Computational Complexity

Lecture 11: Subexponential-time complexity and the ETH

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Recap

- Approximation algorithms
- Limits of approximation algorithms
- PCP Theorem

What will we do today?

- Consider exponential-time and subexponential-time algorithms
- A new assumption: ETH
- Use this assumption to derive exponential-time lower bounds

Our favorite example: 3SAT

- Let's find some exponential-time algorithms for 3SAT
- Take some 3CNF formula $\varphi = c_1 \wedge \cdots \wedge c_m$ with $\text{var}(\varphi) = \{x_1, \ldots, x_n\}$.
- Consider this naive algorithm:
  - Iterate over all truth assignments $\alpha : \text{var}(\varphi) \to \{0, 1\}$
  - If α satisfies φ, for some α, return 1; otherwise, return 0
- This algorithm takes time $2^n \cdot O(m^c)$, for some $c \in \mathbb{N}$
- Can we do better?

Our favorite example: 3SAT (ct'd)

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$\texttt{A}_{\texttt{recursive}}(\varphi)$:
if $\varphi$ contains only clauses of size at most 2 then
    decide if $\varphi$ is satisfiable in polynomial time, and return the answer;
else
    take some clause $c_j$ in $\varphi$ of size 3;
    for each of the 7 truth assignments $\alpha$ to $var(c_j)$ that satisfy $c_j$ do
        if $\texttt{A}_{\texttt{recursive}}(\varphi[\alpha]) = 1$ then
            return 1;
        end
    end
    return 0;
end
```

- This algorithm $\texttt{A}_{\texttt{recursive}}$ takes time $1.92^n \cdot O(m^c)$, for some $c \in \mathbb{N}$
  - Recursion tree has branching factor 7 and depth $^n/_3$, so is of size $O(7^{n/3}) = O(1.92^n)$
- Can we keep improving the base of the exponential? Is there some limit?

Functions between polynomial and exponential

exponential-time $2^n \cdot m$

"ETH"

subexponential-time $n^{\log n} \cdot m^2,\ 2^{\sqrt{n}} \cdot m,$ etc.

"P $\neq$ NP"

polynomial-time $2m,\ m^2,\ n \cdot m^2,$ etc.

P $\neq$ NP not enough to rule out subexponential-time algorithms

- The assumption P $\neq$ NP is not enough to rule out subexponential-time algorithms for NP-complete problems

- Typical strategy to rule out polynomial-time algorithms:

  - Take some NP-complete L.

  - Assume P $\neq$ NP.

  - Suppose that L is solvable in polynomial time.

  - Then P $=$ NP. ↯

only works for polynomial time

The Exponential-Time Hypothesis (ETH)

Definition (δ_q)

For $q \geq 3$, let δ_q be the infimum of the set of constants c for which there exists an algorithm solving q-SAT in time $O(2^{cn}) \cdot m^{O(1)}$, where n is the number of variables in the q-SAT input and m the number of clauses.

Definition (Exponential-Time Hypothesis; ETH)

Exponential-Time Hypothesis (unproven conjecture): $\delta_3 > 0$.

ETH and subexponential-time algorithms for 3SAT

- The ETH implies that there is no $2^{o(n)}$-time algorithm for 3SAT:
  - Suppose that some $2^{o(n)}$-time algorithm A for 3SAT exists.
  - Suppose also that the ETH is true: $\delta_3 > 0$.
  - Then there is some c such that no $2^{cn} \cdot m^{O(1)}$-time algorithm for 3SAT exists.
  - For large enough n, A runs in time $2^{cn} \cdot m^{O(1)}$. $\lightning$

- So we can solve 3SAT in time $2^{O(n)}$, but—assuming the ETH—not in time $2^{o(n)}$.
  - E.g., not in time $2^{O(n/\log n)}$, $2^{O(\sqrt{n})}$ or $n^{O(\log n)}$.

- The ETH implies $\mathrm{P} \neq \mathrm{NP}$—or in other words: $\mathrm{P} = \mathrm{NP}$ implies that the ETH is false

Showing ETH-based lower bounds for other problems

- Take VC as example—solvable in time $2^{O(v)}$, where v is the number of vertices.
- Can we show a matching lower bound—i.e., VC not solvable in time $2^{o(v)}$?
- Idea:
  - Use reduction from 3SAT to VC
  - v of VC needs to increase at most linearly in n of 3SAT
  - In the reduction that we have, v is linear in $n + m$

- Suppose VC is solvable in time $2^{o(v)}$ using some algorithm A
- Idea to construct a $2^{o(n)}$-time algorithm for 3SAT:
  - use reduction from 3SAT to VC
  - then run A to solve the resulting VC instance
- Only works in time $2^{o(n)}$ if v is linear in n.

Sparsification Lemma

Sparsification Lemma

For each $\epsilon > 0$, there is a constant $\kappa(\epsilon)$ such that every 3CNF formula φ with n variables and m clauses can be expressed as:

$$\varphi \equiv \bigvee_{i=1}^{t} \psi_i,$$

where $t \leq 2^{\epsilon n}$ and each ψ_i is a 3CNF formula on the same variables as φ and with $\kappa(\epsilon) \cdot n$ clauses.

Moreover, this disjuction $\bigvee_{i=1}^{t} \psi_i$ can be computed in time $2^{\epsilon n} \cdot m^{O(1)}$.

Assuming the ETH, 3SAT cannot be solved in time $2^{o(n+m)}$

- Assume the ETH, i.e., $\delta_3 > 0$.
- Suppose that 3SAT can be solved in time $2^{o(n+m)}$ with some algorithm A.
- Take some c with $0 < c < \delta_3$.
- We will show that 3SAT is solvable in time $2^{cn} \cdot m^{O(1)}$:
    - Take some 3CNF formula φ with n variables and m clauses.
    - Let $\epsilon = {}^{c}/_{2}$.
    - Construct the ψ_i's from the Sparsification Lemma (using the value $\epsilon = {}^{c}/_{2}$)
    - Run the algorithm A on these ψ_i's.
    - Return 1 if some ψ_i is satisfiable; return 0 otherwise.
    - This runs in time $2^{cn} \cdot m^{O(1)}$. $\lightning$
        - For large enough n, running A on ψ_i takes time $2^{\epsilon n} m^{O(1)}$ – since $|\psi_i|$ is linear in n.

Lower bound for VC using the ETH

- Suppose VC is solvable in time $2^{o(v)}$ using some algorithm A, where v is the number of vertices.
- Idea to construct a $2^{o(n+m)}$-time algorithm for 3SAT:
  - Take some 3CNF formula φ
  - Use polynomial-time reduction R from 3SAT to VC: $R(\varphi) = (G, k)$ with $G = (V, E)$, where $v = |V| = O(n + m)$
  - Then run A to decide if G has a vertex cover of size k (which is the case if and only if φ is satisfiable)
  - This runs in time $|\varphi|^{O(1)} + 2^{o(v)} = 2^{o(n+m)}$. ↯
- So, assuming the ETH, there is no $2^{o(v)}$-time algorithm for VC.

Strong Exponential-Time Hypothesis (SETH)

Definition (δ_q; repeated)

For $q \geq 3$, let δ_q be the infimum of the set of constants c for which there exists an algorithm solving q-SAT in time $O(2^{cn}) \cdot m^{O(1)}$, where n is the number of variables in the q-SAT input and m the number of clauses.

Definition (Strong Exponential-Time Hypothesis; SETH)

Strong Exponential-Time Hypothesis (unproven conjecture):

$$\lim_{q \to \infty} \delta_q = 1.$$

- The SETH is a stronger assumption than the ETH
- SETH implies that CNF-SAT cannot be solved in time $O(2^{cn})$ for any $c < 1$

Recap

- Considered exponential-time and subexponential-time algorithms
- Assumption about (impossibility of) subexponential-time algorithms: ETH
- How to use the ETH to derive exponential-time lower bounds

Next time

- Average-case complexity
- Impagliazzo's Five Worlds