Chicago Journal of Theoretical Computer Science

MIT Press

Volume 1995, Article 2
21 July, 1995

ISSN 1073–0486. MIT Press Journals, 55 Hayward St., Cambridge, MA 02142; (617)253-2889; *journals-orders@mit.edu, journals-info@mit.edu*. Published one article at a time in LaTeX source form on the Internet. Pagination varies from copy to copy. For more information and other articles see:

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On the Weak mod m Representation of Boolean Functions

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21 July, 1995

Abstract

Abstract-1 Let P be a polynomial over the ring of mod m integers. P *weakly represents* Boolean function $f\colon \{0,1\}^n \to \{0,1\}$ if there is a subset $S \subseteq \{0,1,\ldots,m-1\}$ such that $f(x) = 0$ if and only if $P(x) \in S$. The smallest degree of polynomials P weakly representing f is called the *weak* mod m *degree of* f. We give here an $\Omega(\log n)$ lower bound for the weak degree of the generalized inner product function (GIP) of Babai, Nisan, and Szegedy [BNS92]. This is the first lower-bound result for the weak degree of a Boolean function that does not deteriorate if the number of prime divisors of m increases.

Abstract-2 In the second part of the paper, we give superpolynomial lower bounds for the number of monomials with nonzero coefficients in polynomials weakly representing the OR and the GIP$\circ$PARITY functions.

1 Introduction

1-1 One of the central problems of theoretical computer science is the estimation of the computational complexity of Boolean functions. One well studied measure of the complexity of Boolean function f is the *degree* of a polynomial P, which best *approximates* or *represents* f in some sense (see [Raz87], [Smo87], [NS94], [ABFR91], or [Bei93] for a survey). According to this approach, a Boolean function is considered "hard" if the polynomial that represents or best approximates it has a high degree.

1-2 Barrington, Beigel, and Rudich [BBR94] defined the mod m degree of Boolean function f to be the smallest degree of any polynomial P over the

ring of mod m integers such that, for all 0–1 assignments of x, $f(x) = 0$ if and only if $P(x) = 0$. They obtained the following surprising result: The mod m degree of the n-variable OR function is $O(n^{1/r})$, where r is the number of distinct prime factors of m.

1-3 Since some computationally very similar functions, including OR and AND, as well as mod m and $\neg \bmod m$, have different mod m degrees, the *weak* mod m *degree*, a more robust measure, is defined in [BBR94]:

Definition 1 *Let $f\colon \{0,1\}^n \to \{0,1\}$ be a Boolean function, and let P be defined as a polynomial of n variables over $\mathbb{Z}_m$ (the integers* mod m*),*

$$P(x_1, x_2, \ldots, x_n) = \sum_{H \in \mathcal{H}} a_H \prod_{i \in H} x_i$$

where $\mathcal{H} \subseteq 2^{\{1,2,\ldots,n\}}$ and $0 \neq a_H \in \mathbb{Z}_m$. We say that P weakly represents *f if there is a set $S \subseteq \{0, 1, \ldots, m-1\}$ such that, for every $x \in \{0,1\}^n$,*

$$f(x) = 0 \Longleftrightarrow P(x) \in S$$

Let $\Delta(f, m)$ be the minimum degree of polynomials mod m *that weakly represent f. The* size *of polynomial P is defined to be $|\mathcal{H}|$. Let $\Sigma(f, m)$ denote the minimum size of polynomials* mod m *that weakly represent f.*

Note that the mod m degree and the weak mod m degree of the OR function are the same.

1-4 Tardos and Barrington [TB95] proved an $\Omega(\log n)$ lower bound for the weak mod m degree of the OR function, if m has only two distinct prime divisors. More generally, if the number of distinct prime divisors of m is r, and the smallest prime divisor is q, then their lower bound is

$$\Delta(\mathrm{OR}, m) \geq \Big(1/(q-1) - o(1)\Big)(\log n)^{1/(r-1)} \tag{1}$$

1-5 The following function was first defined by Babai, Nisan, and Szegedy [BNS92]:

Definition 2 *Let $A \in \{0,1\}^{l \times k}$. Let $\mathrm{GIP}_{l,k}(A)$ denote the number of all-*1 *rows in matrix A,* mod 2*.*

This is the mod 2 generalized inner product of the columns of A.

1-6 Here we show an $\Omega(\log n)$ lower bound for $\Delta(\mathrm{GIP}_{l,k}, m)$, where m is an arbitrary integer (i.e., our lower bound does not deteriorate when the number of different prime divisors of m increases):

Theorem 1 *Let l and k be positive integers that satisfy $c \log l < k \leq (1/3) \log l$ for some $0 < c < 1/3$, and let $n = kl$. Then for every integer m that satisfies $1 < m \leq \exp(n^{1/4})$,*

$$\Delta(\mathrm{GIP}_{l,k}, m) \geq k = \Omega(\log n)$$

This is the tightest possible lower bound that holds for $m = 2$, since the definition of $\mathrm{GIP}_{l,k}$ is just a polynomial mod 2 of degree k: the sum mod 2 of the product of each row.

1-7 Unfortunately, our degree lower bound method does not apply to the theoretically interesting case when f is the OR function. However, we can prove that the *size* of the polynomials weakly representing OR must be large:

Theorem 2

1. *Let m be the product of two different primes. Then there exists a constant $c_m > 0$ such that*

$$\Sigma(\mathrm{OR}, m) \geq n^{c_m \log n}$$

2. *Suppose that m has r different prime divisors. Then there exists a constant $c_m > 0$ such that*

$$\Sigma(\mathrm{OR}, m) \geq n^{c_m (\log n)^{1/(r-1)}}$$

1-8 The proof of Theorem 2 is based on the method of Razborov and Wigderson [RW93] and the degree lower bound (1) of Tardos and Barrington [TB95]. Consequently, the bound depends on the number of prime divisors of m. Using the degree lower bound of our Theorem 1, we give a lower bound for the size, which does not deteriorate if the number of prime divisors of m increases.

1-9 Razborov and Wigderson [RW93] used the function

$$f_n(x) = \bigoplus_{i=1}^{h} \bigwedge_{j=1}^{\lfloor \frac{1}{3} \log h \rfloor} \bigoplus_{k=1}^{h} x_{ijk}$$

to prove an $\Omega(n^{\log n})$ lower bound on size for some depth-3 circuits, where $n = h^2 \lfloor (1/3) \log h \rfloor$. Observe that f_n is the composition of the GIP and the PARITY functions.

Theorem 3 *Let $m > 1$ be an arbitrary integer. Then*

$$\Sigma(f_n, m) = n^{\Omega(\log n)}$$

2 Communication Complexity

2-1 Our main tool in proving Theorem 1 is a *multiparty communication game*. In a multiparty communication game [CFL83], k players, $\mathbf{p}_1, \mathbf{p}_2, \ldots, \mathbf{p}_k$, intend to compute the value of $g(A_1, A_2, \ldots, A_k)$ cooperatively, where $g\colon \{0,1\}^{l\times k} \to \{0,1\}$ and $A_i \in \{0,1\}^l$, for $i = 1, 2, \ldots, k$. Player $\mathbf{p}_i$ knows the value of each variable, except A_i. The players have unlimited computational power, and they communicate with the help of a blackboard viewed by all players. Only one player may write on the blackboard at a time. The goal is to compute $g(A_1, A_2, \ldots, A_k)$ in such a way that at the end of the computation, all players know this value. The cost of the computation is the number of bits written on the blackboard for the given $A = (A_1, A_1, \ldots, A_k) \in \{0,1\}^{l\times k}$.

2-2 The cost of a multiparty protocol is the maximum number of bits communicated for any A in $\{0,1\}^{l\times k}$. The k-party communication complexity of a function g, $C^{(k)}(g)$, is the minimum of the costs of those k-party protocols that compute g. Babai, Nisan, and Szegedy examined the multiparty communication complexity of the GIP function in [BNS92], and they proved the following theorem.

Theorem 4 ([BNS92], Theorem 2)

$$C^{(k)}(\mathrm{GIP}_{l,k}) = \Omega(l/4^k)$$

3 Proving the Degree Bound

3-1 The proof is based on Theorem 4 and on an idea from [GH90].

Proof of Theorem 1-1 **Proof of Theorem 1** From Theorem 4, with $k < (1/2 - \nu)\log n$ players, for some $\nu > 0$,

$$C^{(k)}(\mathrm{GIP}_{l,k}) \geq cl/4^k = n^{\Omega(1)}$$

On the other hand, suppose that some mod m polynomial P of degree $k-1$ weakly represents $\mathrm{GIP}_{l,k}$. Then the following k-player protocol can evaluate P with a small number of communicated bits. P is the sum of several monomials of degree at most $k-1$. Since for each variable of a monomial there is at most one player who does not know it, for every monomial there exists a player who knows all of its variables. Before starting the communication game for P, the players agree on who computes each monomial. Then each player—without any communication—privately computes the mod m sum of

their assigned monomials. Next, communicating $k\lceil\log(m+1)\rceil$ bits, each player announces this mod m sum, and every player privately adds up the numbers seen. Now, if the result is in the set S, then $\mathrm{GIP}_{l,k} = 0$; otherwise, it is 1.

Proof of Theorem 1-2

From the preceding paragraph and Theorem 4,

$$k\lceil\log(m+1)\rceil \geq C^{(k)}(\mathrm{GIP}_{l,k}) = n^{\Omega(1)}$$

which leads to a contradiction.

Proof of Theorem 1 □

4 Random Restrictions and the Size Bounds

Proof of Theorem 2-1

Proof of Theorem 2 To prove part 1, let

$$P(x_1, x_2, \ldots, x_n) = \sum_{H\in\mathcal{H}} a_H \prod_{i\in H} x_i$$

be a mod m polynomial, weakly representing the OR of n variables, where $\mathcal{H} \subseteq 2^{\{1,2,\ldots,n\}}$ and $0 \neq a_H \in \mathbb{Z}_m$. We apply *random restrictions* independently to each variable x_i, for $i = 1, 2, \ldots, n$, in a similar fashion to Ajtai [Ajt83], Furst, Saxe, and Sipser [FSS84] and Razborov and Wigderson [RW93]. Let

$$\rho(x_i) = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{with probability } 1-p \\ * & \text{with probability } p \end{cases}$$

where $\rho(x_i) = *$ means that x_i remains unrestricted, and $p = (1/2)n^{-1/2}$.

Proof of Theorem 2-2

For every $c > 0$ and $|H| \geq (c/2)\log n$,

$$\Pr\left(\prod_{i\in H}\rho(x_i) \neq 0\right) \leq p^{\frac{c}{2}\log n} \leq n^{-\frac{c}{4}\log n} \tag{2}$$

Suppose that $|\mathcal{H}|$, the size of P, satisfies $|\mathcal{H}| \leq n^{\varepsilon\log n}$, for a small enough $\varepsilon > 0$. Then, because of (2), the degree of the polynomial after the restriction will be small with high probability:

$$\Pr\Big(\deg(P\circ\rho) < (c/2)\log n\Big) = 1 - o(1)$$

while $P \circ \rho$ still represents the OR of at least $\sqrt{n}$ variables with probability $1 - o(1)$. So, from (1), setting $c = \Big(1/(q-1) - o(1)\Big)$, where q is the smallest prime divisor of m, we arrive at a contradiction.

Proof of Theorem 2-3

Part 2 can be proved in similar fashion, using inequality (1) with $r \geq 2$ instead of $r = 2$. The details are left to the reader.

Proof of Theorem 2 □

Proof of Theorem 3 Let

$$P(x_1, x_2, \ldots, x_n) = \sum_{H \in \mathcal{H}} a_H \prod_{i \in H} x_i$$

be a mod m polynomial, weakly representing f_n. We apply random restrictions independently to each variable x_i, for $i = 1, 2, \ldots, n$, as in the proof of Theorem 2, or as in [Ajt83], [FSS84], or [RW93]. Let

$$\rho(x_i) = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{with probability } (1-p)/2 \\ 1 & \text{with probability } (1-p)/2 \\ * & \text{with probability } p \end{cases}$$

where $p = (2 \ln h)/h$. Then, as in the proof of Theorem 2, or as in the proof of Theorem 3 in [RW93], if

$$|\mathcal{H}| \leq n^{\varepsilon \log n}$$

for a sufficiently small $\varepsilon > 0$, then

$$\Pr\Big(\deg(P \circ \rho) < \lfloor (1/3) \log h \rfloor\Big) \geq 1 - o(1) \tag{3}$$

while

$$\Pr\left(\bigoplus_{k=1}^{h} \rho(x_{ijk}) \text{ is a constant}\right) = (1-p)^h \leq 1/h^2$$

So, from (3) we conclude that—after fixing some more variables—there exists a mod m polynomial that weakly represents $\mathrm{GIP}_{l,k}$ with degree less than $\lfloor (1/3) \log h \rfloor$, and this contradicts our Theorem 1.

Proof of Theorem 3 □

5 Acknowledgments

5-1 The author is indebted to David Barrington and to Gábor Tardos for discussions on this subject, and to Alexander Razborov, who directed the author's attention to the random restriction techniques.

Acknowledgement of support: The author acknowledges the support of the grants OTKA 4271, OTKA F 014919, and of the Magyar Tudományért Foundation.

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