorem 3.30]).

**Lemma 5.** Suppose that  $V_1, \dots, V_k$  are (not necessarily distinct) subsets of a graph  $G$  such that all pairs  $(V_i, V_j)$  are  $\varepsilon$ -regular. Then the number of labeled copies of  $K_k$  whose  $i$ th vertex is in  $V_i$  for all  $i$  is

$$\left( \prod_{1 \leq i < j \leq k} d(V_i, V_j) \pm \varepsilon \binom{k}{2} \right) \prod_{i=1}^k |V_i|.$$

We will frequently use the following consequence of Lemma 5, designed to count monochromatic extensions of cliques and thus estimate the size of monochromatic books.

**Corollary 1.** Let  $\eta, \delta \in (0, 1)$  be parameters with  $\eta \leq \delta^3/k^2$ . Suppose  $U_1, \dots, U_k$  are (not necessarily distinct) vertex sets in a graph  $G$  and all pairs  $(U_i, U_j)$  are  $\eta$ -regular with  $\prod_{1 \leq i < j \leq k} d(U_i, U_j) \geq \delta$ . Let  $Q$  be a randomly chosen copy of  $K_k$  with one vertex in each  $U_i$  with  $1 \leq i \leq k$  and say that a vertex  $u$  extends  $Q$  if  $u$  is adjacent to every vertex of  $Q$ . Then, for any  $u$ ,

$$\Pr(u \text{ extends } Q) \geq \prod_{i=1}^k d(u, U_i) - 4\delta. \quad (1)$$

*Proof.* Since the right-hand side of (1) is negative if  $d(u, U_i) \leq \delta$  for some  $i$ , the conclusion is vacuously true in this case. Thus, we may assume that  $d(u, U_i) \geq \delta$  for all  $i$ .

First, by the counting lemma, Lemma 5, the number of copies of  $K_k$  with one vertex in each  $U_i$  is at most

$$\left( \prod_{1 \leq i < j \leq k} d(U_i, U_j) + \eta \binom{k}{2} \right) \prod_{i=1}^k |U_i|.$$

On the other hand, for a vertex  $u$ , let  $U'_i$  be its neighborhood in  $U_i$ , so that  $|U'_i| = d(u, U_i)|U_i| \geq \delta|U_i|$ . Then, by the hereditary property of regularity, we know that each pair  $(U'_i, U'_j)$  is  $\frac{\eta}{\delta}$ -regular. Therefore, by Lemma 5, we know that the number of  $K_k$  with one vertex in each  $U_i$  is at least

$$\left( \prod_{1 \leq i < j \leq k} d(U'_i, U'_j) - \frac{\eta}{\delta} \binom{k}{2} \right) \prod_{i=1}^k |U'_i|.$$

Note that since  $(U_i, U_j)$  is  $\eta$ -regular and  $\delta > \eta$ , we also know that  $d(U'_i, U'_j) \geq d(U_i, U_j) - \eta$  and, therefore,

$$\prod_{1 \leq i < j \leq k} d(U'_i, U'_j) \geq \prod_{1 \leq i < j \leq k} d(U_i, U_j) - \eta \binom{k}{2} \geq \prod_{1 \leq i < j \leq k} d(U_i, U_j) - \frac{\eta}{\delta} \binom{k}{2}.$$

Putting this together, we find that the number of  $K_k$  with one vertex in each  $U'_i$  is at least

$$\left( \prod_{1 \leq i < j \leq k} d(U_i, U_j) - 2\frac{\eta}{\delta} \binom{k}{2} \right) \prod_{i=1}^k d(u, U_i)|U_i|.$$

Now, the probability that  $u$  extends  $Q$  is precisely the probability that  $Q$  has one vertex in each  $U'_i$ . Therefore, dividing the number of such cliques by the total number of cliques with one vertex in each  $U_i$  gives us the probability that  $u$  extends  $Q$ . By the calculations above, we get

$$\Pr(u \text{ extends } Q) \geq \frac{\left( \prod_{1 \leq i < j \leq k} d(U_i, U_j) - 2\frac{\eta}{\delta} \binom{k}{2} \right) \prod_{i=1}^k (d(u, U_i)|U_i|)}{\left( \prod_{1 \leq i < j \leq k} d(U_i, U_j) + \eta \binom{k}{2} \right) \prod_{i=1}^k |U_i|}$$

$$\begin{aligned}
&= \frac{\prod_{1 \leq i < j \leq k} d(U_i, U_j) - 2\frac{\eta}{\delta} \binom{k}{2}}{\prod_{1 \leq i < j \leq k} d(U_i, U_j) + \eta \binom{k}{2}} \prod_{i=1}^k d(u, U_i) \\
&\geq \frac{\delta - 2\frac{\eta}{\delta} \binom{k}{2}}{\delta + \eta \binom{k}{2}} \prod_{i=1}^k d(u, U_i) \tag{2}
\end{aligned}$$

$$\geq (1 - 4\delta) \prod_{i=1}^k d(u, U_i) \tag{3}$$

$$\geq \prod_{i=1}^k d(u, U_i) - 4\delta. \tag{4}$$

In (2), we used that the function  $(x - y)/(x + z)$  is monotonically increasing in  $x$  for all  $y, z > 0$ , as well as the assumption that  $\prod d(U_i, U_j) \geq \delta$ . In (3), we used that  $(x - 2y)/(x(1 + y)) \geq 1 - 2x$  for all positive  $x, y$  with  $y < x^2/2$ , applying this with  $x = \delta$  and  $y = \frac{\eta}{\delta} \binom{k}{2}$ , where the bound  $y < x^2/2$  holds by our assumption that  $\eta \leq \delta^3/k^2 < \delta^3/2 \binom{k}{2}$ . Finally, in (4), we used that  $(1 - x)y \geq y - x$  for all  $y \in [0, 1]$ .  $\square$

### 3 A simplified proof of Theorem 1

In this section, we present a simplified proof of Theorem 1 which gives bounds comparable to those obtained in [3]. Though many of the ideas are the same in both proofs, we believe that the proof here is conceptually simpler than that in [3]. The main differences are that we use Lemma 1 instead of the usual regularity lemma and also that we use averaging arguments in a few more places. As a result, we only need to find a clique in the reduced graph, instead of a clique blow-up as in [3].

Suppose we are given a red/blue coloring of the edges of  $K_N$ , where  $N = (2^k + \varepsilon)n$  for some  $\varepsilon > 0$ . We wish to find a monochromatic  $B_n^{(k)}$  in this coloring. Doing this for all  $\varepsilon$  and all sufficiently large  $n$  will prove Theorem 1. The key observation, which also implicitly underlies the proof in [3], is that to find the “large” structure of a monochromatic  $B_n^{(k)}$ , it suffices to find a different “small” structure, which we call a *good configuration*.

**Definition 1.** Fix  $k \geq 2$  and let  $\eta, \delta > 0$  be some parameters. A  $(k, \eta, \delta)$ -good configuration is a collection of  $k$  disjoint vertex sets  $C_1, \dots, C_k \subseteq V(K_N)$  with the following properties:

1. Each  $C_i$  is  $\eta$ -regular with itself and has red density at least  $\delta$  and
2. For all  $i \neq j$ , the pair  $(C_i, C_j)$  is  $\eta$ -regular and has blue density at least  $\delta$ .

**Definition 2.** A  $(k, \eta, \delta)$ -good configuration  $C_1, \dots, C_k$  is called a  $(k, \eta, \delta)$ -great configuration if the density conditions in Properties 1 and 2 are replaced by the stronger conditions that

$$d_R(C_i) \binom{k}{2} \geq \delta \quad \text{and} \quad \prod_{1 \leq i < j \leq k} d_B(C_i, C_j) \geq \delta.$$

**Remark.** Note that good and great configurations are equivalent up to a polynomial change in the parameters. Certainly, a  $(k, \eta, \delta)$ -great configuration is also  $(k, \eta, \delta)$ -good, for if the product of some numbers in  $[0, 1]$  is at least  $\delta$ , then each of these numbers must be at least  $\delta$ . On the other hand, every  $(k, \eta, \delta)$ -good configuration is also  $(k, \eta, \delta \binom{k}{2})$ -great.



We will first describe a process that finds either a monochromatic  $B_n^{(k)}$  or a good configuration and then later see how to use this good configuration to find a monochromatic book. We set  $\delta = 2^{-3k}\varepsilon$  and  $\eta = \delta^{2k^2}$ .

We begin by applying Lemma 1 to the red graph, with the parameter  $\eta$  as above and with  $M_0 = 1/\eta$ . We obtain an equitable partition  $V(K_N) = V_1 \sqcup \dots \sqcup V_m$  with a bounded number of parts such that, for each  $i$ ,  $V_i$  is  $\eta$ -regular and there are at most  $\eta m$  values of  $j$  such that  $(V_i, V_j)$  is not  $\eta$ -regular. Note that since the colors are complementary, the same holds for the blue graph. Without loss of generality, at least  $m' \geq m/2$  of the parts have internal red density at least  $\frac{1}{2}$ . By renaming if necessary, we may assume that  $V_1, \dots, V_{m'}$  are these red parts. We form a reduced graph  $G$  on the vertex set  $v_1, \dots, v_m$  by connecting  $v_i$  to  $v_j$  if  $(V_i, V_j)$  is  $\eta$ -regular and  $d_B(V_i, V_j) \geq \delta$ . Let  $G'$  be the subgraph of  $G$  induced by the “red” vertices  $v_i$  with  $1 \leq i \leq m'$ . Suppose that, in  $G'$ , some  $v_i$  has at least  $(2^{1-k} + 2\eta)m'$  non-neighbors. Then, since  $v_i$  has at most  $\eta m \leq 2\eta m'$  non-neighbors coming from irregular pairs, this means that there are at least  $2^{1-k}m'$  parts  $V_j$  with  $1 \leq j \leq m'$  such that  $(V_i, V_j)$  is  $\eta$ -regular and  $d_R(V_i, V_j) \geq 1 - \delta$ . Let  $J$  be the set of all these indices  $j$  and let  $U = \bigcup_{j \in J} V_j$  be the union of all of these  $V_j$ . We then have

$$e_R(V_i, U) = \sum_{j \in J} e_R(V_i, V_j) \geq \sum_{j \in J} (1 - \delta)|V_i||V_j| = (1 - \delta)|V_i||U|. \quad (5)$$

Let  $V'_i \subseteq V_i$  denote the set of vertices  $v \in V_i$  with  $e_R(v, U) \geq (1 - 2\delta)|U|$ . Then we may write

$$e_R(V_i, U) = \sum_{v \in V'_i} e_R(v, U) + \sum_{v \in V_i \setminus V'_i} e_R(v, U) \leq |V'_i||U| + (1 - 2\delta)|V_i \setminus V'_i||U|. \quad (6)$$

Combining equations (5) and (6), we find that  $|V'_i| \geq \frac{1}{2}|V_i|$ , where every vertex in  $V'_i$  has red density at least  $1 - 2\delta$  into  $U$ . Moreover, we may apply the  $\eta$ -regularity of  $V_i$  to conclude that the internal red density of  $V'_i$  is at least  $\frac{1}{2} - \eta \geq \delta$ , while the hereditary property of regularity implies that  $V'_i$  is  $2\eta$ -regular. By the counting lemma, Lemma 5,  $V'_i$  contains at least

$$\left( \delta \binom{k}{2} - 2\eta \binom{k}{2} \right) |V'_i|^k \geq \frac{1}{2} \delta \binom{k}{2} |V'_i|^k > 0$$

red copies of  $K_k$ , where we used that  $2\eta \binom{k}{2} < \delta \binom{k}{2} < \frac{1}{2} \delta \binom{k}{2}$ . Since each vertex in this red  $K_k$  has at least  $(1 - 2\delta)|U|$  red edges into  $U$ , this red  $K_k$  has at least  $(1 - 2k\delta)|U|$  red common neighbors in  $U$ . Finally, since  $U$  contains at least  $2^{1-k}m' \geq 2^{-k}m$  parts  $V_j$  and the partition is equitable (and, as explained on Page 4, we are assuming equitable always means exactly equitable), we have that  $|U| \geq 2^{-k}N$ . Thus, the red  $K_k$  we found in  $V'_i$  has at least  $(1 - 2k\delta)|U|$  extensions to a red  $K_{k+1}$  and

$$(1 - 2k\delta)|U| \geq (1 - 2k\delta)(1 + 2^{-k}\varepsilon)n \geq n,$$

where we used that  $2^{-k}\varepsilon \geq 4k\delta$  and  $(1 - x)(1 + 2x) \geq 1$  for all  $x \in [0, \frac{1}{2}]$ . Thus, this red  $K_k$  gives us our desired  $B_n^{(k)}$ .

Therefore, we may assume that every vertex in  $G'$  has degree at least  $(1 - 2^{1-k} - 2\eta)m'$ . By Turán's theorem, as long as

$$2^{1-k} + 2\eta < \frac{1}{k-1},$$

$G'$  will contain a  $K_k$ . But, since  $\eta < 2^{-k}$ , this condition holds for all  $k \geq 2$ , so  $G'$  contains a copy of  $K_k$  with vertices  $v_{i_1}, \dots, v_{i_k}$ . Set  $C_j = V_{i_j}$ . Then we have found a  $(k, \eta, \delta)$ -good configuration, since

every pair  $(C_i, C_j)$  with  $i \leq j$  is  $\eta$ -regular, each  $C_i$  has red density at least  $\frac{1}{2} \geq \delta$ , and  $d_B(C_i, C_j) \geq \delta$  for  $i \neq j$ . The following lemma therefore completes the proof. It is stated for great configurations for later convenience, but, as noted above, our  $(k, \eta, \delta)$ -good configuration is also  $(k, \eta, \delta^{\binom{k}{2}})$ -great.

**Lemma 6.** *Suppose a red/blue coloring of  $K_N$ , with  $N = (2^k + \varepsilon)n$ , contains a  $(k, \eta, \delta)$ -great configuration with  $\delta \leq 2^{-2k-3}\varepsilon$  and  $\eta \leq \delta^3/k^2$ . Then it also contains a monochromatic  $B_n^{(k)}$ .*

*Proof.* Let  $C_1, \dots, C_k$  be the  $(k, \eta, \delta)$ -great configuration. First, observe that by the counting lemma, Lemma 5, the number of blue  $K_k$  with one vertex in each  $C_i$  is at least

$$\left( \prod_{1 \leq i < j \leq k} d_B(C_i, C_j) - \eta \binom{k}{2} \right) \prod_{i=1}^k |C_i| \geq \left( \delta - \eta \binom{k}{2} \right) \prod_{i=1}^k |C_i| \geq (\delta - \delta^3) \prod_{i=1}^k |C_i| > 0,$$

since the definition of a great configuration includes that  $\prod d_B(C_i, C_j) \geq \delta$ . Therefore, there is at least one blue  $K_k$  with one vertex in each  $C_i$ . Similarly, for any  $i$ , the number of red  $K_k$  inside  $C_i$  is at least

$$\left( d_R(C_i)^{\binom{k}{2}} - \eta \binom{k}{2} \right) |C_i|^k \geq \left( \delta - \eta \binom{k}{2} \right) |C_i|^k > 0.$$

Thus, every  $C_i$  contains at least one red  $K_k$ .

Next we will need an analytic inequality, essentially [3, Lemma 8]. The proof of this lemma and a stronger, stability version that we will need later may be found in the appendix.

**Lemma 7.** *For any  $x_1, \dots, x_k \in [0, 1]$ ,*

$$\prod_{i=1}^k x_i + \frac{1}{k} \sum_{i=1}^k (1 - x_i)^k \geq 2^{1-k}.$$

Now, for any vertex  $v$  and any  $i \in [k]$ , consider the blue density  $x_i(v) := d_B(v, C_i)$ . By Lemma 7, we know that

$$\prod_{i=1}^k x_i(v) + \frac{1}{k} \sum_{i=1}^k (1 - x_i(v))^k \geq 2^{1-k}.$$

Summing this inequality over all  $v$ , we get that

$$\sum_{v \in V} \prod_{i=1}^k x_i(v) + \frac{1}{k} \sum_{i=1}^k \sum_{v \in V} (1 - x_i(v))^k \geq 2^{1-k} N.$$

Since the sum of these two quantities is at least  $2^{1-k} N$ , one of them must be at least  $2^{-k} N$ . First, suppose that

$$\sum_{v \in V} \prod_{i=1}^k x_i(v) \geq 2^{-k} N. \tag{7}$$

For a given vertex  $v$ , if we pick  $v_i \in C_i$  with  $1 \leq i \leq k$  uniformly and independently at random, then  $\prod_{i=1}^k x_i(v)$  is the probability that all of the edges  $(v, v_i)$  are blue. Hence, inequality (7) implies that for a random  $v$  and random  $v_i \in C_i$ , there is a probability at least  $2^{-k}$  that all the edges  $(v, v_i)$

are blue. Heuristically, this fact, combined with the regularity of the pairs  $(C_i, C_j)$ , implies that a random blue  $K_k$  spanned by  $(C_1, \dots, C_k)$  will also have probability close to  $2^{-k}$  of being in the blue neighborhood of a random  $v$ . More formally, by applying Corollary 1 for each  $v$  and summing, we see that the expected number of blue extensions of a randomly chosen blue  $K_k$  spanned by  $(C_1, \dots, C_k)$  is at least

$$\sum_{v \in V} \left( \prod_{i=1}^k x_i(v) - 4\delta \right) \geq (2^{-k} - 4\delta)N = (2^{-k} - 4\delta)(2^k + \varepsilon)n \geq (1 + 2^{-k}\varepsilon - 2^{k+3}\delta)n \geq n,$$

by our choice of  $\delta \leq 2^{-2k-3}\varepsilon$ . Therefore, there must exist some blue  $K_k$  with at least  $n$  blue extensions, giving us our desired blue  $B_n^{(k)}$ .

On the other hand, suppose that

$$\frac{1}{k} \sum_{i=1}^k \sum_{v \in V} (1 - x_i(v))^k \geq 2^{-k}N.$$

Then there must exist some  $1 \leq i \leq k$  for which  $\sum_{v \in V} (1 - x_i(v))^k \geq 2^{-k}N$ . For this  $i$ , similar logic applies: this fact, together with the regularity of  $C_i$ , implies that for a random red  $K_k$  in  $C_i$  and for a random  $v \in V$ ,  $v$  will form a red extension of the  $K_k$  with probability close to  $2^{-k}$ . More precisely, by Corollary 1, the expected number of extensions of a random red  $K_k$  in  $C_i$  is at least<sup>1</sup>

$$\sum_{v \in V} \left( (1 - x_i(v))^k - 4\delta \right) \geq (2^{-k} - 4\delta)N \geq n,$$

by the same computation as above. Therefore, we see that a randomly chosen red  $K_k$  inside  $C_i$  will have at least  $n$  red extensions in expectation. Hence, there must exist a red  $B_n^{(k)}$ , completing the proof.  $\square$

Recall that previously we found a  $(k, \eta, \delta)$ -good configuration with  $\delta = 2^{-3k}\varepsilon$  and  $\eta = \delta^{2k^2}$ . This is also a  $(k, \eta, \delta')$ -great configuration, where  $\delta' = \delta^{\binom{k}{2}}$ . Therefore, we can apply Lemma 6, since  $\delta' \leq 2^{-2k-3}\varepsilon$  and  $\eta = \delta^{2k^2} \leq (\delta')^4 \leq (\delta')^3/k^2$ . Applying Lemma 6 yields our desired monochromatic  $B_n^{(k)}$  and completes the proof of Theorem 1.

## 4 A new proof, with better bounds

In this section, we prove Theorem 2, which we now restate in the following more precise form.

**Theorem 2.** Fix  $k \geq 3$ . Then, for any  $n \geq 2^{2^{2k}25k^2}2^{100k^3}$ ,

$$r(B_n^{(k)}) \leq 2^k n + \frac{n}{(\log \log \log n)^{1/25}}.$$

---

<sup>1</sup>Strictly speaking, if  $v \in C_i$ , then  $d_R(v, C_i) \neq 1 - x_i(v)$ , as  $v$  has no edge to itself. However, this tiny loss can be absorbed into the error terms and the result does not change.

The proof of this result follows similar lines to the proof of Theorem 1 presented in Section 3, except that we must now avoid invoking Szemerédi’s regularity lemma at all costs, as doing so would necessarily result in tower-type bounds. Instead, we will invoke Lemma 4 to obtain a somewhat structured partition of our vertex set (which results in only a double-exponential loss in our parameters) and then attempt to locate a great configuration in this partition. If we are able to do so, then Lemma 6 guarantees us our desired monochromatic book. We first show that such a great configuration exists unless there are very blue  $K_k$  between the red parts of our partition and then, in Section 4.1, we show how to guarantee a monochromatic book also in that case (without finding a great configuration). The rest of the section spells out the details of this approach. We will assume throughout that  $\varepsilon \leq 2^{-4k^3}/k^{k^2}$  and set  $\delta = 2^{-2k-3}\varepsilon$ ,  $\zeta = \delta^3/k^2$ , and  $\eta = \zeta^{2k^2}\zeta^{-5}$ .

Suppose we are given a red/blue coloring of  $K_N$ , where  $N = (2^k + \varepsilon)n$ , and we wish to find a monochromatic  $B_n^{(k)}$ . We apply Lemma 4 to the red graph with parameter  $\eta$  as above to obtain an equitable partition of the vertices  $V = V_1 \sqcup \dots \sqcup V_m$  where each part is  $\eta$ -regular in red and  $m = K(\eta)$ ; to do this, we assume that  $N \geq 2^{1/\eta^{(10/\eta)^{15}}}$ . Since the colors are complementary, each part is also  $\eta$ -regular in blue. We call a part  $V_i$  *red* if at least half its edges are colored red and *blue* otherwise. Without loss of generality, we may assume that at least  $m/2$  of the parts are red. Let  $R$  be the set of all vertices in red parts, that is,

$$R = \bigcup_{i: V_i \text{ red}} V_i. \quad (8)$$

The main tool that we will use to find a great configuration in  $R$  is a weak regularity lemma due to Duke, Lefmann, and Rödl, stated below. We need the following terminology. A *cylinder* is simply a product set, that is, a set of the form  $S = S_1 \times \dots \times S_k$ . We say that such a cylinder of vertex sets is  $\varepsilon$ -regular if every pair  $(S_i, S_j)$  with  $1 \leq i \neq j \leq k$  is  $\varepsilon$ -regular.

**Lemma 8** (Duke–Lefmann–Rödl [5]). *For any  $0 < \zeta < \frac{1}{2}$  and any  $k \in \mathbb{N}$ , let  $M = \zeta^{-k^2}\zeta^{-5}$ . Suppose  $U_1, \dots, U_k$  are disjoint vertex subsets of a graph  $G$ . Then there is a partition  $\mathcal{P}$  of the cylinder  $U_1 \times \dots \times U_k$  into at most  $M$  parts, each a cylinder of the form  $W_1 \times \dots \times W_k$  with  $W_i \subseteq U_i$ , such that the following hold:*

1. *All but a  $\zeta$ -fraction of the tuples  $(v_1, \dots, v_k) \in U_1 \times \dots \times U_k$  are contained in  $\zeta$ -regular parts of  $\mathcal{P}$  and*
2. *For each  $W_1 \times \dots \times W_k \in \mathcal{P}$  and each  $i \in [k]$ ,  $|W_i| \geq |U_i|/M$ .*

Using this lemma, we now show that we can find a great configuration in  $R$ , provided that  $R$  contains a reasonable number of blue  $K_k$ .

**Lemma 9.** *Let  $0 < \zeta < \frac{1}{2}$ ,  $0 < \delta < 2^{-2k^2}$  and  $\alpha \geq 2\delta + \zeta k^2$ . Suppose the set  $R$  from (8) contains at least  $\alpha|R|^k$  blue  $K_k$ , and that  $\eta \leq \min\{\alpha, \zeta^{2k^2}\zeta^{-5}, \frac{1}{4}\}$ . Then there exist disjoint  $C_1, \dots, C_k \subseteq R$  which form a  $(k, \zeta, \delta)$ -great configuration.*

*Proof.* First, we show that since  $R$  contains “many” blue  $K_k$ , we can find distinct  $i_1, \dots, i_k$  so that the red blocks  $V_{i_1}, \dots, V_{i_k} \subseteq R$  span “many” blue  $K_k$ , where we say that the tuple *spans* a blue  $K_k$  if each part contains one vertex of the  $K_k$ . Note first that the number of blue  $K_k$  with at least two vertices in a fixed part  $V_i$  is at most

$$\binom{|V_i|}{2} |R|^{k-2} \leq \frac{|V_i|^2}{2} |R|^{k-2} \leq \frac{(|R|/(m/2))^2}{2} |R|^{k-2} \leq \frac{2|R|^k}{m^2}$$

and, therefore, the number of blue  $K_k$  with at least two vertices in the same part is at most  $2|R|^k/m$ . Recall from Lemma 4 that  $m = K(\eta) \geq 2^{1/\eta^{(10/\eta)^{12}}} > 4/\alpha$ , so that  $2|R|^k/m < \alpha|R|^k/2$ . Thus, at least  $\alpha|R|^k/2$  blue  $K_k$  go between parts. By averaging over all choices of  $i_1, \dots, i_k$ , we find that there must exist a choice such that  $(V_{i_1}, \dots, V_{i_k})$  spans at least  $\frac{\alpha}{2}|V_{i_1}| \cdots |V_{i_k}|$  blue  $K_k$ . We reorder the parts so that these are  $V_1, \dots, V_k$ .

We now apply Lemma 8 with the parameter  $\zeta$  as in the statement of the lemma. We thus get a partition  $\mathcal{P}$  of  $V_1 \times \cdots \times V_k$ , with each part  $P_\ell \in \mathcal{P}$  a cylinder  $W_{1\ell} \times \cdots \times W_{k\ell}$ . We can write

$$\#\{\text{blue } K_k \text{ in } V_1 \times \cdots \times V_k\} = \sum_{\ell} \#\{\text{blue } K_k \text{ in } P_\ell\},$$

where a blue  $K_k$  in  $P_\ell$  is a blue  $K_k$  with one vertex in each  $W_{i\ell}$ . At most a  $\zeta$ -fraction of the  $k$ -tuples in  $V_1 \times \cdots \times V_k$  are contained in irregular parts  $P_\ell$ . Therefore,

$$\sum_{P_\ell \text{ is } \zeta\text{-regular}} \#\{\text{blue } K_k \text{ in } P_\ell\} \geq \left(\frac{\alpha}{2} - \zeta\right) |V_1| \cdots |V_k|.$$

For each  $\zeta$ -regular  $P_\ell$ , we can count the number of blue  $K_k$  using Lemma 5. This implies that

$$\#\{\text{blue } K_k \text{ in } P_\ell\} \leq \left( \zeta \binom{k}{2} + \prod_{1 \leq i < j \leq k} d_B(W_{i\ell}, W_{j\ell}) \right) \prod_{i=1}^k |W_{i\ell}|,$$

where  $d_B$  denotes the blue density. Therefore,

$$\begin{aligned} \left(\frac{\alpha}{2} - \zeta\right) |V_1| \cdots |V_k| &\leq \sum_{P_\ell \text{ } \zeta\text{-regular}} \left( \zeta \binom{k}{2} + \prod_{i < j} d_B(W_{i\ell}, W_{j\ell}) \right) \prod_{i=1}^k |W_{i\ell}| \\ &\leq \max_{P_\ell \text{ } \zeta\text{-regular}} \left( \zeta \binom{k}{2} + \prod_{i < j} d_B(W_{i\ell}, W_{j\ell}) \right) \sum_{P_\ell \in \mathcal{P}} \prod_{i=1}^k |W_{i\ell}| \\ &= \max_{P_\ell \text{ } \zeta\text{-regular}} \left( \zeta \binom{k}{2} + \prod_{i < j} d_B(W_{i\ell}, W_{j\ell}) \right) |V_1| \cdots |V_k|. \end{aligned}$$

Thus, there is some  $\ell$  for which  $P_\ell$  is  $\zeta$ -regular and

$$\prod_{i < j} d_B(W_{i\ell}, W_{j\ell}) \geq \left(\frac{\alpha}{2} - \zeta\right) - \zeta \binom{k}{2} \geq \frac{\alpha}{2} - \zeta \frac{k^2}{2} \geq \delta,$$

by our choice of  $\alpha$ . Setting  $C_i = W_{i\ell}$ , we have found sets  $C_1, \dots, C_k$  such that each pair  $(C_i, C_j)$  is  $\zeta$ -regular and the product of their pairwise blue densities is at least  $\delta$ .

We also know that for each  $i$ ,  $|C_i| \geq |V_i|/M$ . Since  $V_i$  was  $\eta$ -regular, the hereditary property of regularity implies that  $C_i$  is  $\eta M$ -regular and, by our choice of  $\eta \leq \zeta^{2k^2\zeta^{-5}} = M^{-2}$ , it will thus be  $\zeta$ -regular. Moreover, since  $|C_i| \geq \eta|V_i|$ , the  $\eta$ -regularity of  $V_i$  implies that the red density of  $C_i$  is at least  $\frac{1}{2} - \eta \geq \delta^{1/\binom{k}{2}}$ . These are the properties defining great configurations, so we see that  $C_1, \dots, C_k$  is a  $(k, \zeta, \delta)$ -great configuration, as desired.  $\square$

Thus, by assuming that  $R$  contains many blue  $K_k$ , we conclude that it also contains a great configuration. By Lemma 6 and our choice of  $\delta = 2^{-2k-3}\varepsilon$  and  $\zeta = \delta^3/k^2$ , this  $(k, \zeta, \delta)$ -great configuration then implies the existence of the required monochromatic copy of  $B_n^{(k)}$ . In the next subsection, we will see how to find such a book under the opposite assumption that  $R$  has fewer than  $\alpha|R|^k$  blue  $K_k$ .

#### 4.1 Few blue cliques

We now assume that the condition of Lemma 9 is not met and show that we can still find a monochromatic book, though we can no longer guarantee the existence of a great configuration (for instance, if every edge is red). Broadly speaking, the idea of the proof is to use the assumption that  $R$  contains few blue  $K_k$  to find either a monochromatic book or a large subset of  $R$  with few blue  $K_{k-1}$ . Applying the same argument repeatedly (starting from a set with few  $K_r$  and restricting to a large subset with few  $K_{r-1}$ ), we will eventually find a large subset of  $R$  with few blue  $K_2$ , that is, few blue edges. At that point, it is a straightforward consequence of the pigeonhole principle that this set must contain a large red book, which concludes the proof.

A pair of vertex sets  $(X, Y)$  is said to be *lower*-( $\lambda, \gamma$ )-*regular* if  $d(X', Y') \geq \lambda$  holds for every  $X' \subseteq X$ ,  $Y' \subseteq Y$  with  $|X'| \geq \gamma|X|$ ,  $|Y'| \geq \gamma|Y|$ . We begin by showing that if  $R$  contains few blue  $K_k$ , then we can find either a large red book or a large pair of lower-( $\lambda, \gamma$ )-regular subsets in the blue graph on  $R$ .

**Lemma 10.** *Fix  $0 < \beta, \gamma \leq \frac{1}{2}$ ,  $0 < \lambda < \frac{1}{4k}$  and set*

$$\beta' = \frac{\beta}{1 - 2k\lambda} \quad \text{and} \quad \rho = \left(\frac{\gamma}{2}\right)^{1 - \frac{\ln(1-\beta')}{\gamma}}.$$

*Fix  $0 < \eta < \rho/2^{2k^2}$ . Suppose  $A$  is a set that is  $\eta$ -regular with red density at least  $\frac{1}{3}$  and  $B$  is a disjoint set of vertices with  $|B| \geq \gamma^{-3}$ . Then either there is a red  $K_k$  in  $A$  with at least  $\beta|B|$  red extensions in  $B$  (i.e., a red book  $B_{\beta|B|}^{(k)}$ ) or there are subsets  $A' \subseteq A$ ,  $B' \subseteq B$  such that  $|A'| \geq \rho|A|$ ,  $|B'| \geq (1 - \gamma)(1 - \beta')^{1+\gamma}|B|$ , and  $(A', B')$  is lower-( $\lambda, \gamma$ )-regular in blue.*

*Proof.* We will iteratively build two sequences of vertex sets  $A = A_0 \supseteq A_1 \supseteq \dots$  and  $B = B_0 \supseteq B_1 \supseteq \dots$  with the following properties:

- (i)  $|A_\ell| \geq (\gamma/2)^\ell |A|$ ,
- (ii)  $(1 - \gamma)^\ell |B| - \ell \leq |B_\ell| \leq (1 - \gamma)^\ell |B|$ , and
- (iii) Setting  $\overline{B}_\ell = B \setminus B_\ell$ , every vertex in  $A_\ell$  has blue degree at most  $2\lambda|\overline{B}_\ell|$  into  $\overline{B}_\ell$ .

In each step of the process, either  $(A_\ell, B_\ell)$  will be lower-( $\lambda, \gamma$ )-regular in blue (in which case we take  $A' = A_\ell$ ,  $B' = B_\ell$ ) or else we will be able to continue the sequence. If we continue for sufficiently long, then the outcome will yield the desired large red book.

To begin, set  $A_0 = A$ ,  $B_0 = B$ , noting that the three properties we are tracking hold vacuously, since  $|A_0| = |A|$ ,  $|B_0| = |B|$ , and  $\overline{B}_0 = \emptyset$ . Suppose now that we have defined  $A_\ell$  and  $B_\ell$  satisfying properties (i)–(iii). If  $(A_\ell, B_\ell)$  is lower-( $\lambda, \gamma$ )-regular in blue, then we output  $(A_\ell, B_\ell)$  as our desired pair  $(A', B')$ . If not, we may find  $X \subseteq A_\ell$ ,  $Y \subseteq B_\ell$  such that  $|X| \geq \gamma|A_\ell|$ ,  $|Y| \geq \gamma|B_\ell|$ , and  $d_B(X, Y) < \lambda$ . If  $Z$  is a uniformly random subset of  $Y$  of cardinality exactly  $\lceil \gamma|B_\ell| \rceil$ , then

$\mathbb{E}[d_B(X, Z)] = d_B(X, Y)$ , which implies that there is some subset  $Y' \subseteq Y$  with  $|Y'| = \lceil \gamma|B_\ell| \rceil$  and  $d_B(X, Y') \leq d_B(X, Y) < \lambda$ . Fix such a  $Y'$ .

Let  $X_1 \subseteq X$  be the set of all  $x \in X$  with  $e_B(x, Y') < 2\lambda|Y'|$  and  $X_2 = X \setminus X_1$ . Then

$$\lambda|X||Y'| > d_B(X, Y')|X||Y'| = \sum_{x \in X} e_B(x, Y') \geq \sum_{x \in X_2} e_B(x, Y') \geq 2\lambda|X_2||Y'|,$$

which implies that  $|X_2| < \frac{1}{2}|X|$  and thus that  $|X_1| \geq \frac{1}{2}|X|$ . We set  $A_{\ell+1} = X_1$  and  $B_{\ell+1} = B_\ell \setminus Y'$ .

We need to check that properties (i)–(iii) still hold for  $(A_{\ell+1}, B_{\ell+1})$ . Property (i) is rather straightforward, since

$$|A_{\ell+1}| = |X_1| \geq \frac{1}{2}|X| \geq \frac{\gamma}{2}|A_\ell| \geq \frac{\gamma}{2} \left(\frac{\gamma}{2}\right)^\ell |A| = \left(\frac{\gamma}{2}\right)^{\ell+1} |A|,$$

where we used our assumption that property (i) holds for  $A_\ell$ . Similarly,

$$|B_{\ell+1}| = |B_\ell| - |Y'| = |B_\ell| - \lceil \gamma|B_\ell| \rceil \leq |B_\ell| - \gamma|B_\ell| = (1 - \gamma)|B_\ell| \leq (1 - \gamma)^{\ell+1}|B|$$

and

$$|B_{\ell+1}| \geq |B_\ell| - \gamma|B_\ell| - 1 \geq (1 - \gamma) \left( (1 - \gamma)^\ell |B| - \ell \right) - 1 \geq (1 - \gamma)^{\ell+1}|B| - (\ell + 1),$$

by applying property (ii) for  $B_\ell$ . Finally, if we let  $\overline{B_{\ell+1}} = B \setminus B_{\ell+1}$ , then we see that

$$\overline{B_{\ell+1}} = B \setminus (B_\ell \setminus Y') = \overline{B_\ell} \sqcup Y'.$$

By applying property (iii) to  $(A_\ell, B_\ell)$ , we know that every vertex in  $A_\ell$  has blue density at most  $2\lambda$  into  $\overline{B_\ell}$ . Since  $A_{\ell+1} \subseteq A_\ell$ , the same holds immediately for all vertices in  $A_{\ell+1}$ . Additionally, by our choice of  $A_{\ell+1} = X_1$ , we know that every vertex in  $A_{\ell+1}$  has blue density less than  $2\lambda$  into  $Y'$ . By adding these two facts, we see that  $d_B(x, \overline{B_{\ell+1}}) < 2\lambda$  for all  $x \in A_{\ell+1}$ , proving property (iii). This proves that we can indeed continue the sequence of pairs  $(A_\ell, B_\ell)$ .

Now suppose this process continues until step  $\ell^* = \lceil -\frac{\ln(1-\beta')}{\gamma} \rceil$ . Then

$$|A_{\ell^*}| \geq \left(\frac{\gamma}{2}\right)^{\ell^*} |A| \geq \left(\frac{\gamma}{2}\right)^{1 - \frac{\ln(1-\beta')}{\gamma}} |A| = \rho|A|.$$

Thus, since  $A$  was  $\eta$ -regular and had red density at least  $\frac{1}{3}$ , we see that  $A_{\ell^*}$  has red density at least  $\frac{1}{3} - \eta \geq \frac{1}{4}$  and is  $(\eta/\rho)$ -regular. Therefore, by the counting lemma, Lemma 5, we see that  $A_{\ell^*}$  contains at least

$$\left( 4^{-\binom{k}{2}} - \frac{\eta}{\rho} \binom{k}{2} \right) |A_{\ell^*}|^k \geq \left( 2^{-2\binom{k}{2}} - 2^{-2k^2} \binom{k}{2} \right) |A_{\ell^*}|^k > 0$$

red  $K_k$ , since  $\eta < \rho/2^{2k^2}$ . Thus,  $A_{\ell^*}$  contains at least one red  $K_k$ .

Fix a red  $K_k$  inside  $A_{\ell^*}$ . Since every vertex in this clique has blue degree at most  $2\lambda|\overline{B_{\ell^*}}|$  into  $\overline{B_{\ell^*}}$ , they have at least  $(1 - 2k\lambda)|\overline{B_{\ell^*}}|$  common red neighbors inside  $\overline{B_{\ell^*}}$ . Moreover, by our choice of  $\ell^*$  and property (ii), we see that

$$|B_{\ell^*}| \leq (1 - \gamma)^{\ell^*} |B| \leq e^{-\gamma\ell^*} |B| \leq (1 - \beta')|B|,$$

which implies that the number of red extensions of our fixed clique is at least

$$(1 - 2k\lambda)|\overline{B_{\ell^*}}| = (1 - 2k\lambda)(|B| - |B_{\ell^*}|) \geq (1 - 2k\lambda)\beta'|B| = \beta|B|.$$

This gives us our monochromatic red book  $B_{\beta|B|}^{(k)}$ .

Therefore, we may assume that the process stops at some step  $\ell \leq \ell^* - 1$ . Then, by the definition of the sequence, we know that  $(A_\ell, B_\ell)$  is lower- $(\lambda, \gamma)$ -regular in blue, so all that needs to be done is to check the lower bounds on  $|A_\ell|$  and  $|B_\ell|$ . But, by properties (i) and (ii), we see that

$$|A_\ell| \geq \left(\frac{\gamma}{2}\right)^\ell |A| \geq \left(\frac{\gamma}{2}\right)^{\ell^*} |A| \geq \rho|A|$$

and

$$\begin{aligned} |B_\ell| &\geq (1 - \gamma)^\ell |B| - \ell \\ &\geq (1 - \gamma)^{\ell+1} |B| \end{aligned} \tag{9}$$

$$\begin{aligned} &\geq (1 - \gamma)(1 - \gamma)^{-\ln(1 - \beta')/\gamma} |B| \\ &\geq (1 - \gamma)e^{(\gamma + \gamma^2)\ln(1 - \beta')/\gamma} |B| \\ &= (1 - \gamma)(1 - \beta')^{1 + \gamma} |B|, \end{aligned} \tag{10}$$

where we used the bound  $|B| \geq \gamma^{-3}$  and the definition of  $\ell^*$  in (9) and the inequality  $1 - x \geq e^{-x - x^2}$ , valid for all  $x \in [0, \frac{1}{2}]$ , in (10). This shows that  $(A_\ell, B_\ell)$  satisfies the properties required of  $(A', B')$  and concludes the proof.  $\square$

We will use this lemma in conjunction with the following result, which, though stated in a more general form, will tell us that if we have few blue  $K_r$  in a large set  $B$ , then there is a large subset of  $B$  containing few blue  $K_{r-1}$ .

**Lemma 11.** *Fix  $0 < \lambda < 1$ ,  $r \in \mathbb{N}$ , and  $0 < \gamma < \lambda^r$ . Suppose that  $G = (A, B, E)$  is a bipartite graph such that the pair  $(A, B)$  is lower- $(\lambda, \gamma)$ -regular. Suppose also that  $H = (B, F)$  is an  $r$ -uniform hypergraph with vertex set  $B$  and edge set  $F$ . Define an extension to be a pair  $(a, f) \in A \times F$  such that  $a$  is adjacent in  $G$  to every vertex of  $f$ . Then the number of extensions in  $G$  is at least*

$$\lambda^r |A| \left( |F| - \frac{r\gamma}{\lambda^{r-1}} |B|^r \right).$$

*Proof.* The proof is by induction on  $r$ . The base case is when  $r = 1$ , which means that  $F$  is a 1-uniform hypergraph on  $B$ , i.e., simply a subset of  $B$ . If  $|F| < \gamma|B|$ , then the bound holds trivially, since  $\lambda^r |A| (|F| - r\gamma|B|^r/\lambda^{r-1})$  is negative in this case. So suppose that  $|F| \geq \gamma|B|$ . Then we may apply lower- $(\lambda, \gamma)$ -regularity to the pair  $(A, F)$  to conclude that  $d(A, F) \geq \lambda$ . Since  $r = 1$ , the number of extensions is the same as the number of edges between  $A$  and  $F$ . But

$$e(A, F) = d(A, F)|A||F| \geq \lambda|A||F| \geq \lambda|A|(|F| - \gamma|B|),$$

as desired.

For the induction step, suppose the lemma is true for  $r - 1$ . Call a vertex  $v \in B$  *good* if its degree to  $A$  is at least  $\lambda|A|$  and *bad* otherwise. Then there are fewer than  $\gamma|B|$  bad vertices, for otherwise they would form a set  $B'$  of size at least  $\gamma|B|$  with density less than  $\lambda$  into  $A$ . For a



good vertex  $v \in B$ , let  $A' \subseteq A$  be its set of neighbors in  $A$  and let  $H_v$  be its *link* in  $H$ . That is,  $H_v = (B, F_v)$  is the  $(r-1)$ -uniform hypergraph with vertex set  $B$  and hyperedges

$$F_v = \left\{ f \in \binom{B}{r-1} : f \cup \{v\} \in F \right\}.$$

By the hereditary property of lower regularity, we know that the pair  $(A', B)$  is lower- $(\lambda, \gamma/\lambda)$ -regular. Therefore, we may apply the induction hypothesis to the configuration  $(A', B, H_v)$  to conclude that the number of extensions of  $H_v$  in  $A'$  is at least

$$\lambda^{r-1}|A'| \left( |F_v| - \frac{(r-1)(\gamma/\lambda)}{\lambda^{r-2}}|B|^{r-1} \right) \geq \lambda^r|A| \left( |F_v| - \frac{(r-1)\gamma}{\lambda^{r-1}}|B|^{r-1} \right),$$

since  $|A'| \geq \lambda|A|$  by the goodness of  $v$ . Note that, by the definition of  $A'$ , every extension of  $f \in F_v$  into  $A'$  yields an extension of  $f \cup \{v\} \in F$  into  $A$ . Now, instead of counting extensions of hyperedges, it will be convenient to count extensions of *ordered* hyperedges. In other words, every  $f \in F$  will be counted  $r!$  times, once for each ordering of its vertices. Then, by summing over the first vertex of the ordered hyperedges, we have that

$$\begin{aligned} \#(\text{ordered extensions}) &= \sum_{v \in B} \#(\text{ordered extensions of hyperedges starting with } v) \\ &\geq \sum_{v \text{ good}} \#(\text{ordered extensions of hyperedges starting with } v) \\ &\geq (r-1)! \lambda^r |A| \sum_{v \text{ good}} \left( |F_v| - \frac{(r-1)\gamma}{\lambda^{r-1}} |B|^{r-1} \right) \\ &\geq r! \lambda^r |A| \left( |F| - \frac{(r-1)\gamma}{\lambda^{r-1}} |B|^r \right) - (r-1)! \lambda^r |A| \sum_{v \text{ bad}} |F_v| \\ &\geq r! \lambda^r |A| \left( |F| - \frac{(r-1)\gamma}{\lambda^{r-1}} |B|^r \right) - r! \lambda^r |A| (\gamma |B|^r) \\ &\geq r! \lambda^r |A| \left( |F| - \frac{r\gamma}{\lambda^{r-1}} |B|^r \right), \end{aligned}$$

where we use the fact that since there are at most  $\gamma|B|$  bad vertices, there are at most  $\gamma|B|^r$  ordered  $r$ -tuples that start with a bad vertex. Dividing by  $r!$  to count unordered extensions gives the desired result.  $\square$

Using these two lemmas, we can tackle the case where  $R$  does not contain many blue  $K_k$ . First, since  $R$  contains few blue  $K_k$ , one of its parts spans few blue  $K_k$  with the rest of  $R$ . Call this block  $A$  and set  $B = R \setminus A$ . Then, by Lemma 10, either we can find a large red book between  $A$  and  $B$  or we can restrict to large subsets  $A'$  and  $B'$  such that  $(A', B')$  is lower regular in blue. In the latter case, Lemma 11 implies that either there are many blue  $K_k$  between  $A'$  and  $B'$ , a possibility which is ruled out by our assumption that  $A$  spans few blue  $K_k$  with  $B$ , or else  $B'$  must itself contain few blue  $K_{k-1}$ . We now repeat this argument  $k-2$  times. At each step, we assume that we have few blue  $K_r$  and either find a large monochromatic book or else we reduce to a large subset with few blue  $K_{r-1}$ . If we never find a monochromatic book, then, at the end, we find a large subset of  $R$  with few blue  $K_2$ , i.e., a large subset that is close to monochromatic in red. If the parameters

are chosen appropriately, we can then show that this large, very red set contains the requisite red  $B_n^{(k)}$ . The inductive step for this argument is given by the following lemma. Recall that  $R$  is the union of blocks  $V_i$ , each of which is  $\eta$ -regular and has red density at least  $\frac{1}{2}$ .

**Lemma 12.** *Let  $3 \leq r \leq k$  be an integer and let  $\beta = 1/(k-1)$ ,  $\tau = (1-\beta)^{k-2}\varepsilon/8^k$ ,  $\lambda = 2^{-4k}/k$ ,  $\beta' = \beta/(1-2k\lambda)$  and*

$$\gamma = \min \left\{ \lambda^{k^2}, 1 - (1-\beta)^{1/2k}, \frac{(k-5/2)\ln(1-\beta)}{(k-3)\ln(1-\beta')} - 1 \right\}.$$

*Suppose that  $|R| \geq \gamma^{-4}$  and  $S^{(r)} \subseteq R$  is a set that is the disjoint union  $S^{(r)} = \bigcup_i V_i^{(r)}$  of blocks, where  $V_i^{(r)} \subseteq V_i$  and either  $V_i^{(r)} = \emptyset$  or else  $|V_i^{(r)}| \geq \tau|V_i|$ . Suppose too that*

$$|S^{(r)}| \geq \left( (1-\gamma)^{k-r}(1-\beta')^{(k-r)(1+\gamma)} - 2(k-r)\tau \right) |R|$$

*and  $S^{(r)}$  spans at most  $\alpha_r |S^{(r)}|^r$  blue  $K_r$ , where  $\alpha_r = (k-r+1)\lambda^{kr}$ . Then either  $S^{(r)}$  contains a monochromatic  $B_n^{(k)}$  or there is a subset  $S^{(r-1)} \subseteq S^{(r)}$  that is the union of  $V_i^{(r-1)} \subseteq V_i^{(r)}$  with either  $V_i^{(r-1)} = \emptyset$  or  $|V_i^{(r-1)}| \geq \tau|V_i|$  such that*

$$|S^{(r-1)}| \geq \left( (1-\gamma)^{k-(r-1)}(1-\beta')^{(k-(r-1))(1+\gamma)} - 2(k-(r-1))\tau \right) |R|$$

*and  $S^{(r-1)}$  spans at most  $\alpha_{r-1} |S^{(r-1)}|^{r-1}$  blue  $K_{r-1}$ , where  $\alpha_{r-1} = (k-(r-1)+1)\lambda^{k(r-1)}$ .*

**Remark.** The definition of  $\gamma$  is rather complicated, but one can check that for all  $k \geq 3$  the first term in the minimum is the smallest, i.e.,  $\gamma = \lambda^{k^2}$ . However, it will be convenient for the proof to define it as above. In the same vein, if  $k = 3$ , then the last term in the minimum is not well-defined, but we treat it as  $\infty$  and disregard it for the purposes of taking the minimum.

*Proof of Lemma 12.* By assumption,  $S^{(r)}$  spans at most  $\alpha_r |S^{(r)}|^r$  blue  $K_r$ . Therefore, by averaging, there must be some  $i$  for which there are at most  $r\alpha_r |V_i^{(r)}| |S^{(r)}|^{r-1}$  blue  $K_r$  with a vertex in  $V_i^{(r)}$ . Fix such an  $i$  and let  $A = V_i^{(r)}$  and  $B = S^{(r)} \setminus V_i^{(r)}$ .

Since  $A = V_i^{(r)} \subseteq V_i$  with  $|V_i^{(r)}| \geq \tau|V_i|$ , we find that  $A$  is  $(\tau\eta)$ -regular and, since  $\tau > \eta$ , it has red density at least  $\frac{1}{2} - \eta \geq \frac{1}{3}$ . We apply Lemma 10 with parameters  $\beta, \gamma$ , and  $\lambda$  as above to the pair  $(A, B)$ , which we may do since the assumption that  $|R| \geq \gamma^{-4}$  implies that  $|B| \geq \gamma^{-3}$ . This tells us that we can either find a red book  $B_{\beta|B|}^{(k)}$  or subsets  $A' \subseteq A$ ,  $B' \subseteq B$  such that  $(A', B')$  is lower- $(\lambda, \gamma)$ -regular in blue with  $|A'| \geq \rho|A|$  and  $|B'| \geq (1-\gamma)(1-\beta')^{1+\gamma}|B|$ , where

$$\beta' = \frac{\beta}{1-2k\lambda} \quad \text{and} \quad \rho = \left( \frac{\gamma}{2} \right)^{1 - \frac{\ln(1-\beta')}{\gamma}}.$$

First, suppose that we have found a red book  $B_{\beta|B|}^{(k)}$ . We know that

$$\begin{aligned} |B| &= |S^{(r)}| - |V_i^{(r)}| \\ &\geq (1-\gamma)^{k-r}(1-\beta')^{(k-r)(1+\gamma)}|R| - (2(k-r)\tau|R| + |V_i|) \\ &\geq (1-\gamma)^k(1-\beta')^{(1+\gamma)(k-3)}|R| - 2k\tau N \end{aligned} \tag{11}$$

$$\begin{aligned}
&\geq (1-\beta)^{1/2}(1-\beta)^{k-5/2}|R| - 2k\tau N \\
&= (1-\beta)^{k-2}|R| - 2k\tau N,
\end{aligned} \tag{12}$$

where in (11) we used that  $r \geq 3$  and  $|V_i| = N/K(\eta) \leq \tau N$  by the choice of  $\tau$  and in (12) we used the definition of  $\gamma$ , which implies that  $(1-\gamma)^k \geq (1-\beta)^{1/2}$  and that  $(1-\beta')^{(1+\gamma)(k-3)} \geq (1-\beta)^{k-5/2}$ . Now, we plug in  $|R| \geq N/2$  and our definition of  $\tau$  to find that

$$\begin{aligned}
|B| &\geq (1-\beta)^{k-2} \frac{N}{2} - 2k(1-\beta)^{k-2} \frac{\varepsilon}{8^k} N \\
&= (1-\beta)^{k-2} n \left( \left( 2^{k-1} + \frac{\varepsilon}{2} \right) - 2k\varepsilon \frac{2^k + \varepsilon}{8^k} \right) \\
&\geq (1-\beta)^{k-2} 2^{k-1} n.
\end{aligned}$$

Therefore, the number of pages in our red book  $B_{\beta|B|}^{(k)}$  satisfies

$$\beta|B| \geq \beta(1-\beta)^{k-2} 2^{k-1} n \geq n,$$

since, for all  $k \geq 3$  and  $\beta = 1/(k-1)$ , we have that

$$\frac{1}{k-1} \left( 1 - \frac{1}{k-1} \right)^{k-2} \geq \frac{1}{2^{k-1}}. \tag{13}$$

Thus, in this case, we have found a red  $B_n^{(k)}$ .

Therefore, we may suppose that we instead find the subsets  $A'$  and  $B'$  described earlier. If  $B'$  spans fewer than  $\frac{1}{2}\alpha_{r-1}|B'|^{r-1}$  blue  $K_{r-1}$ , then we are done. To see this, we delete from  $B'$  all the vertices in blocks  $V_i$  that maintain at most a  $\tau$  fraction of their vertices and set  $S^{(r-1)}$  to be the remainder. Doing so discards at most  $\tau|R|$  vertices from  $B'$ , so we find that

$$\begin{aligned}
|S^{(r-1)}| &\geq |B'| - \tau|R| \\
&\geq (1-\gamma)(1-\beta')^{1+\gamma} \left( |S^{(r)}| - |V_i^{(r)}| \right) - \tau|R| \\
&\geq (1-\gamma)(1-\beta')^{1+\gamma} |S^{(r)}| - 2\tau|R| \\
&\geq (1-\gamma)(1-\beta')^{1+\gamma} \left( (1-\gamma)^{k-r} (1-\beta')^{(k-r)(1+\gamma)} - 2(k-r)\tau \right) |R| - 2\tau|R| \\
&\geq \left( (1-\gamma)^{k-(r-1)} (1-\beta')^{(k-(r-1))(1+\gamma)} - 2(k-(r-1))\tau \right) |R|,
\end{aligned}$$

as desired. Additionally, since we discarded at most  $\tau|R|$  vertices from  $B'$ , we discarded at most a  $(\tau|R|/|B'|)$ -fraction of the vertices in  $B'$ . By the same computation as in equations (11) and (12), we see that  $|B'| \geq (1-\beta)^{k-2}|R| - 2k\tau N \geq \frac{1}{2}(1-\beta)^{k-2}|R|$ . Therefore,  $\tau|R|/|B'| \leq 2\tau(1-\beta)^{2-k} = 2\varepsilon/8^k < 2^{-k}$ , so discarding this small fraction of vertices means that  $S^{(r-1)}$  will still span fewer than  $\alpha_{r-1}|S^{(r-1)}|^{r-1}$  blue  $K_{r-1}$ , as needed. Therefore, in this case, we are done.

So we may assume that  $B'$  spans at least  $\frac{1}{2}\alpha_{r-1}|B'|^{r-1}$  blue  $K_r$ . Now we apply Lemma 11 to the blue graph between the pair  $(A', B')$ , which is lower- $(\lambda, \gamma)$ -regular by construction. The hypergraph on  $B'$  that we will use is the hypergraph  $F$  of all blue  $K_{r-1}$  in  $B'$ , i.e., an  $(r-1)$ -tuple in  $B'$  will be a hyperedge if and only if it spans a blue clique. Note that  $|F| \geq \frac{1}{2}\alpha_{r-1}|B'|^{r-1}$ , since we assumed that  $B'$  spans at least that many blue  $K_{r-1}$ . Then the number of extensions is

precisely the number of blue  $K_r$  with one vertex in  $A'$  and the rest in  $B'$ . Lemma 11 says that this number of extensions is at least

$$\begin{aligned} \lambda^{r-1}|A'| \left( |F| - \frac{(r-1)\gamma}{\lambda^{r-2}} |B'|^{r-1} \right) &\geq \lambda^{r-1}|A'| \left( \frac{1}{2}\alpha_{r-1} - \frac{(r-1)\gamma}{\lambda^{r-2}} \right) |B'|^{r-1} \\ &\geq (\lambda(1-\gamma)(1-\beta')^{1+\gamma})^{r-1} \left( \frac{1}{2}\alpha_{r-1} - \frac{(r-1)\gamma}{\lambda^{r-2}} \right) |A'| |B|^{r-1} \\ &=: \mu |A'| |B|^{r-1}. \end{aligned}$$

In other words, an average vertex in  $A'$  is contained in at least  $\mu |B|^{r-1}$  blue extensions of a blue  $K_{r-1}$  in  $B$ . Now we delete  $A'$  from  $A$  and apply this argument again. Formally, set  $A_1 = A \setminus A'$ . Then we apply Lemma 10 to the pair  $(A_1, B)$ , which tells us that we either find a red book  $B_{\beta|B|}^{(k)}$  or subsets  $A'_1 \subseteq A_1$ ,  $B' \subseteq B$  such that  $(A'_1, B')$  is lower- $(\lambda, \gamma)$ -regular in blue with  $|A'_1| \geq \rho |A_1|$  and  $|B'| \geq (1-\gamma)(1-\beta')^{1+\gamma} |B|$ . As above, if we find the monochromatic  $B_{\beta|B|}^{(k)}$ , we are done, since  $\beta |B| \geq n$ . If not, then either this  $B'$  has a density of blue  $K_{r-1}$  smaller than  $\frac{1}{2}\alpha_{r-1}$ , in which case we are again done, or else an average vertex in  $A'_1$  is contained in at least  $\mu |B|^{r-1}$  blue extensions of a blue  $K_{r-1}$  in  $B$ . In that case, we set  $A_2 = A_1 \setminus A'_1$  and repeat the process once more. Each time we repeat, either we get the desired conclusion or we can pull out a new subset  $A'_i \subseteq A$  with  $|A'_i| \geq \rho |A \setminus (A'_1 \cup \dots \cup A'_{i-1})|$  and such that the average vertex in  $A'_i$  is contained in at least  $\mu |B|^{r-1}$  blue extensions of a blue  $K_{r-1}$  in  $B$ . Since we pull out at least a  $\rho$ -fraction of the remainder of  $A$  at each step, we will eventually pull out at least half the vertices in  $A$ .

The set  $\tilde{A} \subseteq A$  of removed vertices has the property that the average vertex in  $\tilde{A}$  is contained in at least  $\mu |B|^{r-1}$  blue extensions of a blue  $K_{r-1}$  in  $B$ . Therefore, the total number of extensions between  $A$  and  $B$  is at least  $\frac{1}{2}\mu |A| |B|^{r-1}$ . However, by construction, this number is also at most  $r\alpha_r$ , so we conclude that

$$r\alpha_r \geq \frac{1}{2}\mu = \frac{1}{2} (\lambda(1-\gamma)(1-\beta')^{1+\gamma})^{r-1} \left( \frac{1}{2}\alpha_{r-1} - \frac{(r-1)\gamma}{\lambda^{r-2}} \right).$$

Rearranging, this implies that

$$\begin{aligned} \alpha_{r-1} &\leq \frac{4r\alpha_r}{(\lambda(1-\gamma)(1-\beta')^{1+\gamma})^{r-1}} + \frac{2(r-1)\gamma}{\lambda^{r-2}} \\ &\leq \frac{k2^{4k}}{\lambda^{r-1}} \alpha_r + \frac{2k\gamma}{\lambda^{r-2}} \end{aligned} \tag{14}$$

$$\leq \lambda^{-r} \alpha_r + \lambda^{k^2-r} \tag{15}$$

$$\leq \lambda^{-k} ((k-r+1)\lambda^{kr}) + \lambda^{kr-k} \tag{16}$$

$$= (k - (r-1) + 1) \lambda^{k(r-1)},$$

where in (14) we used that  $r \leq k$  and  $(1-\gamma)(1-\beta')^{1+\gamma} \geq \frac{1}{8}$ , in (15) we used that  $1/\lambda \geq k2^{4k}$  and  $\gamma \leq \lambda^{k^2} < \lambda^{k^2-2}/2k$ , and in (16) we used our assumption that  $\alpha_r \leq (k-r+1)\lambda^{kr}$  and that  $k^2 - r \geq kr - k$  since  $r \leq k$ . This is our desired bound.  $\square$

We can now put all the pieces together and finish the proof of Theorem 2.

*Proof of Theorem 2.* Recall that we are given a 2-coloring of  $K_N$ , where  $N = (2^k + \varepsilon)n$ . We set  $\delta = 2^{-2k-3}\varepsilon$ ,  $\zeta = \delta^3/k^2$ ,  $\eta = \zeta^{2k^2}\zeta^{-5}$ ,  $\beta = 1/(k-1)$ ,  $\tau = (1-\beta)^{k-2}\varepsilon/8^k$ ,  $\lambda = 2^{-4k}/k$ ,  $\beta' = \beta/(1-2k\lambda)$ ,  $\alpha = \lambda^{k^2}$  and

$$\gamma = \min \left\{ \lambda^{k^2}, 1 - (1-\beta)^{1/2k}, \frac{(k-5/2)\ln(1-\beta)}{(k-3)\ln(1-\beta')} - 1 \right\}.$$

We apply Lemma 4 to our coloring, with  $\eta$  as the parameter, which we can do as long as  $N \geq 2^{1/\eta^{(10/\eta)^{15}}}$ . We assume without loss of generality that at least half the parts in the partition have internal red density at least  $\frac{1}{2}$  and set  $R$  to be the union of these parts. If  $R$  spans at least  $\alpha|R|^k$  blue  $K_k$ , then we apply Lemma 9. To do so, we need to check that  $\alpha \geq 2\delta + \zeta k^2$ , which indeed holds since

$$2\delta + \zeta k^2 = 2^{-2k-2}\varepsilon + k^2 2^{-6k-9}\varepsilon^3 \leq \varepsilon \leq \frac{2^{-4k^3}}{k^{k^2}} = \lambda^{k^2} = \alpha,$$

by our choice of  $\varepsilon \leq 2^{-4k^3}/k^{k^2}$  (recall that we are free to make such a choice since we are ultimately interested in small  $\varepsilon$ ). To apply Lemma 9, we also need to check that  $\eta \leq \min\{\alpha, \zeta^{2k^2}\zeta^{-5}, \frac{1}{4}\}$ , which certainly holds since  $\eta \leq \delta \leq \alpha \leq \frac{1}{4}$  by the above. Similarly,  $\delta < 2^{-2k^2}$  holds since  $\delta < \varepsilon < 2^{-4k^3}$ . Thus, Lemma 9 applies and we may find a  $(k, \zeta, \delta)$ -great configuration within  $R$ . We then apply Lemma 6 to this  $(k, \zeta, \delta)$ -great configuration to find the desired monochromatic  $B_n^{(k)}$ .

Therefore, we may suppose that  $R$  contains fewer than  $\alpha|R|^k$  blue  $K_k$ . We set  $S^{(k)} = R$ ,  $\alpha_k = \alpha$ , and apply Lemma 12. To do so, we need to assume that  $|R| \geq \gamma^{-4}$ . We then repeatedly apply Lemma 12 and, at each step of this induction, either we will find a monochromatic  $B_n^{(k)}$  or we will be able to continue on to the next step. This process ends when  $r = 2$ , at which point we have found a set  $S^{(2)}$  with at least  $((1-\beta)^{k-2} - 2k\tau)|R|$  vertices and fewer than  $\alpha_2|S^{(2)}|^2$  blue edges, where  $\alpha_2 \leq k\lambda^{2k} \leq k\lambda^4$ . At this point, it is very easy to find a red  $B_n^{(k)}$ , since  $S^{(2)}$  is almost a red clique. Concretely, first observe that each blue edge is in  $\binom{|S^{(2)}|-2}{k-1}$  tuples of  $k+1$  vertices of  $S^{(2)}$ . This means that the number of red  $K_{k+1}$  in  $S^{(2)}$  is at least

$$\binom{|S^{(2)}|}{k+1} - \alpha_2|S^{(2)}|^2 \binom{|S^{(2)}|-2}{k-1} \geq (1 - 2k(k+1)\alpha_2) \binom{|S^{(2)}|}{k+1}.$$

This implies that a random  $k$ -tuple of vertices in  $S^{(k)}$  is in at least  $(1 - 3k(k+1)\alpha_2)|S^{(2)}|$  red  $K_{k+1}$ , on average. Moreover,

$$\begin{aligned} (1 - 3k(k+1)\alpha_2)|S^{(2)}| &\geq (1 - 3k(k+1)k\lambda^4)((1-\beta)^{k-2} - 2k\tau)|R| \\ &\geq (1 - 2^{-10k})\frac{1}{k} \left(2^{k-1} + \frac{\varepsilon}{2}\right)n \\ &\geq n, \end{aligned}$$

using, as in (13), that, by our choice of  $\beta = 1/(k-1)$ ,  $(1-\beta)^{k-2} - 2k\tau \geq 1/k$ . Therefore, if the process is allowed to continue until  $r = 2$ , then we again find our desired monochromatic book.

In this proof, our two lower-bound assumptions on  $N$  were that  $N \geq 2^{1/\eta^{(10/\eta)^{15}}}$ , in order to apply Lemma 4, and that  $|R| \geq \gamma^{-4}$ , in order to apply Lemma 12. The latter is a much weaker condition, since  $|R| \geq N/2$  and

$$\gamma^{-4} = \lambda^{-4k^2} = k^{4k^2} 2^{16k^3} \leq \varepsilon^{-4} \ll 2^{1/\eta^{(10/\eta)^{15}}}.$$

Therefore, the lower bound the proof gives is  $N \geq 2^{1/\eta^{(10/\eta)^{15}}}$ . By our choice of  $\varepsilon \leq 2^{-4k^3}/k^{k^2}$ , we have that  $\zeta = 2^{-6k-9}\varepsilon^3/k^2 \geq \varepsilon^4$  and

$$\eta = \zeta^{2k^2\zeta^{-5}} \geq (\varepsilon^4)^{2k^2\varepsilon^{-20}} = \varepsilon^{8k^2\varepsilon^{-20}} \geq 2^{-\varepsilon^{-22}}.$$

Therefore,

$$2^{1/\eta^{(10/\eta)^{15}}} \leq 2^{2^{\varepsilon^{-25}}},$$

so our proof goes through when  $n \geq 2^{2^{\varepsilon^{-25}}}$ . That is, if  $\varepsilon \leq 2^{-4k^3}/k^{k^2}$  and  $n \geq 2^{2^{\varepsilon^{-25}}}$ , then any 2-coloring of the complete graph on  $(2^k + \varepsilon)n$  vertices must contain a monochromatic  $B_n^{(k)}$ . Therefore, as long as

$$n \geq 2^{2^{2^{(2^{-4k^3}/k^{k^2})^{-25}}}} = 2^{2^{2^{k^{25k^2}2^{100k^3}}}},$$

this result will hold. Thus, for  $n \geq 2^{2^{k^{25k^2}2^{100k^3}}}$ , we have

$$r(B_n^{(k)}) \leq 2^k n + \frac{n}{(\log \log \log n)^{1/25}},$$

as desired.  $\square$

## 5 Quasirandomness Results

### 5.1 The main result

We begin by recalling the definition of quasirandomness from the introduction. Usually, quasirandomness is defined for a sequence of graphs and the right-hand side of the defining inequality is just  $o(N^2)$ . However, it will be more convenient for us to explicitly track the error parameter  $\theta$ , rather than hiding it in the little- $o$  notation.

**Definition 3.** For any  $\theta > 0$ , a 2-coloring of the edges of  $K_N$  is called  $\theta$ -*quasirandom* if, for any disjoint  $X, Y \subseteq V(K_N)$ ,

$$\left| e_B(X, Y) - \frac{1}{2}|X||Y| \right| \leq \theta N^2,$$

where  $e_B(X, Y)$  denotes the number of blue edges between  $X$  and  $Y$ . Since the colors are complementary, this condition is equivalent to the analogous condition for the red edge count  $e_R(X, Y)$ .

With this, we can restate the main theorem of this section, Theorem 3.

**Theorem 3.** For any  $k \geq 3$  and any  $0 < \theta < \frac{1}{2}$ , there is some  $c = c(\theta, k) > 0$  such that if a 2-coloring of  $K_N$  is not  $\theta$ -quasirandom, then it contains a monochromatic  $B_n^{(k)}$  with  $n = (2^{-k} + c)N$ .

**Remark.** This result was conjectured by Nikiforov, Rousseau, and Schelp [16], who proved it in the case  $k = 2$ . This case is very special because of Goodman's formula [11] for counting monochromatic triangles in 2-colorings, no analogue of which exists for counting monochromatic cliques of larger size. As such, the approach we use to prove Theorem 3 is substantially different and more complicated than that in [16], though it is interesting to note that our new technique actually fails for  $k = 2$ . As such, we also present a simple proof of the  $k = 2$  case, using Goodman's formula, in Section 5.2.

As mentioned in the introduction, we will actually prove a strengthening of Theorem 3, restated here.

**Theorem 4.** *For any  $k \geq 3$  and any  $0 < \theta < \frac{1}{2}$ , there is some  $c_1 = c_1(\theta, k) > 0$  such that if a 2-coloring of  $K_N$  is not  $\theta$ -quasirandom, then it contains at least  $c_1 N^k$  monochromatic  $K_k$ , each of which has at least  $(2^{-k} + c_1)N$  extensions to a monochromatic  $K_{k+1}$ .*

We will prove the contrapositive: if fewer than  $c_1 N^k$  monochromatic cliques in a coloring have at least  $(2^{-k} + c_1)N$  extensions, then the coloring is  $\theta$ -quasirandom. First, we apply an argument similar to that in Section 3 to find a good configuration within our coloring. As we know from Lemma 6, this good configuration is enough to guarantee the existence of a monochromatic  $B_n^{(k)}$ . Lemma 6 followed from Lemma 7, which proves a lower bound for a certain function of real variables  $x_1, \dots, x_k$ . Here we need a stability version of Lemma 7, which says that if our vector  $(x_1, \dots, x_k)$  is bounded away from  $(\frac{1}{2}, \dots, \frac{1}{2})$ , then the function in Lemma 7 is bounded away from its minimum. Using this, one can strengthen Lemma 6 so that our good configuration not only contains a  $B_n^{(k)}$ , but also guarantees many larger books, unless every part of the good configuration is  $\varepsilon$ -regular to the entire vertex set of the graph. Thus, under the assumption that our coloring contains few monochromatic  $B_{(2^{-k} + c_1)N}^{(k)}$ , we can pull out a small part of the graph that is  $\varepsilon$ -regular to the whole vertex set. We then iterate this argument, repeatedly pulling out parts of the coloring that are  $\varepsilon$ -regular to  $V$ , until we have almost partitioned the graph into such a collection of parts. The property these parts satisfy is a form of weak regularity, which will be sufficient to prove that the coloring is quasirandom.

We begin with a simple consequence of Markov's inequality, saying that whenever a random clique among some large set of monochromatic cliques has many monochromatic extensions in expectation, then we can find many cliques with many extensions.

**Lemma 13.** *Let  $\kappa, \xi \in (0, 1)$ , let  $0 < \nu < \xi$ , and suppose that  $\mathcal{Q}$  is a set of at least  $\kappa N^k$  monochromatic  $K_k$  in a 2-coloring of  $K_N$ . Suppose that a uniformly random  $Q \in \mathcal{Q}$  has at least  $\xi N$  monochromatic extensions in expectation. Then the coloring contains at least  $(\xi - \nu)\kappa N^k$  monochromatic  $K_k$ , each with at least  $\nu N$  monochromatic extensions.*

*Proof.* Let  $X$  be the random variable counting the number of monochromatic extensions of a random  $Q \in \mathcal{Q}$  and let  $Y = N - X$ . Then  $Y$  is a nonnegative random variable with  $\mathbb{E}[Y] = N - \mathbb{E}[X] \leq (1 - \xi)N$ . By Markov's inequality,

$$\Pr(X \leq \nu N) = \Pr(Y \geq (1 - \nu)N) \leq \frac{\mathbb{E}[Y]}{(1 - \nu)N} \leq \frac{(1 - \xi)N}{(1 - \nu)N} = \frac{1 - \xi}{1 - \nu}.$$

Thus,

$$\Pr(X \geq \nu N) \geq 1 - \frac{1 - \xi}{1 - \nu} = \frac{\xi - \nu}{1 - \nu} \geq \xi - \nu,$$

which implies that the number of  $Q \in \mathcal{Q}$  with at least  $\nu N$  extensions is at least  $(\xi - \nu)|\mathcal{Q}| \geq (\xi - \nu)\kappa N^k$ , as desired.  $\square$

Next, we need Hölder's Defect Formula, which is a stability version of Jensen's inequality.

**Theorem 6** (Hölder's Defect Formula, [20, Problem 6.5]). *Suppose  $\varphi : [a, b] \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$  is a twice-differentiable function with  $\varphi''(y) \geq m > 0$  for all  $y \in (a, b)$ . For any  $y_1, \dots, y_k \in [a, b]$ , let*

$$\mu = \frac{1}{k} \sum_{i=1}^k y_i \quad \text{and} \quad \sigma^2 = \frac{1}{k} \sum_{i=1}^k (y_i - \mu)^2$$

*be the empirical mean and variance of  $\{y_1, \dots, y_k\}$ . Then*

$$\frac{1}{k} \sum_{i=1}^k \varphi(y_i) - \varphi(\mu) \geq \frac{m\sigma^2}{2}.$$

This allows us to obtain the promised stability variant of Lemma 7. The details of the proof are given in the appendix.

**Lemma 14.** *Let  $k \geq 3$ . Then, for every  $\varepsilon_0 > 0$ , there exists  $\delta_0 > 0$  such that, for any  $x_1, \dots, x_k \in [0, 1]$  with  $|x_j - \frac{1}{2}| \geq \varepsilon_0$  for some  $j$ ,*

$$\prod_{i=1}^k x_i + \frac{1}{k} \sum_{i=1}^k (1 - x_i)^k \geq 2^{1-k} + \delta_0.$$

**Remark.** This lemma is actually false for  $k = 2$ , since the minimum value of  $\frac{1}{2}$  is attained everywhere on the line  $x_1 + x_2 = 1$ . Note also that the precise numerical dependence between  $\delta_0$  and  $\varepsilon_0$  depends in a complicated way on  $k$ , but it is of the form  $\delta_0 = \Omega_k(\varepsilon_0^2)$ .

Using Lemma 14, we can prove the strengthening of Lemma 6 alluded to earlier, which says that a good configuration whose blue density to the rest of the graph is not close to  $\frac{1}{2}$  actually yields a monochromatic book with substantially more than  $2^{-k}N$  pages.

**Lemma 15.** *Let  $0 < \varepsilon_0 < \frac{1}{4}$  and let  $\delta_0 = \delta_0(\varepsilon_0)$  be the parameter from Lemma 14. Suppose  $\delta \leq \delta_0 \varepsilon_0 / 2$ ,  $\eta \leq \delta^{2k^2}$ , and  $C_1, \dots, C_k$  is a  $(k, \eta, \delta)$ -good configuration in a 2-coloring of  $K_N$ . Define*

$$B_i = \{v \in K_N : |d_B(v, C_i) - \frac{1}{2}| \geq \varepsilon_0\}.$$

*If  $|B_i| \geq \varepsilon_0 N$  for some  $i$ , then the coloring contains a monochromatic book  $B_{(2^{-k}+c)N}^{(k)}$ , where  $c = \delta_0 \varepsilon_0 / 4$ . Moreover, if  $|C_i| \geq \alpha N$  for all  $i$  and some  $\alpha > 0$ , then there exists some  $0 < c_1 < c$  depending on  $\varepsilon_0$ ,  $\alpha$ , and  $\delta$  such that the coloring contains at least  $c_1 N^k$  monochromatic  $K_k$ , each of which has at least  $(2^{-k} + c_1)N$  monochromatic extensions.*

*Proof.* First, as in the proof of Lemma 6, observe that by the counting lemma, Lemma 5, the number of blue  $K_k$  with one vertex in each  $C_i$  is at least

$$\left( \prod_{1 \leq i < j \leq k} d_B(C_i, C_j) - \eta \binom{k}{2} \right) \prod_{i=1}^k |C_i| \geq \left( \delta \binom{k}{2} - \eta \binom{k}{2} \right) \prod_{i=1}^k |C_i| > 0,$$

so there is at least one blue  $K_k$  spanning  $C_1, \dots, C_k$ . Similarly, the number of red  $K_k$  inside a given  $C_i$  is at least

$$\left( d_R(C_i) \binom{k}{2} - \eta \binom{k}{2} \right) |C_i|^k \geq \left( \delta \binom{k}{2} - \eta \binom{k}{2} \right) |C_i|^k > 0,$$



so each  $C_i$  contains at least one red  $K_k$ .

Suppose, without loss of generality, that  $|B_1| \geq \varepsilon_0 N$ . For every  $v \in V$ , let  $x_i(v) = d_B(v, C_i)$ . By Lemma 14, for  $v \in B_1$ , we have

$$\prod_{i=1}^k x_i(v) + \frac{1}{k} \sum_{i=1}^k (1 - x_i(v))^k \geq 2^{1-k} + \delta_0,$$

where  $\delta_0 > 0$  depends on  $\varepsilon_0$ . Additionally, for every  $v \in V \setminus B_1$ , we know, by Lemma 7, that

$$\prod_{i=1}^k x_i(v) + \frac{1}{k} \sum_{i=1}^k (1 - x_i(v))^k \geq 2^{1-k}.$$

Summing these two inequalities over all vertices, we get that

$$\sum_{v \in V} \prod_{i=1}^k x_i(v) + \frac{1}{k} \sum_{i=1}^k \sum_{v \in V} (1 - x_i(v))^k \geq 2^{1-k} N + \delta_0 |B_1| \geq (2^{1-k} + \delta_0 \varepsilon_0) N.$$

Now, we argue as in the proof of Lemma 6. One of the two summands above must be at least  $(2^{-k} + \frac{\delta_0 \varepsilon_0}{2}) N$ . If it is the first, we apply Corollary 1, using the fact that  $\prod_{i < j} d_B(C_i, C_j) \geq \delta^{(k)}_{(2)}$  and  $\eta \leq \delta^{2k^2} \leq (\delta^{(k)}_{(2)})^3 / k^2$ . Then summing the result of Corollary 1 over all  $v \in V$  implies that a random blue  $K_k$  spanning  $C_1, \dots, C_k$  will have in expectation at least

$$\sum_{v \in V} \left( \prod_{i=1}^k x_i(v) - 4\delta^{(k)}_{(2)} \right) \geq \left( 2^{-k} + \frac{\delta_0 \varepsilon_0}{2} - 4\delta^{(k)}_{(2)} \right) N \geq (2^{-k} + c) N$$

blue extensions, since  $c = \delta_0 \varepsilon_0 / 4$ . On the other hand, if the second summand is the larger one, then we find that a random red  $K_k$  inside some  $C_i$  will have in expectation at least<sup>2</sup>

$$\sum_{v \in V} \left( (1 - x_i(v))^k - 4\delta^{(k)}_{(2)} \right) \geq \left( 2^{-k} + \frac{\delta_0 \varepsilon_0}{2} - 4\delta^{(k)}_{(2)} \right) N \geq (2^{-k} + c) N$$

red extensions.

To prove the last statement in the lemma, that we can in fact find  $c_1 N^k$  monochromatic cliques each with at least  $(2^{-k} + c_1) N$  monochromatic extensions, we apply Lemma 13, using the fact that the argument just presented actually finds a set of cliques with at least  $(2^{-k} + c) N$  extensions in expectation. To apply Lemma 13, we need only check that the sets of cliques in question are large, of size at least  $\Omega(N^k)$ . But this again follows from the counting lemma, Lemma 5. Specifically, since  $|C_i| \geq \alpha N$  for all  $i$ , Lemma 5 implies that the number of blue  $K_k$  spanning  $C_1, \dots, C_k$  is at least

$$\left( \prod_{1 \leq i < j \leq k} d_B(C_i, C_j) - \eta \binom{k}{2} \right) \prod_{i=1}^k |C_i| \geq \left( \delta^{(k)}_{(2)} - \eta \binom{k}{2} \right) \alpha^k N^k \geq \frac{1}{2} \delta^{(k)}_{(2)} \alpha^k N^k$$

and similarly for the number of red  $K_k$  inside  $C_i$ . Thus, if we define  $\kappa = \frac{1}{2} \delta^{(k)}_{(2)} \alpha^k$ , then we find that all the sets of cliques we considered in the above argument contain at least  $\kappa N^k$  cliques. Applying

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<sup>2</sup>As in the proof of Lemma 6,  $d_R(v, C_i)$  is not quite the same as  $1 - d_B(v, C_i)$  if  $v \in C_i$ , but this discrepancy can be absorbed into the error term.

Lemma 13 with this choice of  $\kappa$ ,  $\xi = 2^{-k} + c$ , and  $\nu = 2^{-k} + c/2$ , we see that the coloring contains at least  $(\xi - \nu)\kappa N^k$  monochromatic cliques, each with at least  $\nu N$  monochromatic extensions. Taking  $c_1 = \min\{(\xi - \nu)\kappa, \nu - 2^{-k}\} = c\kappa/2$  gives the desired result.  $\square$

The previous lemma shows that if our coloring has no monochromatic  $B_{(2^{-k}+c)N}^{(k)}$ , then, for every good configuration  $C_1, \dots, C_k$ , most vertices have blue density into  $C_i$  that is close to  $\frac{1}{2}$ . The next lemma strengthens this, saying that, in fact, the good configuration is regular to the rest of the graph. We say that a pair  $(X, Y)$  of vertex sets in a graph is  $(p, \varepsilon)$ -regular if, for every  $X' \subseteq X$ ,  $Y' \subseteq Y$  with  $|X'| \geq \varepsilon|X|$ ,  $|Y'| \geq \varepsilon|Y|$ , we have

$$|d(X', Y') - p| \leq \varepsilon.$$

Saying that  $(X, Y)$  is  $(p, \varepsilon)$ -regular is essentially equivalent to saying that  $(X, Y)$  is  $\varepsilon$ -regular and has edge density  $p \pm \varepsilon$ , so it is not strictly necessary to make this new definition. However, the next lemma is most conveniently stated in the language of  $(p, \varepsilon)$ -regularity, rather than that of  $\varepsilon$ -regularity.

**Lemma 16.** *Fix  $0 < \varepsilon_1 < \frac{1}{4}$ , let  $\varepsilon_0 = \varepsilon_1^2/2$ , and let  $\delta_0 = \delta_0(\varepsilon_0)$  be the parameter from Lemma 14. Let  $0 < \delta < \delta_0\varepsilon_0/4 = O_k(\varepsilon_1^6)$  and  $0 < \eta < 2^{-2k^2}\varepsilon_1\delta^{2k^2}$  be other parameters and suppose that  $C_1, \dots, C_k$  is a  $(k, \eta, \delta)$ -good configuration in a 2-coloring of  $K_N$ . Then, if the pair  $(C_i, V)$  is not  $(\frac{1}{2}, \varepsilon_1)$ -regular for some  $i$ , the coloring contains a monochromatic  $B_{(2^{-k}+c)N}^{(k)}$  for  $c = \delta_0\varepsilon_0/4$ . Moreover, if  $|C_i| \geq \alpha N$  for all  $i$  and some  $\alpha > 0$ , then the coloring contains at least  $c_1 N^k$  monochromatic  $K_k$ , each with at least  $(2^{-k} + c_1)N$  extensions, for some  $0 < c_1 < c$  depending on  $\varepsilon_1$ ,  $\delta$ , and  $\alpha$ .*

*Proof.* Without loss of generality, suppose that  $(C_1, V)$  is not  $(\frac{1}{2}, \varepsilon_1)$ -regular. Then there exist  $C'_1 \subseteq C_1$  and  $D \subseteq V$  such that

$$\left| d_B(C'_1, D) - \frac{1}{2} \right| \geq \varepsilon_1,$$

where  $|C'_1| \geq \varepsilon_1|C_1|$  and  $|D| \geq \varepsilon_1 N$ . Suppose first that  $d_B(C'_1, D) \geq \frac{1}{2} + \varepsilon_1$ . Let  $D_1 \subseteq D$  denote the set of vertices  $v \in D$  with  $d_B(v, C'_1) < \frac{1}{2} + \frac{\varepsilon_1}{2}$  and  $D_2 = D \setminus D_1$ . Then

$$\left( \frac{1}{2} + \varepsilon_1 \right) |C'_1||D| \leq \sum_{v \in D_1} e_B(v, C'_1) + \sum_{v \in D_2} e_B(v, C'_1) \leq \left( \frac{1}{2} + \frac{\varepsilon_1}{2} \right) |C'_1||D| + |C'_1||D_2|,$$

which implies that  $|D_2| \geq \frac{\varepsilon_1}{2}|D|$ .

Now consider the collection of sets  $C'_1, C_2, C_3, \dots, C_k$ . By the hereditary property of regularity, this is a  $(k, \eta', \delta')$ -good configuration, where  $\eta' = \eta/\varepsilon_1$  and  $\delta' = \delta - \eta$ . Moreover, we have a set  $D_2 \subseteq V$  with  $|d_B(v, C'_1) - \frac{1}{2}| \geq \varepsilon_0/2$  for all  $v \in D_2$  and

$$|D_2| \geq \frac{\varepsilon_1}{2}|D| \geq \frac{\varepsilon_1^2}{2}N,$$

so we may apply Lemma 15 with  $B_1 = D_2$  and  $\varepsilon_0 = \varepsilon_1^2/2$  to conclude that our coloring contains a monochromatic  $B_{(2^{-k}+c)N}^{(k)}$  for some  $c$  depending on  $\varepsilon_0$ . Moreover, if we assume that  $|C_i| \geq \alpha N$  for all  $i$ , then we also get that  $|C'_1| \geq \alpha\varepsilon_1 N$ , so the second part of Lemma 15 implies that our coloring contains at least  $c_1 N^k$  monochromatic  $K_k$ , each of which has at least  $(2^{-k} + c_1)N$  monochromatic extensions, for some  $c_1 < c$  depending on  $\varepsilon_1$ ,  $\alpha$ , and  $\delta$ .

The above argument worked under the assumption that  $d_B(C'_1, D) \geq \frac{1}{2} + \varepsilon_1$ , so we now need to deal with the case where  $d_B(C'_1, D) \leq \frac{1}{2} - \varepsilon_1$ . However, this case is similar: we first find a large subset  $D_2 \subseteq D$  with  $d_B(v, C'_1) \leq \frac{1}{2} - \frac{\varepsilon_1}{2}$  for all  $v \in D_2$  and then the remainder of the argument is identical.  $\square$

The next technical lemma we need is the following, which spells out the inductive step of the procedure outlined earlier, wherein we repeatedly pull out subsets of our coloring that are regular to the remainder of the graph.

**Lemma 17.** *Fix  $0 < \varepsilon \leq 1/25k$  and consider a 2-coloring of  $K_N$  with vertex set  $V$ , where  $N$  is sufficiently large in terms of  $\varepsilon$ . Suppose that  $A_1, \dots, A_\ell$  are disjoint subsets of  $V$  such that  $(A_i, V)$  is  $(\frac{1}{2}, \varepsilon^2)$ -regular for all  $i$ . Let  $W = V \setminus (A_1 \cup \dots \cup A_\ell)$  and suppose that  $|W| \geq \varepsilon N$ . Then either there is some  $A_{\ell+1} \subseteq W$  such that  $(A_{\ell+1}, V)$  is  $(\frac{1}{2}, \varepsilon^2)$ -regular or the coloring contains at least  $c_1 N^k$  monochromatic  $K_k$ , each with at least  $(2^{-k} + c_1)N$  monochromatic extensions, where  $c_1 > 0$  depends only on  $\varepsilon$  and  $k$ .*

*Proof.* This proof roughly follows the proof of Theorem 1 in Section 3. Let  $\varepsilon_1 = \varepsilon^2$ ,  $\varepsilon_0 = \varepsilon_1^2/2$ , and  $\delta_0 = \delta_0(\varepsilon_0) = \Omega_k(\varepsilon^8)$  be the parameter from Lemma 14. Next, fix  $\delta = \delta_0 \varepsilon_0/4$ ,  $\eta = 2^{-2k^2} \varepsilon^2 \delta^{2k^2}$ ,  $c = 2^{-k} k \varepsilon^2$ , and  $c' = 4\varepsilon$  to be other parameters depending on  $\varepsilon$  and  $k$ . We apply Lemma 1 to the subgraph induced on  $W$ , with parameters  $\eta$  and  $M_0 = 1/\eta$ , to obtain an equitable partition  $W = W_1 \sqcup \dots \sqcup W_m$ , where  $M_0 \leq m \leq M = M(\eta, M_0)$ . Without loss of generality, we may assume that the parts  $W_1, \dots, W_{m'}$  have internal red density at least  $\frac{1}{2}$ , where  $m' \geq m/2$ . We build a reduced graph  $G$  with vertex set  $w_1, \dots, w_m$ , by making  $\{w_{j_1}, w_{j_2}\}$  an edge if  $(W_{j_1}, W_{j_2})$  is  $\eta$ -regular and  $d_B(W_{j_1}, W_{j_2}) \geq \delta$ . We also set  $G'$  to be the subgraph of  $G$  induced by  $w_1, \dots, w_{m'}$ .

Suppose that  $w_1$  has fewer than  $(1 - 2^{1-k} - 2c' - 2\eta)m'$  neighbors in  $G'$ . Since  $w_1$  has at most  $\eta m \leq 2\eta m'$  non-neighbors coming from irregular pairs, this means that there are at least  $(2^{1-k} + 2c')m'$  parts  $W_j$  with  $2 \leq j \leq m'$  such that  $(W_1, W_j)$  is  $\eta$ -regular and  $d_R(W_1, W_j) \geq 1 - \delta$ . Let  $J$  be the set of these indices  $j$  and set  $U = \bigcup_{j \in J} W_j$ . By the counting lemma, Lemma 5,  $W_1$  contains at least  $\left(2^{-\binom{k}{2}} - \eta \binom{k}{2}\right) |W_1|^k$  red copies of  $K_k$  and

$$\left(2^{-\binom{k}{2}} - \eta \binom{k}{2}\right) |W_1|^k \geq 2^{-k^2} \left(\frac{|W|}{M}\right)^k \geq \left(\frac{\varepsilon N}{2^k M}\right)^k,$$

where we used that  $\eta \leq \delta^{2k^2} \leq \delta^{\binom{k}{2}} / \binom{k}{2}$  and  $2^{-\binom{k}{2}} - \delta^{\binom{k}{2}} > 2^{-k^2}$ , along with our assumption that  $|W| \geq \varepsilon N$ . If we set  $\kappa = (\varepsilon/2^k M)^k$ , then this implies that  $W_1$  contains at least  $\kappa N^k$  red  $K_k$ . Moreover,  $d_R(W_1)^{\binom{k}{2}} \geq 2^{-\binom{k}{2}} \geq \delta^k/4$ . We pick a random such red  $K_k$  and apply Corollary 1 with parameters  $\eta$  and  $\delta^k/4$ , which we may do since  $\eta \leq (\delta^k/4)^3/k^2$ . Then Corollary 1 implies that the expected number of red extensions of this random clique inside  $U$  is at least

$$\sum_{u \in U} \left( d_R(u, W_1)^k - 4 \left( \frac{\delta^k}{4} \right) \right) \geq \left( (1 - \delta)^k - \delta^k \right) |U| \geq (1 - 2k\delta) |U|,$$

where we first used Jensen's inequality applied to the convex function  $x \mapsto x^k$  to lower bound  $\sum_u d_R(u, W_1)^k$  by  $(1 - \delta)^k |U|$  and then used that  $(1 - \delta)^k \geq 1 - k\delta$  and  $\delta^k \leq k\delta$ . Since we assumed that  $J$  was large, and since the partition is equitable, we find that

$$|U| \geq (2^{1-k} + 2c')m'|W_j| \geq (2^{-k} + c')|W|.$$

Thus, a random red  $K_k$  inside  $W_1$  has, on average, at least  $(1 - 2k\delta)(2^{-k} + c')|W|$  red extensions in  $W$ .

Now suppose that instead of just  $w_1$  having low degree in  $G'$ , we have a set of at least  $\varepsilon m$  vertices  $w_j \in V(G')$ , each with fewer than  $(1 - 2^{1-k} - 2c' - 2\eta)m'$  neighbors in  $G'$ . Let  $S$  be the set of these  $j$  and  $T = \bigcup_{j \in S} W_j$ . By the above argument, for every  $j \in S$ , we have that  $W_j$  contains at least  $\kappa N^k$  red  $K_k$ , each with at least  $(1 - 2k\delta)(2^{-k} + c')|W|$  red extensions on average. Moreover, we have that

$$|T| = |S||W_j| \geq (\varepsilon m) \frac{|W|}{m} = \varepsilon |W| \geq \varepsilon^2 |V|.$$

So we may apply the  $(\frac{1}{2}, \varepsilon^2)$  regularity of  $(A_i, V)$  to conclude that  $d_B(T, A_i) = \frac{1}{2} \pm \varepsilon^2$  for all  $i$ . Thus, if we pick  $j \in S$  randomly, then  $\mathbb{E}[d_B(W_j, A_i)] = \frac{1}{2} \pm \varepsilon^2$ . Therefore, if we first sample  $j \in S$  randomly and then pick a random red  $K_k$  inside  $W_j$ , then Corollary 1 implies that this random red  $K_k$  will have in expectation at least

$$\sum_{a \in A_i} \left( d_R(a, W_j)^k - 4 \left( \frac{\delta^k}{4} \right) \right) \geq \left( \left( \frac{1}{2} - \varepsilon^2 \right)^k - \delta^k \right) |A_i| \geq 2^{-k} (1 - 3k\varepsilon^2) |A_i|$$

red extensions into  $A_i$ , again by Jensen's inequality. This implies that this random  $K_k$  has in expectation at least  $(1 - 3k\varepsilon^2)2^{-k}|A_1 \cup \dots \cup A_\ell|$  extensions into  $A_1 \cup \dots \cup A_\ell$ . Adding up the extensions into this set and into  $W$ , its complement, shows that this random red  $K_k$  has in expectation at least  $\xi N$  red extensions, where  $\xi$  is a weighted average of  $(1 - 3k\varepsilon^2)2^{-k}$  and  $(1 - 2k\delta)(2^{-k} + c')$  with the latter quantity receiving weight at least  $\varepsilon$ , since  $|W| \geq \varepsilon N$ . Thus,

$$\begin{aligned} \xi &\geq (1 - \varepsilon)(1 - 3k\varepsilon^2)2^{-k} + \varepsilon(1 - 2k\delta)(2^{-k} + c') \\ &\geq (1 - 3k\varepsilon^2 - \varepsilon)2^{-k} + \varepsilon(1 - 2k\delta)(1 + 2^k c')2^{-k} \\ &\geq (1 - 3k\varepsilon^2 - \varepsilon)2^{-k} + \varepsilon(1 + 4k\delta)2^{-k} \\ &= 2^{-k}(1 + k\varepsilon^2) \\ &= 2^{-k} + c, \end{aligned}$$

where we used the definition of  $c$ , the fact that  $2k\delta < 2^k c'/4$ , and the inequality  $(1 - x/4)(1 + x) \geq 1 + x/2$  for all  $x \in [0, 1]$ . Therefore, by Lemma 13, we can find at least  $c_1 N^k$  red  $K_k$ s, each with at least  $(2^{-k} + c_1)N$  red extensions, for some  $c_1 < c$  depending only on  $\varepsilon$  and  $k$ .

Hence, we may assume that at most  $\varepsilon m \leq 2\varepsilon m'$  vertices of  $G'$  have degree less than  $(1 - 2^{1-k} - 2c' - 2\eta)m'$ . Therefore, the average degree in  $G'$  is at least

$$(1 - 2^{1-k} - 2c' - 2\eta)(1 - 2\varepsilon) \geq 1 - 2^{1-k} - 2c' - 2\eta - 2\varepsilon \geq 1 - 2^{1-k} - 12\varepsilon,$$

by our choice of  $c' = 4\varepsilon$  and  $\eta < \varepsilon$ . Since  $\varepsilon < \frac{1}{25k}$ , we have that  $12\varepsilon < \frac{1}{2k}$ . Therefore,  $1 - 2^{1-k} - 12\varepsilon > 1 - 1/(k - 1)$ . Thus, by Turán's theorem,  $G'$  contains a  $K_k$ . Let  $w_{j_1}, \dots, w_{j_k}$  be the vertices of this  $K_k$  in  $G'$ . We claim that  $(C_1, \dots, C_k) = (W_{j_1}, \dots, W_{j_k})$  is a  $(k, \eta, \delta)$ -good configuration in our original coloring of  $K_N$ . Indeed, by our definition of the  $W_j$ , we know that each of them is an  $\eta$ -regular set with red density at least  $\frac{1}{2} \geq \delta$  and, by the definition of the reduced graph  $G$ , we know that if  $\{w_j, w_{j'}\}$  is an edge of  $G$ , then  $(W_j, W_{j'})$  is an  $\eta$ -regular pair with  $d_B(W_j, W_{j'}) \geq \delta$ .

Moreover, we know that  $|C_j| \geq \alpha N$ , where  $\alpha = \varepsilon/M$  and  $M$  depends only on  $\eta$  and, thus, only on  $\varepsilon$  and  $k$ . Therefore, by Lemma 16, we know that either our coloring contains at least  $c_1 N^k$

monochromatic  $K_k$ , each with at least  $(2^{-k} + c_1)N$  monochromatic extensions, or  $(C_j, V)$  is  $(\frac{1}{2}, \varepsilon^2)$ -regular for all  $i$ , where  $c_1$  again depends only on  $\varepsilon$  and  $k$ . In particular, we may set  $A_{\ell+1} = C_1$  (or any other  $C_j$ ) and obtain the desired conclusion.  $\square$

The previous lemma shows that if we assume our coloring does not contain  $c_1 N^k$  monochromatic  $K_k$ , each with at least  $(2^{-k} + c_1)N$  monochromatic extensions, then we may inductively pull out subsets that are  $(\frac{1}{2}, \varepsilon^2)$ -regular with the whole vertex set and we may keep doing so until the remainder of the graph becomes too small (namely, until it contains only an  $\varepsilon$ -fraction of the vertices). At the end of this process, we will have almost partitioned our vertex set into parts which are not necessarily  $\varepsilon$ -regular with each other, but which satisfy a more global regularity condition (for comparison, this notion is a bit stronger than the Frieze–Kannan notion of weak regularity [9, 10]). Our final technical lemma shows that this global regularity is enough to conclude that our coloring is  $\theta$ -quasirandom.

**Lemma 18.** *Let  $\varepsilon \leq \theta/2$ . Suppose we have a partition*

$$V(K_N) = A_1 \sqcup \cdots \sqcup A_\ell \sqcup A_{\ell+1},$$

*where, for each  $i \leq \ell$ ,  $(A_i, V)$  is  $(\frac{1}{2}, \varepsilon)$ -regular and  $|A_{\ell+1}| \leq \varepsilon N$ . Then the coloring is  $\theta$ -quasirandom.*

*Proof.* Fix disjoint  $X, Y \subseteq V(K_N)$ . We need to check that

$$\left| e_B(X, Y) - \frac{1}{2}|X||Y| \right| \leq \theta N^2.$$

First, observe that if  $|Y| \leq \varepsilon N$ , then

$$\left| e_B(X, Y) - \frac{1}{2}|X||Y| \right| \leq \frac{1}{2}|X||Y| \leq \frac{\varepsilon}{2}N^2 \leq \theta N^2.$$

So, from now on, we may assume that  $|Y| \geq \varepsilon N$ . For  $1 \leq i \leq \ell + 1$ , let  $X_i = A_i \cap X$  and define  $I_X = \{1 \leq i \leq \ell : |X_i| \geq \varepsilon|A_i|\}$ . Then

$$\sum_{i \notin I_X} |X_i| \leq |A_{\ell+1}| + \varepsilon \sum_{i=1}^{\ell} |A_i| \leq 2\varepsilon N.$$

We now write

$$e_B(X, Y) - \frac{1}{2}|X||Y| = \sum_{i=1}^{\ell+1} \left( e_B(X_i, Y) - \frac{1}{2}|X_i||Y| \right).$$

We split this sum into two parts, depending on whether  $i \in I_X$  or not. First, suppose that  $i \in I_X$ . Then  $|X_i| \geq \varepsilon|A_i|$  and  $|Y| \geq \varepsilon N$  by our assumption that  $|Y| \geq \varepsilon N$ , so we may apply the  $(\frac{1}{2}, \varepsilon)$ -regularity of  $(A_i, V)$  to conclude that

$$\sum_{i \in I_X} \left| e_B(X_i, Y) - \frac{1}{2}|X_i||Y| \right| = \sum_{i \in I_X} \left| d_B(X_i, Y) - \frac{1}{2} \right| |X_i||Y| \leq \sum_{i \in I_X} \varepsilon |X_i||Y| \leq \varepsilon |X||Y| \leq \varepsilon N^2.$$

On the other hand, we know by our earlier discussions that

$$\sum_{i \notin I_X} \left| e_B(X_i, Y) - \frac{1}{2}|X_i||Y| \right| \leq \frac{1}{2}|Y| \sum_{i \notin I_X} |X_i| \leq \frac{1}{2}|Y|(2\varepsilon N) \leq \varepsilon N^2.$$

Adding these up, we conclude that

$$\left| e_B(X, Y) - \frac{1}{2}|X||Y| \right| \leq 2\varepsilon N^2 \leq \theta N^2,$$

as desired.  $\square$

**Remark.** The output of Lemma 17 is a collection of sets, each of which is  $(\frac{1}{2}, \varepsilon^2)$ -regular to  $V$ . However, all that Lemma 18 requires is  $(\frac{1}{2}, \varepsilon)$ -regularity, which is substantially weaker. The reason for the discrepancy is that Lemma 17 requires a quadratic dependence between the level of regularity and the density of the remainder set  $W$ .

With this collection of technical lemmas, we can finally prove the main result of this section.

*Proof of Theorem 4.* Fix  $k \geq 3$  and  $0 < \theta < \frac{1}{2}$ , let  $\varepsilon = \min\{\theta/2, 1/25k\}$ , and fix a 2-coloring of  $K_N$ . Let  $c_1 > 0$  be the constant from Lemma 17, depending only on  $\varepsilon$  and  $k$  and, thus, only on  $\theta$  and  $k$ . If our coloring does not contain at least  $c_1 N^k$  monochromatic  $K_k$ , each with at least  $(2^{-k} + c_1)N$  monochromatic extensions, then we may repeatedly apply Lemma 17. At each step, we find a new set  $A_i \subseteq V$  such that  $(A_i, V)$  is  $(\frac{1}{2}, \varepsilon^2)$ -regular, as long as the remainder of the graph has cardinality at least  $\varepsilon N$ . When this is no longer the case, we stop the iteration and apply Lemma 18 with  $A_1, \dots, A_\ell$  the sets we pulled out using Lemma 17 and  $A_{\ell+1}$  the remainder set of cardinality at most  $\varepsilon N$ . This implies that the coloring is  $\theta$ -quasirandom, as desired.  $\square$

**Remark.** The dependence between  $c_1$  and  $\theta$  in this proof is of tower type, because, in the proof of Lemma 17, we assumed that  $N$  was sufficiently large to apply Lemma 1, which gives a tower-type bound. In principle, it should also be possible to obtain a proof of Theorem 4 by avoiding Lemma 1 and only using Lemma 4, as in the proof of Theorem 2 in Section 4. Doing so would likely give a tighter dependence between  $\theta$  and  $c_1$  in Theorem 4, since Lemma 4 never invokes tower-type dependencies. However, we chose not to pursue this further, because the proof of Theorem 2 is already substantially more involved than that of Theorem 1 (for instance, we have to split into two cases depending on the number of blue  $K_k$ ) and obtaining a stability version would inevitably add further complications.

## 5.2 The $k = 2$ case

As mentioned previously, our proof of Theorem 4 fails for  $k = 2$ , because Lemma 14 is false in that case. However, even though our proof fails, the result is still true, since the following simple variant of the argument in [16] applies.

*Proof.* Consider a red/blue coloring of the edges of  $K_N$  in which there are at most  $\varepsilon \binom{N}{2}$  edges that are in at least  $(\frac{1}{4} + \varepsilon)(N - 2)$  monochromatic triangles, where  $\varepsilon > 1/N$ . We may suppose without loss of generality that the red edge density is at least  $1/2$ . Let

$$S := \sum_{(u,v) \text{ red}} \left( \text{codeg}_R(u, v) - \frac{N-2}{4} \right)_+ + \sum_{(u,v) \text{ blue}} \left( \text{codeg}_B(u, v) - \frac{N-2}{4} \right)_+,$$

where the nonnegative part  $x_+$  is given by  $x_+ = x$  if  $x \geq 0$  and  $x_+ = 0$  if  $x < 0$ . The number  $S$  is a measure of the monochromatic book excess over the random bound. Since the excess is at most

$\varepsilon(N-2)$  for all but  $\varepsilon\binom{N}{2}$  edges (whose excess is at most  $\frac{3}{4}(N-2)$ ), we obtain

$$S \leq \varepsilon\binom{N}{2} \cdot \frac{3}{4}(N-2) + (1-\varepsilon)\binom{N}{2} \cdot \varepsilon(N-2) < 6\varepsilon\binom{N}{3}. \quad (17)$$

Let  $M$  denote the number of monochromatic triangles in the coloring. Observe that

$$\frac{S}{3} \geq M - \frac{1}{4}\binom{N}{3}, \quad (18)$$

as the right-hand side is just one third of the sum that defines  $S$  taken without nonnegative parts. Goodman's formula [11] for the number of monochromatic triangles in a coloring is

$$M = \frac{1}{2} \left( \sum_{v \in V} \left( \binom{\deg_B(v)}{2} + \binom{\deg_R(v)}{2} \right) - \binom{N}{3} \right).$$

This identity is equivalent to

$$M - \frac{1}{4}\binom{N}{3} = -\frac{1}{4}\binom{N}{2} + \frac{1}{2} \sum_{v \in V} \left( \deg_R(v) - \frac{N-1}{2} \right)^2.$$

From this identity, the inequalities (17) and (18), and the Cauchy-Schwarz inequality, we obtain

$$\sum_{v \in V} \left| \deg_R(v) - \frac{N-1}{2} \right| \leq \varepsilon^{1/2} N^2,$$

where we used the bound  $\varepsilon > 1/N$ .

By the inclusion-exclusion principle, we have

$$\text{codeg}_B(u, v) \geq N - 2 - \deg_R(u) - \deg_R(v) + \text{codeg}_R(u, v),$$

from which it follows that

$$\text{codeg}_B(u, v) - \frac{N-2}{4} \geq \text{codeg}_R(u, v) - \frac{N-2}{4} - \left| \deg_R(u) - \frac{N-1}{2} \right| - \left| \deg_R(v) - \frac{N-1}{2} \right| - 1.$$

Summing over all pairs  $(u, v)$ , we get

$$S \geq \sum_{(u,v)} \left( \text{codeg}_R(u, v) - \frac{N-2}{4} \right)_+ - (N-1) \sum_u \left| \deg_R(u) - \frac{N-1}{2} \right| - \binom{N}{2}.$$

Since the red density is at least  $1/2$ , convexity implies that the average value of  $\text{codeg}_R(u, v)$  is at least  $\frac{N-3}{4}$ , so

$$\sum_{(u,v)} \left( \text{codeg}_R(u, v) - \frac{N-3}{4} \right)_+ \geq \sum_{(u,v)} \frac{1}{2} \left| \text{codeg}_R(u, v) - \frac{N-3}{4} \right|.$$

Moreover,

$$\sum_{(u,v)} \left( \text{codeg}_R(u, v) - \frac{N-2}{4} \right)_+ - \sum_{(u,v)} \left( \text{codeg}_R(u, v) - \frac{N-3}{4} \right)_+ \geq \sum_{(u,v)} -\frac{1}{4} \geq -\frac{N^2}{8}.$$

Putting this together, we get

$$\sum_{(u,v)} \left| \text{codeg}_R(u,v) - \frac{N-3}{4} \right| \leq \frac{N^2}{4} + 2S + 2(N-1)\varepsilon^{1/2}N^2 + N(N-1) \leq (4\varepsilon + 2\varepsilon^{1/2})N^3.$$

Since the red density is at least  $1/2$  and the codegree condition is a quasirandom property, we get that the coloring is  $\theta$ -quasirandom for some  $\theta$  depending on  $\varepsilon$ .  $\square$

### 5.3 The converse result

As mentioned in the introduction, a converse to Theorem 4 is also true, meaning that the condition in Theorem 4 is an equivalent characterization of quasirandomness (up to a change in parameters).

**Theorem 7.** *For any  $k \geq 2$  and any  $c_2 > 0$ , there is some  $\theta > 0$  such that if a 2-coloring of the edges of  $K_N$  is  $\theta$ -quasirandom, then the number of monochromatic  $K_k$  with at least  $(2^{-k} + c_2)N$  monochromatic extensions is at most  $c_2 N^k$ .*

*Proof.* We will use the standard result of Chung, Graham, and Wilson that a quasirandom coloring contains roughly the correct count of any fixed monochromatic subgraph. Specifically, for every  $\delta > 0$ , there is some  $\theta > 0$  such that, in any  $\theta$ -quasirandom coloring,

$$\begin{aligned} M(K_k) &= \#(\text{monochromatic } K_k) = 2^{1-\binom{k}{2}} \binom{N}{k} \pm \delta N^k, \\ M(K_{k+1}) &= \#(\text{monochromatic } K_{k+1}) = 2^{1-\binom{k+1}{2}} \binom{N}{k+1} \pm \delta N^{k+1}, \\ M(K_{k+2} - e) &= \#(\text{monochromatic } K_{k+2} - e) = 2^{2-\binom{k+2}{2}} \binom{N}{k+2} \binom{k+2}{2} \pm \delta N^{k+2}, \end{aligned}$$

where  $K_{k+2} - e$  is the graph formed by deleting one edge from  $K_{k+2}$ . Note that for this latter count we have an extra factor of  $\binom{k+2}{2}$ , which accounts for the fact that the graph is not vertex transitive. On the other hand, we observe that every monochromatic copy of  $K_{k+2} - e$  corresponds to two distinct extensions of a single monochromatic  $K_k$  to a monochromatic  $K_{k+1}$ . Therefore,

$$M(K_{k+2} - e) = \sum_Q \binom{\#(\text{monochromatic extensions of } Q)}{2},$$

where the sum is over all monochromatic  $K_k$ . Let  $\text{ext}(Q)$  denote the number of monochromatic extensions of  $Q$ . Then we also have that  $\sum_Q \text{ext}(Q)$  counts the total number of ways of extending a monochromatic  $K_k$  to a monochromatic  $K_{k+1}$ , which is precisely  $(k+1)M(K_{k+1})$ , since each monochromatic  $K_{k+1}$  contributes exactly  $k+1$  terms to the sum.

We now consider the quantity

$$E = \sum_Q (\text{ext}(Q) - 2^{-k}N)^2.$$

On the one hand, we have that

$$E = \sum_Q \text{ext}(Q)^2 - 2^{1-k}N \sum_Q \text{ext}(Q) + \sum_Q 2^{-2k}N^2$$



$$\begin{aligned}
&= \left( 2 \sum_Q \binom{\text{ext}(Q)}{2} + \sum_Q \text{ext}(Q) \right) - 2^{1-k} N \sum_Q \text{ext}(Q) + 2^{-2k} N^2 M(K_k) \\
&= 2M(K_{k+2} - e) + (1 - 2^{1-k} N)(k+1)M(K_{k+1}) + 2^{-2k} N^2 M(K_k) \\
&\leq 2^{3-\binom{k+2}{2}} \binom{N}{k+2} \binom{k+2}{2} - 2^{2-k-\binom{k+1}{2}} N(k+1) \binom{N}{k+1} + 2^{1-2k-\binom{k}{2}} N^2 \binom{N}{k} + 2k\delta N^{k+2} \\
&\leq \frac{N^{k+2}}{k!} \left[ 2^{2-\binom{k+2}{2}} - 2^{2-k-\binom{k+1}{2}} + 2^{1-2k-\binom{k}{2}} \right] + 3k\delta N^{k+2} \\
&= 3k\delta N^{k+2}.
\end{aligned}$$

On the other hand, suppose there were at least  $c_2 N^k$  monochromatic  $K_k$  with at least  $(2^{-k} + c_2)N$  monochromatic extensions. Then, by only keeping these cliques in the sum defining  $E$ , we would have that

$$E = \sum_Q (\text{ext}(Q) - 2^{-k} N)^2 \geq c_2 N^k (c_2 N)^2 = c_2^3 N^{k+2}.$$

Therefore, if  $\theta$  is small enough that  $\delta < c_2^3/3k$ , we have a contradiction.  $\square$

## 6 Conclusion

The outstanding open problem that remains is Thomason's conjecture [21], that

$$r(B_n^{(k)}) \leq 2^k(n+k-2) + 2.$$

There are, in fact, two problems here, the problem of proving this conjecture for all  $n$  and  $k$  and the problem of proving it when  $k$  is fixed and  $n$  is sufficiently large. The first of these problems seems bewilderingly hard, not least because it would immediately yield an exponential improvement for the classical Ramsey number  $r(K_r)$ , as outlined in the introduction. The second problem may be more approachable, but we have not found a way of leveraging our stability result, saying that near extremal colorings are quasirandom, to obtain this more precise statement.

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## A Proofs of technical lemmas

In this appendix, we collect those proofs which did not fit neatly into the structure of the paper itself. We begin with the proof of Lemma 3, which says that a random subset of a regular set is still regular, as long as the subset is not too small.

*Proof of Lemma 3.* Say that a graph  $G$  of density  $d$  is  $\varepsilon$ -homogeneous if

$$\max_{S, T \subseteq V(G)} |e(S, T) - d|S||T|| \leq \varepsilon|V|^2.$$

It is easy to check [23, Lemma 3.29] that  $\varepsilon$ -regularity implies  $\varepsilon$ -homogeneity, which in turn implies  $\varepsilon^{1/3}$ -regularity.

Given two edge-weighted graphs  $G$  and  $H$  on the same set  $V$  of vertices, their *cut distance* is defined by

$$d_{\square}(G, H) = \frac{1}{|V|^2} \max_{S, T \subseteq V} |e_G(S, T) - e_H(S, T)|,$$

where  $e_G$  and  $e_H$  denote the total weight of edges between  $S$  and  $T$  in  $G$  and  $H$ , respectively. Note that if  $G$  has density  $d$  and  $H_d$  denotes the complete graph with loops on vertex set  $V$  where every edge receives weight  $d$ , then  $\varepsilon$ -homogeneity is equivalent to the statement that  $d_{\square}(G, H_d) \leq \varepsilon$ . Finally, we will need the First Sampling Lemma [15, Lemma 10.5], which says that if  $U$  is chosen uniformly at random from  $\binom{V}{t}$ , then with probability at least  $1 - 4e^{-\sqrt{t}/10}$ ,

$$|d_{\square}(G[U], H[U]) - d_{\square}(G, H)| \leq \frac{8}{t^{1/4}}.$$

Now, suppose, as in the Lemma statement, that  $G$  is  $\varepsilon$ -regular and let  $d$  be its density. Then  $G$  is  $\varepsilon$ -homogeneous, so  $d_{\square}(G, H_d) \leq \varepsilon$ . Let  $U$  be chosen uniformly at random from  $\binom{V}{t}$  and let  $d'$  denote the density of  $G[U]$ . Then we have that

$$\begin{aligned} d_{\square}(G[U], H_{d'}[U]) &= (d_{\square}(G[U], H_{d'}[U]) - d_{\square}(G[U], H_d[U])) \\ &\quad + (d_{\square}(G[U], H_d[U]) - d_{\square}(G, H_d)) + d_{\square}(G, H_d) \end{aligned} \quad (19)$$

and we can bound each of these terms in turn. Since the triangle inequality holds for the cut distance, we know that

$$|d_{\square}(G[U], H_{d'}[U]) - d_{\square}(G[U], H_d[U])| \leq d_{\square}(H_d[U], H_{d'}[U]) = |d - d'|.$$

To bound this, suppose we reveal the vertices in the random subset  $U$  one at a time and let  $Z_0, \dots, Z_t$  be the martingale where  $Z_i$  is the expected value of  $e(G[U])$  conditioned on the first  $i$  vertices revealed. Then  $|Z_i - Z_{i-1}| \leq t - 1$ , since each new vertex can affect the total number of

edges in  $U$  by at most  $t - 1$ , and  $Z_0 = \mathbb{E}[e(G[U])] = d\binom{t}{2}$ . Therefore, by Azuma's inequality, we see that for any  $\lambda > 0$ ,

$$\Pr(|Z_t - Z_0| > \lambda) \leq 2e^{-\lambda^2/(2t(t-1)^2)} \leq 2e^{-\lambda^2/(4t\binom{t}{2})}.$$

If we set  $\lambda = \delta\binom{t}{2}$  for some  $\delta > 0$ , then we see that

$$\Pr(|d - d'| > \delta) \leq 2e^{-\delta^2\binom{t}{2}/4t} = 2e^{-\delta^2(t-1)/8}.$$

For the next term in (19), we use the First Sampling Lemma, which implies that with probability at least  $1 - 4e^{-\sqrt{t}/10}$ ,

$$d_{\square}(G[U], H_d[U]) - d_{\square}(G, H_d) \leq \frac{8}{t^{1/4}}.$$

Finally, by our assumption that  $G$  is  $\varepsilon$ -regular, we know that  $d_{\square}(G, H_d) \leq \varepsilon$ . Putting this all together, we see that for any  $\delta > 0$ , with probability at least  $1 - 4e^{-\sqrt{t}/10} - 2e^{-\delta^2(t-1)/8}$ , we have that

$$d_{\square}(G[U], H_{d'}[U]) \leq \delta + \frac{8}{t^{1/4}} + \varepsilon.$$

Plugging in  $\delta = t^{-1/4}$  and using our assumption that  $t \geq \varepsilon^{-4}$ , we find that

$$d_{\square}(G[U], H_{d'}[U]) \leq \varepsilon + 8\varepsilon + \varepsilon = 10\varepsilon$$

with probability at least  $1 - 6e^{-\sqrt{t}/10} \geq 1 - 6e^{-\varepsilon^{-2}/10}$ . By our assumption that  $\varepsilon < 1/5$ , this quantity is strictly positive, so there exists some subset  $U$  satisfying  $d_{\square}(G[U], H_{d'}[U]) \leq 10\varepsilon$ . This means that  $G[U]$  is  $10\varepsilon$ -homogeneous, so it must also be  $(10\varepsilon)^{1/3}$ -regular, as desired.  $\square$

The rest of the section consists of proofs of the various analytic results used throughout the paper. First, we need the following simple inequality.

**Lemma 19** (Multiplicative Jensen inequality). *Suppose  $0 < a < b$  are real numbers and  $x_1, \dots, x_k \in (a, b)$ . Let  $f : (a, b) \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$  be a function such that  $y \mapsto f(e^y)$  is strictly convex on the interval  $(\log a, \log b)$ . Then, for any  $z \in (a^k, b^k)$ , subject to the constraint  $\prod_{i=1}^k x_i = z$ ,*

$$\frac{1}{k} \sum_{i=1}^k f(x_i)$$

*is minimized when all the  $x_i$  are equal (and thus equal to  $z^{1/k}$ ).*

*Proof.* Define new variables  $y_1, \dots, y_k$  by  $y_i = \log x_i$ , so that  $\sum y_i = \log z$ . We now apply Jensen's inequality to the strictly convex function  $f \circ \exp$ , which says that subject to the constraint  $\sum y_i = \log z$ ,  $\sum_{i=1}^k f(e^{y_i})$  is minimized when all the  $y_i$  are equal. This is equivalent to the desired result.  $\square$

*Proof of Lemma 7.* Our proof follows the proof of [3, Lemma 8], though we give considerably more detail, particularly for small values of  $k$ . Set  $z = \prod_{i=1}^k x_i$  and assume for the moment that every  $x_i$  is in  $(\frac{1}{k}, 1)$ . We will show that for every fixed  $z$ , the inequality is true. For this, we first claim that  $\varphi : y \mapsto (1 - e^y)^k$  is strictly convex on  $(\log \frac{1}{k}, 0)$ . To see this, note that

$$\varphi''(y) = ke^y(1 - e^y)^{k-2}(ke^y - 1).$$

For  $y \in (\log \frac{1}{k}, 0)$ , we have that  $e^y \in (\frac{1}{k}, 1)$ , so that  $\varphi''(y)$  is strictly positive and  $\varphi$  is strictly convex.

Therefore, by Lemma 19, we get that subject to the constraint  $\prod_{i=1}^k x_i = z$ , the function  $\frac{1}{k} \sum_{i=1}^k (1 - x_i)^k$  is minimized when all the  $x_i$  are equal to  $z^{1/k}$ . Thus,

$$\prod_{i=1}^k x_i + \frac{1}{k} \sum_{i=1}^k (1 - x_i)^k \geq z + (1 - z^{1/k})^k =: \psi(z).$$

We now claim that for all  $z \in (0, 1)$ ,  $\psi(z) \geq 2^{1-k}$ . To see this, note that

$$\psi'(z) = 1 - (1 - z^{1/k})^{k-1} z^{-\frac{k-1}{k}}.$$

Setting this equal to zero and taking  $(k-1)$ th roots, we get that  $\psi'(z) = 0$  implies that

$$1 - z^{1/k} = z^{1/k}.$$

Thus, the only critical point of  $\psi$  in  $(0, 1)$  is at  $z^{1/k} = \frac{1}{2}$  or, equivalently,  $z = 2^{-k}$ , where we have  $\psi(z) = 2^{1-k}$ . On the other hand,  $\psi(0) = \psi(1) = 1$ , so this critical point must be the minimum of  $\psi$  on the interval  $(0, 1)$ , proving the desired claim.

Thus, we have proven the lemma under the assumption that  $x_i \in (\frac{1}{k}, 1)$  for all  $i$ . By continuity, we can get the same result under the assumption that  $x_i \in [\frac{1}{k}, 1]$  for all  $i$ . So now suppose that  $0 \leq x_j < \frac{1}{k}$  for some  $j$ . If  $k \geq 5$ , then

$$\frac{1}{k} \sum_{i=1}^k (1 - x_i)^k \geq \frac{1}{k} (1 - x_j)^k \geq \frac{1}{k} \left(1 - \frac{1}{k}\right)^k \sim \frac{1}{ek} > 2^{1-k},$$

so we only need to check the result in the cases  $k = 2, 3$ , and  $4$ .

**Case  $k = 2$ :** We may write

$$\begin{aligned} x_1 x_2 + \frac{1}{2}((1 - x_1)^2 + (1 - x_2)^2) &= \frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{2}(1 - 2x_1 - 2x_2 + 2x_1 x_2 + x_1^2 + x_2^2) \\ &= \frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{2}(1 - x_1 - x_2)^2 \\ &\geq \frac{1}{2} = 2^{1-k}. \end{aligned}$$

**Case  $k = 3$ :** The function we are trying to minimize is

$$F(x_1, x_2, x_3) = x_1 x_2 x_3 + \frac{1}{3}((1 - x_1)^3 + (1 - x_2)^3 + (1 - x_3)^3).$$

To minimize this function, we will find its critical points. Its partial derivatives are

$$\frac{\partial F}{\partial x_i} = \prod_{j \neq i} x_j - (1 - x_i)^2.$$

If we set each of these three equations equal to zero, it is tedious but straightforward to verify that the only solution in  $(0, 1)^3$  is at  $(\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2})$ . Thus,  $F$  is either minimized at that point (where its value

is  $1/4 = 2^{1-k}$ ) or else on the boundary of the cube. So we may assume that one of the  $x_i$ , say  $x_3$ , is in  $\{0, 1\}$ . If  $x_3 = 0$ , we have that

$$F(x_1, x_2, 0) = \frac{1}{3}(1 + (1 - x_1)^3 + (1 - x_2)^3)$$

and since this function is monotonically decreasing in both  $x_1$  and  $x_2$ , it is minimized when  $x_1 = x_2 = 1$ , where its value is  $1/3$ , which is larger than  $1/4$ . For the other case, where  $x_3 = 1$ , we write

$$G(x_1, x_2) = F(x_1, x_2, 1) = x_1 x_2 + \frac{1}{3}((1 - x_1)^3 + (1 - x_2)^3)$$

The partial derivatives of  $G$  are

$$\frac{\partial G}{\partial x_1} = x_2 - (1 - x_1)^2 \quad \frac{\partial G}{\partial x_2} = x_1 - (1 - x_2)^2$$

and setting these both equal to zero, we find that the only critical point of  $G$  in  $(0, 1)^2$  is when  $x_1 = x_2 = \frac{1}{2}(3 - \sqrt{5})$ . But at this point the value of  $G$  is approximately 0.303, which is larger than  $1/4$ . So it again suffices to check the boundary case, when one of the variables, say  $x_2$ , is in  $\{0, 1\}$ . But if  $x_2 = 0$ , then

$$G(x_1, 0) = \frac{1}{3}(1 + (1 - x_1)^3) \geq \frac{1}{3}$$

and if  $x_2 = 1$ , then

$$G(x_1, 1) = x_1 + \frac{1}{3}(1 - x_1)^3 = \frac{1}{3} + x_1^2 - \frac{x_1^3}{3} \geq \frac{1}{3} + \frac{2x_1^2}{3} \geq \frac{1}{3},$$

where we used that  $x_1^3 \leq x_1^2$  for  $x_1 \in [0, 1]$ .

**Case  $k = 4$ :** Here, our function is

$$F(x_1, x_2, x_3, x_4) = x_1 x_2 x_3 x_4 + \frac{1}{4}((1 - x_1)^4 + (1 - x_2)^4 + (1 - x_3)^4 + (1 - x_4)^4).$$

To minimize, we again consider the partial derivatives

$$\frac{\partial F}{\partial x_i} = \prod_{j \neq i} x_j - (1 - x_i)^3.$$

Setting each equation equal to zero and multiplying by its  $x_i$ , we get that

$$x_1(1 - x_1)^3 = x_2(1 - x_2)^3 = x_3(1 - x_3)^3 = x_4(1 - x_4)^3 = x_1 x_2 x_3 x_4.$$

Setting  $z = x_1 x_2 x_3 x_4$ , this system of equations tells us that, for all  $i$ ,

$$x_i(1 - x_i)^3 = z.$$

Observe that the function  $x \mapsto x(1 - x)^3$  is 0 at both 0 and 1 and has a unique local maximum in the interval  $(0, 1)$ . This implies that, for any fixed  $z$ , the equation  $x(1 - x)^3 = z$  has at most two solutions for  $x \in [0, 1]$ . Thus, we find that all four  $x_i$  can take on at most two values at the critical

point. Call these values  $a$  and  $b$ . We now split into cases depending on how many  $x_i$  take on each value.

If all the  $x_i$  are equal, say to  $a$ , then we are done. Indeed, in that case  $z = a^4$  and all our equations become

$$a(1-a)^3 = a^4,$$

which implies that  $a = 1 - a$ , i.e.,  $a = \frac{1}{2}$ , and the only critical point with all its coordinates equal is  $(\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2})$ .

Next, suppose that  $x_1 = a$ , while  $x_2 = x_3 = x_4 = b$ . Then  $z = ab^3$  and our equations become

$$a(1-a)^3 = ab^3 = b(1-b)^3.$$

From the first equation, we find that  $(1-a)^3 = b^3$  and thus that  $a+b=1$ . Plugging this into the second equation, we find that

$$ab^3 = b(1-b)^3 = ba^3$$

and thus  $a^2 = b^2$ , so that  $a = b$ . Combining this with  $a+b=1$ , we find that  $a = b = \frac{1}{2}$ , returning us to the previous case.

Finally, the remaining case is where  $x_1 = x_2 = a$ , while  $x_3 = x_4 = b$ . Then  $z = a^2b^2$  and our equations are

$$a(1-a)^3 = a^2b^2 = b(1-b)^3.$$

Multiplying the two equations together and dividing out by  $ab$  gives

$$(1-a)^3(1-b)^3 = a^3b^3$$

and thus  $(1-a)(1-b) = ab$ . Expanding out the left-hand side and rearranging tells us that  $a+b=1$ . Therefore, our equations become

$$ab^3 = a^2b^2 = ba^3,$$

which implies that  $a = b$ . This and  $a+b=1$  imply that  $a = b = \frac{1}{2}$ , again yielding our previously found critical point. Therefore, the unique critical point of  $F$  in  $(0,1)^4$  is at  $(\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2})$ .

To conclude, we again need to check what happens on the boundary. So suppose that some variable, say  $x_4$ , is in  $\{0,1\}$ . If  $x_4 = 0$ , then

$$F(x_1, x_2, x_3, 0) = \frac{1}{4}(1 + (1-x_1)^4 + (1-x_2)^4 + (1-x_3)^4).$$

This function is monotonically decreasing in  $x_1, x_2, x_3$ , so it's minimized when  $x_1 = x_2 = x_3 = 1$ , at which point we have

$$F(1, 1, 1, 0) = \frac{1}{4}(1 + 0 + 0 + 0) = \frac{1}{4} > \frac{1}{8} = F\left(\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2}\right).$$

On the other hand, if  $x_4 = 1$ , then we can define

$$G(x_1, x_2, x_3) = F(x_1, x_2, x_3, 1) = x_1x_2x_3 + \frac{1}{4}((1-x_1)^4 + (1-x_2)^4 + (1-x_3)^4).$$

Solving for where the gradient of  $G$  is 0, we find that the only such point in  $(0,1)^3$  is approximately  $(0.43, 0.43, 0.43)$ , where the value of  $G$  is approximately 0.159, which is more than  $1/8$ . So the only

way the value of  $F$  can be smaller than  $1/8$  on the boundary is if another variable, say  $x_3$ , is also on the boundary. If  $x_3 = 0$ , then we have

$$F(x_1, x_2, 0, 1) = \frac{1}{4}(1 + (1 - x_1)^4 + (1 - x_2)^4),$$

which is minimized when  $x_1 = x_2 = 1$ , where its value is  $1/4 > 1/8$ . So we may suppose  $x_3 = x_4 = 1$  and define

$$H(x_1, x_2) = F(x_1, x_2, 1, 1) = x_1 x_2 + \frac{1}{4}((1 - x_1)^4 + (1 - x_2)^4).$$

Its gradient equals zero in  $(0, 1)^2$  only at approximately  $(0.32, 0.32)$ , where its value is approximately  $0.209 > 1/8$ . So the only remaining case is the boundary, when  $x_2 \in \{0, 1\}$ . As above, if  $x_2 = 0$ , then  $H(x_1, 0) \geq 1/4 > 1/8$ , so this case is not a problem. If  $x_2 = x_3 = x_4 = 1$ , then

$$F(x_1, 1, 1, 1) = x_1 + \frac{(1 - x_1)^4}{4},$$

which is minimized at  $x_1 = 0$ , where its value is  $1/4 > 1/8$ . Thus, having checked the boundary of  $[0, 1]^4$ , we can conclude that the unique minimum of  $F$  on  $[0, 1]^4$  is at  $(\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2})$ .  $\square$

*Proof of Lemma 14.* To prove this, it suffices to show that for every  $k \geq 3$ , the point  $(\frac{1}{2}, \dots, \frac{1}{2})$  is the unique global minimum of the function

$$F(x_1, \dots, x_k) = \prod_{i=1}^k x_i + \frac{1}{k} \sum_{i=1}^k (1 - x_i)^k$$

For  $k = 3$  and  $4$ , we explicitly checked this in the proof of Lemma 7. So from now on, we may assume that  $k \geq 5$ .

To apply Theorem 6, we need to get a uniform lower bound on  $\varphi''(y)$ , where  $\varphi(y) = (1 - e^y)^k$ , as in the proof of Lemma 7. To obtain this uniform lower bound we will need to restrict to a subinterval, and specifically a subinterval of  $(\log \frac{1}{k}, 0)$ , where  $\varphi''(y) > 0$ . We first deal with the case where one of the variables is not in such a subinterval.

Suppose first that  $x_j \leq \frac{1+\xi}{k}$  for some  $j$ , where  $\xi > 0$  is some small constant. Then

$$\prod_{i=1}^k x_i + \frac{1}{k} \sum_{i=1}^k (1 - x_i)^k \geq \frac{1}{k} (1 - x_j)^k \geq \frac{1}{k} \left(1 - \frac{1+\xi}{k}\right)^k.$$

For  $k \geq 5$  and  $\xi$  sufficiently small, this last term is larger than  $2^{1-k}$ . Therefore, as long as

$$\delta_0 \leq \frac{1}{k} \left(1 - \frac{1+\xi}{k}\right)^k - 2^{1-k},$$

we get the desired result whenever one of the  $x_j$  is at most  $\frac{1+\xi}{k}$ . Thus, from now on, we may assume that  $x_j \geq \frac{1+\xi}{k}$  for all  $j$ .

Next, suppose that one of the  $x_j$  is equal to 1, say  $x_k = 1$ . We can compute

$$\left. \frac{\partial F}{\partial x_k} \right|_{x_k=1} = \left[ \prod_{i=1}^{k-1} x_i - (1 - x_k)^{k-1} \right]_{x_k=1} = \prod_{i=1}^{k-1} x_i \geq \left( \frac{1+\xi}{k} \right)^{k-1} > 0.$$



Therefore, in a neighborhood of the region where  $x_k = 1$ , we have that  $F$  is a strictly increasing function of  $x_k$ . Now suppose that there exist some  $x_1, \dots, x_{k-1} \geq \frac{1+\xi}{k}$  so that  $F(x_1, \dots, x_{k-1}, 1) = 2^{1-k}$ . Then, by decreasing  $x_k$  from 1 to some number slightly smaller than 1, we could decrease the value of  $F$ . This would then allow us to decrease the value of  $F$  to below  $2^{1-k}$ , contradicting Lemma 7. Therefore, whenever  $x_k = 1$ , the value of  $F$  must be strictly larger than  $2^{1-k}$ . By symmetry, the same holds if any coordinate is 1. Since the boundary of the cube is compact, we find that  $F(x_1, \dots, x_k) \geq 2^{1-k} + 2\delta_0$ , for some  $\delta_0 > 0$ , whenever one of the  $x_j$  equals 1. By continuity of  $F$ , this also implies a lower bound of  $2^{1-k} + \delta_0$  in some neighborhood of the boundary. Thus, for  $\xi'$  sufficiently small, we get the desired result if any of the  $x_j$  is larger than  $1 - \xi'$ .

We have therefore established the desired bound if some  $x_j$  is either less than  $\frac{1+\xi}{k}$  or greater than  $1 - \xi'$ , for some constants  $\xi$  and  $\xi'$  depending only on  $k$ . Inside the interval  $(\frac{1+\xi}{k}, 1 - \xi')$ , we have a uniform lower bound on  $\varphi''$ , so, by the Hölder defect formula, Theorem 6, we also obtain the desired result in this interval.  $\square$