Computational Complexity Theory

Lecture 17: Parity not in AC^0

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Recap: Class NC

- NC stands for Nick's Class – named after Nick Pippenger.
- Definition. For $i \in \mathbb{N}$, a language L is in NC^i if there is a polynomial function $q(.)$ and a constant c s.t. L is decided by a $q(n)$-size circuit family $\{C_n\}_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$, where depth of C_n is at most $c.(\log n)^i$ for every $n \in \mathbb{N}$.

- Definition. $NC = \bigcup_{i \in \mathbb{N}} NC^i$.

- PARITY is in NC^1 = *poly(n)*-size Boolean formulas.

Recap: Class AC

- Definition. For $i \in \mathbb{N} \cup \{0\}$, a language L is in AC^i if there is a polynomial function $q(.)$ and a constant c s.t. L is decided by a $q(n)$-size **unbounded fan-in** circuit family $\{C_n\}_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$, where depth of C_n is at most $c.(\log n)^i$ for every $n \in \mathbb{N}$.

- Definition. $AC = \bigcup_{i \geq 0} AC^i$. (stands for *Alternating Class*)

- Observation. $AC^i \subseteq NC^{i+1} \subseteq AC^{i+1}$ for all $i \geq 0$.

Replace an unbounded fan-in gate by a binary tree of bounded fan-in gates.

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- Definition. $AC = \bigcup_{i \geq 0} AC^i$.

- In this lecture, we'll show that PARITY is not in AC^0, i.e., $AC^0 \subsetneq NC^1$.

Recap: P-completeness

- Recall, to define completeness of a complexity class, we need an appropriate notion of a *reduction*.
- What kind of reductions will be suitable is guided by *a complexity question*, like a comparison between the complexity class under consideration & another class.
- Is P = (uniform) NC? Is P = L?…use log-space reduction!

- Definition. A language $L \in P$ is *P-complete* if for every L' in P, $L' \leq_l L$.

Recap: P-complete problems

- Circuit value problem. Given a circuit and an input, compute the output of the circuit. (The reduction in the Cook-Levin theorem can be made a log-space reduction.)

- Linear programming. Check the feasibility of a system of linear inequality constraints over rationals.

- CFG membership. Given a context-free grammar and a string, decide if the string can be generated by the grammar.

Recap: No log-space or parallel algorithms for PC problems

- Theorem. Let L be a P-complete language. Then,

  L is in L $\Leftrightarrow$ P = L.

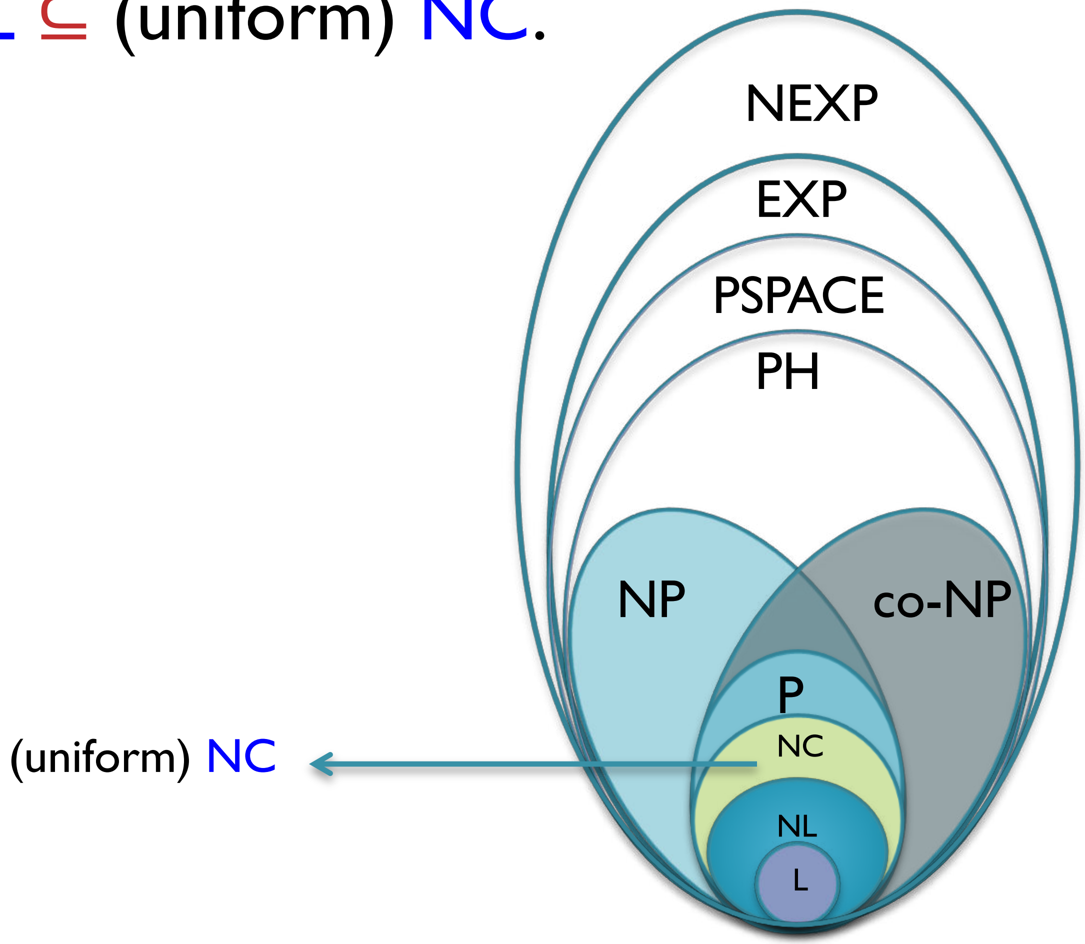
- Theorem. Let L be a P-complete language. Then,

  L is in NC $\Leftrightarrow$ P $\subseteq$ NC.

- Can't hope to get a log-space algorithm for a P-complete problem unless P = L.
- Can't hope to get an efficient parallel algorithm for a P-complete problem unless P $\subseteq$ NC.

Recap: Parallelization of Log-space

- Do problems in L have efficient parallel algorithms? Yes!
- Theorem. NL ⊆ (uniform) NC.



The Parity function

The Parity function

- $\text{PARITY}(x_1, x_2, \ldots, x_n) = x_1 \oplus x_2 \oplus \ldots \oplus x_n$.

- Fact. $\text{PARITY}(x_1, x_2, \ldots, x_n)$ can be computed by a $\underbrace{\text{circuit}}_{\text{has depth } O(\log n)}$ of size $O(n)$ and a $\underbrace{\text{formula}}_{\text{has depth } O(\log n)}$ of size $O(n^2)$.

- Theorem. (*Khrapchenko 1971*) Any formula computing $\text{PARITY}(x_1, x_2, \ldots, x_n)$ has size $\Omega(n^2)$.

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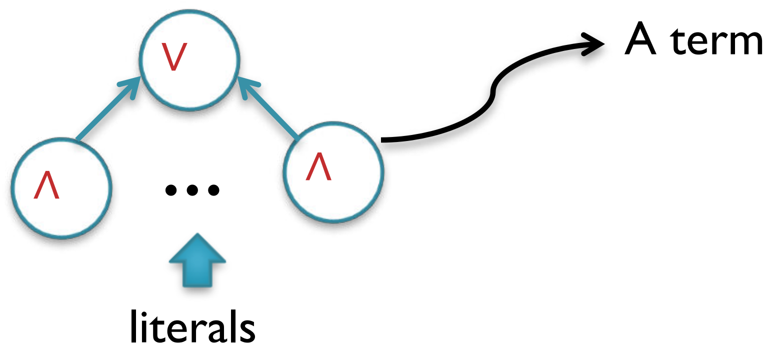
- Fact. $\text{PARITY}(x_1, x_2, \ldots, x_n)$ can be computed by a circuit of size $O(n)$ and a formula of size $O(n^2)$.
- Theorem. (*Khrapchenko 1971*) Any formula computing $\text{PARITY}(x_1, x_2, \ldots, x_n)$ has size $\Omega(n^2)$.
- Can poly-size <u>constant depth</u> circuits compute PARITY? No!

Depth 2 circuit for Parity

- Without loss of generality, a depth 2 circuit is either a DNF or a CNF.

DNF:



- Any Boolean function can be computed by a DNF (similarly, CNF) with 2^n terms (respectively, clauses).

- Can we do better for depth 2 circuits computing PARITY?

Depth 2 circuit for Parity

- Without loss of generality, a depth 2 circuit is either a DNF or a CNF.

- Obs. Any DNF computing PARITY has $\geq 2^{n-1}$ terms.
- Proof. Let ϕ be a DNF computing PARITY. Then, every term in ϕ has n literals (otherwise, the value of PARITY can be fixed by fixing less than n variables which is false).

Depth 2 circuit for Parity

- Without loss of generality, a depth 2 circuit is either a DNF or a CNF.

- Obs. Any DNF computing PARITY has $\geq 2^{n-1}$ terms.
- Proof. Let ϕ be a DNF computing PARITY. Then, every term in ϕ has n literals (otherwise, the value of PARITY can be fixed by fixing less than n variables which is false). Such a term corresponds to a *unique* assignment that makes the term evaluate to 1. Terms corresponding to assignments that set odd number of variables to 1 must be present in ϕ.

Depth 3 circuit for Parity

- Obs. There's a $2^{O(\sqrt{n})}$ size depth 3 circuit for PARITY.
- Proof.

$$\text{PARITY} = \underbrace{x_1 \oplus x_2 \oplus \ldots \oplus x_{\sqrt{n}}}_{y_1} \oplus \ldots \oplus \underbrace{x_{n-\sqrt{n}} \oplus x_2 \oplus \ldots \oplus x_n}_{y_{\sqrt{n}}}$$

- *Divide & conquer*: Compute y_i and $\neg y_i$ by $2^{O(\sqrt{n})}$ size DNFs on the **x** literals. Compute $y_1 \oplus \ldots \oplus y_{\sqrt{n}}$ by a $2^{O(\sqrt{n})}$ size CNF on the **y** literals. "Attach" the CNF with the DNFs and "merge" the two middle layers of $\vee$ gates.

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Is the $2^{O(\sqrt{n})}$ upper bound on the size of depth 3 circuits computing PARITY tight? "Yes"

Depth d circuit for Parity

- Obs. There's a $\exp(n^{1/(d-1)})$ size depth d circuit for PARITY, where $\exp(x) = 2^x$. *(Homework)*
- Proof sketch. "Divide & conquer" for $d-1$ levels. Alternate between CNFs and DNFs. "Attach" the CNFs and the DNFs appropriately, and then "merge" the intermediate layers to bring the depth down to d.

- Is the $\exp(n^{1/(d-1)})$ upper bound on the size of depth d circuits computing PARITY tight? "Yes"

Lower bound for depth d circuits

- Theorem. *(Furst, Saxe, Sipser '81; Ajtai '83; Hastad '86)* Any depth d circuit computing PARITY has size $\exp(\Omega_d(n^{1/(d-1)}))$, where $\Omega_d()$ is hiding a d^{-1} factor.

- Furst, Saxe and Sipser showed a quasi-polynomial lower bound.
- Ajtai showed an exponential lower bound, but the bound wasn't optimal.
- Finally, Hastad showed an optimal lower bound.

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- Gives a super-polynomial lower bound for depth d circuits for d up to $O(\log n/\log\log n)$.

- A lower bound for circuits of depth $d = O(\log n)$ implies a Boolean formula lower bound!

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- Proof idea. A ***random assignment*** to a "large" fraction of the variables makes a constant depth circuit of polynomial size evaluate to a constant (i.e., the circuit stops depending on the unset variables). On the other hand, we cannot make PARITY evaluate to a constant by setting less than n variables.

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$\downarrow$

- We'll prove this fact using Hastad's **Switching lemma**. But first let us discuss some structural simplifications of depth d circuits.

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- **Proof idea.** A ***random assignment*** to a "large" fraction of the variables makes a constant depth circuit of polynomial size evaluate to a constant (i.e., the circuit stops depending on the unset variables).
- We'll prove this fact using Hastad's **Switching lemma**. But first let us discuss some structural simplifications of depth d circuits.

Will be proved in the next lecture

Simplifying depth d circuits

- Fact 1. If $f(x_1,\ldots, x_n)$ is computable by a circuit of depth d and size s, then f is also computable by a circuit C of depth d and size $O(s)$ such that C has <u>no $\neg$ gates</u> and the inputs to C are $x_1, \ldots, x_n$ and $\neg x_1, \ldots, \neg x_n$.

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- Fact 2. If f is computable by a circuit of depth d and size s, then f is also computable by a *formula* of depth d and size $O(s)^d$.
- Fact 3. If f is computable by a formula of depth d and size s, then f is computable by a formula C of depth d and size $O(sd)$ that has alternating layers of $\vee$ and $\wedge$ gates with inputs feeding into *only* the bottom layer.

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Homework: Prove the above facts.

Random restrictions

- A *restriction* σ is a partial assignment to a subset of the n variables.
- A *random restriction* σ that leaves m variables alive/unset is obtained by picking a random subset $S \subseteq [n]$ of size $n-m$ and setting every variable in S to $0/1$ uniformly and independently.
- Let f_σ denote the function obtained by applying the restriction σ on f.

The Switching Lemma

- Switching lemma. Let f be a t-CNF on n variables and σ a random restriction that leaves $m = pn$ variables alive, where $p < ½$. Then,

  $$\Pr_\sigma[f_\sigma \text{ can't be represented as a } k\text{-DNF}] \leq (16pt)^k.$$

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- Before proving the lemma, let us see how it is used to prove lower bound for depth d circuits.

Lower bound for depth d circuits

- Theorem. *(Furst, Saxe, Sipser '81; Ajtai '83; Hastad '86)* Any depth d circuit C computing PARITY has size $\exp(\boldsymbol{\Omega}_d(n^{1/(d-1)}))$, where $\boldsymbol{\Omega}_d()$ is hiding a d^{-1} factor.
- Proof. Bottom-up application of the switching lemma.

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- **Step 0:** Pick every variable independently with prob. $\frac{1}{2}$, and then set it to 0/1 uniformly. C_1 be the resulting ckt.

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- Let t be a parameter that we'll fix later in the analysis. If a $\vee$ gate in the last layer has fan-in $> t$, then the probability it doesn't evaluate to 1 is $\leq (3/4)^t$.

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  $\Pr[\text{a fan-in} > t \text{ last layer } \vee \text{ gate survives}] \leq s(3/4)^t.$

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  Pr[a fan-in $> t$ last layer $\vee$ gate survives] $\leq \boxed{s(3/4)^t.}$

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- Proof. W.l.o.g C is in the simplified form and the bottom/last layer consists of $\vee$ gates. $\mathrm{Size}(C) = s$.
- **Step 0:** Pick every variable independently with prob. $\frac{1}{2}$, and then set it to $0/1$ uniformly. C_1 be the resulting ckt.
- With probability $\geq 1 - s(3/4)^t$, every $\wedge$ gate of the second-last layer of C_1 computes a t-CNF.

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- Let n_1 be the no. of unset variables after Step 0. By Chernoff bound, $n_1 \geq n/4$ with probability $1 - 2^{-\Omega(n)}$.

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- Proof. W.l.o.g C is in the simplified form and the bottom/last layer consists of $\vee$ gates. $\mathrm{Size}(C) = s$.
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- Proof. # ($\wedge$ gates of the second-last layer of C_1) $\leq s$.
- **Step 1:** Apply a random restriction σ_1 on the n_1 variables that leaves $n_2 = pn_1$ variables alive, where $p < \frac{1}{2}$ will be fixed later.

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- **Step 1:** Apply a random restriction $\boldsymbol{\sigma}_1$ on the n_1 variables that leaves $n_2 = pn_1$ variables alive, where $p < ½$ will be fixed later.
- By the Switching lemma, probability that any of the t-CNFs computed at the second-last layer of C_1 cannot be expressed as a t-DNF is $\leq s.(16pt)^t$.

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- Proof. # ($\wedge$ gates of the second-last layer of C_1) $\leq s$.
- **Step 1:** Apply a random restriction σ_1 on the n_1 variables that leaves $n_2 = pn_1$ variables alive, where $p < ½$ will be fixed later.
- Replace the t-CNFs by the corresponding t-DNFs.

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- **Step 1:** Apply a random restriction σ_1 on the n_1 variables that leaves $n_2 = pn_1$ variables alive, where $p < ½$ will be fixed later.
- Replace the t-CNFs by the corresponding t-DNFs.
- Merge the $\vee$ gates of the second-last layer with the $\vee$ gates of the layer above. C_2 be the resulting ckt.

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- **Step 1:** Apply a random restriction σ_1 on the n_1 variables that leaves $n_2 = pn_1$ variables alive, where $p < ½$ will be fixed later.
- The no. of $\vee$ gates of the second-last layer of the resulting circuit C_2 *equals* the no. of $\vee$ gates of the third-last layer of C_1. So, this no. is $\leq s$.

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- Proof. # ($\wedge$ gates of the second-last layer of C_1) $\leq s$.
- **Step 1:** Apply a random restriction σ_1 on the n_1 variables that leaves $n_2 = pn_1$ variables alive, where $p < ½$ will be fixed later.
- Merging reduces the depth to $d-1$.
- All the gates of the second-last layer of C_2 compute t-DNFs with probability $\geq 1 - s.(16pt)^t$.

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- Proof. # ($\vee$ gates of the second-last layer of C_2) $\leq s$.
- **Step 2:** Apply a random restriction $\boldsymbol{\sigma}_2$ on the n_2 variables that leaves $n_3 = pn_2$ variables alive, where p is same as before.

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Lower bound for depth d circuits

- Theorem. *(Furst, Saxe, Sipser '81; Ajtai '83; Hastad '86)* Any depth d circuit C computing PARITY has size $\exp(\Omega_d(n^{1/(d-1)}))$, where $\Omega_d()$ is hiding a d^{-1} factor.
- Proof. # ($\vee$ gates of the second-last layer of C_2) $\leq$ s.
- **Step 2:** Apply a random restriction σ_2 on the n_2 variables that leaves $n_3 = pn_2$ variables alive, where p is same as before.
- Replace the t-DNFs by the corresponding t-CNFs.
- Merge the $\wedge$ gates of the second-last layer with the $\wedge$ gates of the layer above. C_3 be the resulting ckt.

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- **Step 2:** Apply a random restriction σ_2 on the n_2 variables that leaves $n_3 = pn_2$ variables alive, where p is same as before.
- The no. of $\wedge$ gates of the second-last layer of the resulting circuit C_3 *equals* the no. of $\wedge$ gates of the third-last layer of C_2. So, this no. is $\leq s$ (why?).

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- Proof. # ($\vee$ gates of the second-last layer of C_2) $\leq s$.
- **Step 2:** Apply a random restriction σ_2 on the n_2 variables that leaves $n_3 = pn_2$ variables alive, where p is same as before.
- Merging reduces the depth to $d-2$.
- All the gates of the second-last layer of C_3 compute t-CNFs with probability $\geq 1 - s.(16pt)^t$.

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- Proof. # ($\wedge$ gates of the second-last layer of C_3) $\leq s$.
- **Step 3:** Apply a random restriction σ_3 on the n_3 variables that leaves $n_4 = pn_3$ variables alive, where p is same as before. Continue as before..

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- Proof. After **Step d-2**, we are left with a depth 2 circuit, i.e., a t-CNF or a t-DNF with probability $\geq$

$$1 - s.(d-2)(16pt)^t - 2^{-\Omega(n)} - s(3/4)^t.$$

- The number of variables alive is $p^{d-2}n_1 \geq (p^{d-2}n)/4$.

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- The number of variables alive is $p^{d-2}n_1 \geq (p^{d-2}n)/4$.
- Observe that by setting t more variables, we can now fix the value of the circuit. But, recall that the value of PARITY cannot be fixed by setting $< n$ variables.

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- The number of variables alive is $p^{d-2}n_1 \geq (p^{d-2}n)/4$.
- Hence,

either $1 - s.(d-2)(16pt)^t - 2^{-\Omega(n)} - s(3/4)^t \leq 0$,

or $p^{d-2}n_1 \leq t$.

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- The number of variables alive is $p^{d-2}n_1 \geq (p^{d-2}n)/4$.
- By choosing $t = O(n^{1/(d-1)})$ and $p = 1/(160\ t)$, we can make sure that

$$p^{d-2}n_1 > t.$$

$< ½$

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- Proof. After **Step d-2**, we are left with a depth 2 circuit, i.e., a t-CNF or a t-DNF with probability $\geq$

$$1 - s.(d-2)(16pt)^t - 2^{-\Omega(n)} - s(3/4)^t.$$

- The number of variables alive is $p^{d-2}n_1 \geq (p^{d-2}n)/4$.
- Therefore, for $t = O(n^{1/(d-1)})$ and $p = 1/(160\ t)$,

$$1 - s.(d-2)(16pt)^t - 2^{-\Omega(n)} - s(3/4)^t \leq 0,$$

$$\Rightarrow \quad s = \exp(\Omega(n^{1/(d-1)})).$$