

# SCRAMBLING PERMUTATIONS AND ENTROPY OF HYPERGRAPHS

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ABSTRACT. The following result is proved by using entropy of hypergraphs. If  $\pi_1, \dots, \pi_d$  are permutations of the  $n$  element set  $P$  such that for every triple  $x, y, z \in P$  one can find a  $\pi_i$  such that  $\pi_i(x)$  is between  $\pi_i(y)$  and  $\pi_i(z)$ , then  $n < \exp(d/2)$ .

We also study  $k$ -scrambling permutations. Several problems remained open.

## 1. MIXING PERMUTATIONS AND A CONTAINMENT PROBLEM OF ORTHANTS

The permutations  $\pi_1, \dots, \pi_d$  of the  $n$ -element set  $P$  are called *3-mixing* if for any 3-element set  $\{i, j, k\} \subset P$ , one of the permutations places  $i$  between  $j$  and  $k$ , another one puts  $j$  between the other two, and the same holds for  $k$ , too. Let  $g(d)$  denote the maximum  $n$  with the above property.

**Theorem 1.1.** *For all  $d \geq 2$  we have  $g(d) < e^{d/2} < 1.65^d$ .*

This problem is easily seen to be equivalent to the following. What is the largest number  $n$  such that one can find an  $n$ -point set  $X \subset \mathbb{R}^d$  with the property that each orthant  $\text{orth}(x, \varepsilon)$  whose origin  $x$  belongs to  $X$  and whose faces are parallel to the axis contains at most one additional point of  $X$ . Here  $\varepsilon = (\varepsilon_1, \varepsilon_2, \dots, \varepsilon_d) \in \{1, -1\}^d$  and  $\text{orth}(x, \varepsilon)$  is defined as the set of all vectors of the form  $x_i + \varepsilon_i t_i$  with  $t_i \geq 0$  for all

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coordinates  $1 \leq i \leq d$ . The pigeon hole principle gives  $g(d) := \max n \leq 1 + 2^d$ . Enomoto (unpublished) proved  $g(d) = o(2^d)$  and this was improved by Ishigami [7,8] to

$$(1.1) \quad 7^{\lfloor d/5 \rfloor} \leq g(d) \leq 4 \binom{d}{\lfloor d/4 \rfloor}$$

These bounds asymptotically are  $(1.475\dots)^d$  and  $(4/3^{3/4})^d \sim (1.754\dots)^d$ .

For small values we have  $g(2) = 2$ ,  $g(3) = 3$ ,  $g(4) = 4$  and  $g(5) \geq 7$  by the following example from [8]:  $\mathcal{P} = \{1234567, 5273461, 4217365, 3251764, 7245163\}$ . Actually, it is easy to see that  $g(5) = 7$  as it was shown by one of the referees as follows. Suppose that there exists an example with 5 permutations on 8 elements. Consider the elements in the positions 1, 2, 7 and 8 of these permutations. There are 20 such places. It is easy to see that no element can occur 4 times here. So there are at least 4 elements occurring exactly 3 times. However, if an element appears 3 times then all the 3 must be in positions 2 and 7. However, this is impossible since there are only 10 such places.

Let  $\ell(n, d)$  be the largest number such that for every  $n$ -element set  $P \subset \mathbb{R}^d$  there exist an  $x \in P$  and an  $\varepsilon \in \{1, -1\}^d$  satisfying  $|\text{orth}(x, \varepsilon) \cap P| \geq 1 + \ell(n, d)$ . It is easy to verify that  $\ell(2, d) = 1$  and  $\ell(n, 2) = \lceil n/2 \rceil$  (see [8]). Ishigami [8] showed that

$$\frac{n}{4 \binom{d}{\lfloor d/4 \rfloor}} \leq \ell(n, d) \leq \lceil \frac{n}{g(d)} \rceil \leq \lceil \frac{n}{7^{\lfloor d/5 \rfloor}} \rceil$$

Theorem 1.1 is implied by the following stronger result.

**Theorem 1.2.** *For  $n, d \geq 3$  we have  $\ell(n, d) > n \exp(-d/2)$ .*

The proof is given in the next two sections. In Section 4 we show that  $\lim_{d \rightarrow \infty} g(d)^{1/d}$  exists. Section 5 contains further extremal results, and in Section 6 we propose a series of open problems.

## 2. THE ENTROPY LEMMA

Let  $\mathcal{F}$  be a multihypergraph with (the finite) underlying set (or vertex set)  $V$ , i.e., it is a collection of subsets of  $V$ ,  $\mathcal{F} = \{F_1, F_2, \dots, F_m\}$ , where repetition of the members is allowed. The multiplicity of the set  $S \subset V$  is denoted by  $\mu(S)$ , (or  $\mu(S, \mathcal{F})$  to be precise), and set  $\mu = \mu(\mathcal{F})$  the maximum multiplicity,  $\mu = \max_{S \subset V} \mu(S)$ . Here  $\mu(S)$  is a nonnegative integer with  $\sum_{S \subset V} \mu(S) = m$ . Define the entropy function

$H(y) = y \log_2(1/y) + (1 - y) \log_2(1/(1 - y))$  for all  $0 < y < 1$ ,  $H(0) = H(1) = 0$ . Then  $H$  is a concave real function. The binary entropy of the hypergraph  $\mathcal{F}$  is defined as

$$H(\mathcal{F}) = \sum_{S \subset V} \frac{\mu(S)}{m} \log_2 \frac{m}{\mu(S)}.$$

We are going to use the following lemma which was first proved (for  $\mu = 1$ ) by Kleitman, Shearer and Sturtevant [11]. The proof for multihypergraphs is identical to the original one, we omit it. It is a consequence of the basic entropy inequality  $H(\xi) \leq \sum_i H(\xi_i)$ , where  $\xi$  and  $\xi_1, \dots, \xi_k$  are random variables such that the values of the  $\xi_i$ 's completely determine  $\xi$ . The interested reader can find a thorough discussion and additional applications in the survey of Alon [1].

**Lemma 2.1.** *Let  $\mathcal{F}$  be a multihypergraph of  $m$  sets with maximum multiplicity  $\mu$  and underlying set  $V$ . Let  $p(x)$  denote the fraction of sets in  $\mathcal{F}$  that contain the element  $x \in V$ . Then*

$$\log_2(m/\mu) \leq \sum_{x \in V} H(p(x)).$$

Let us remark that, as far as the author knows, the entropy function for extremal combinatorial problems was first used by Katona [10] in 1966, and later the method was renewed in [11] and [3].

### 3. PROOF OF THEOREM 1.2

From now on we consider only the permutation version of the problem. Let  $P$  be an  $n$ -element set, it is usually identified with  $[n] := \{1, 2, \dots, n\}$ . The matrix  $M = [M_{i,j}]$  is called a  $d \times n$  permutation matrix if each of its  $d$  rows contains each element of  $P$  exactly once. The rank of an element  $v$  in the  $i$ 'th row is denoted by  $\pi_i(v)$ , i.e.,  $\pi_i(v) = j$  for  $M_{i,j} = v$ . For  $\varepsilon \in \{1, -1\}^d$  let  $L(v, \varepsilon)$  denote the set of  $w \in P \setminus \{v\}$ , with the property that  $\pi_i(w) < \pi_i(v)$  if and only if  $\varepsilon_i = -1$ . That is, the element  $w \in L(v, \varepsilon)$  precedes  $v$  in the  $i$ 'th permutation if and only if  $\varepsilon_i = -1$ . Define  $\ell(M) = \max\{|L(v, \varepsilon)| : v \in P, \varepsilon \in \{1, -1\}^d\}$ . (If  $\mathcal{P}$  is a system of permutations then  $\ell(\mathcal{P})$  is defined as  $\ell(M)$ , where  $M$  is a matrix with rows corresponding to the members of  $\mathcal{P}$ .) Finally, let  $\ell(n, d) = \min\{\ell(M) : M \text{ is a } d \times n \text{ permutation matrix}\}$ ,  $g(d) = \max\{n : \ell(n, d) \leq 1\}$ .

For any two elements  $x, y \in P$  define the set  $F(y, x) \subset [d]$  as the set of indices  $i$  with  $\pi_i(y) < \pi_i(x)$ . Define the multihypergraph  $\mathcal{F}(x) = \{F(y, x) : x \neq y \in P\}$ . It has  $n - 1$

members with maximum multiplicity at most  $\ell = \ell(M)$ . The element  $i$  appears in the members of  $\mathcal{F}(x)$  exactly  $\pi_i(x) - 1$  times. The entropy lemma implies that

$$\log_2 \frac{n-1}{\ell} \leq \sum_{1 \leq i \leq d} H\left(\frac{\pi_i(x) - 1}{n-1}\right).$$

Add up the above inequalities for all  $x \in P$ .

$$\begin{aligned} n \log_2 \frac{n-1}{\ell} &\leq \sum_{x \in P} \sum_{1 \leq i \leq d} H\left(\frac{\pi_i(x) - 1}{n-1}\right) \\ &= \sum_{1 \leq i \leq d} \sum_{x \in P} H\left(\frac{\pi_i(x) - 1}{n-1}\right) = d \sum_{0 \leq j \leq n-1} H\left(\frac{j}{n-1}\right). \end{aligned}$$

Using the symmetry and concavity of the function  $H$  one gets that

$$\sum_{0 \leq j \leq n-1} \frac{1}{n-1} H\left(\frac{j}{n-1}\right) < \int_0^1 H(x) dx.$$

On the other hand it is a simple calculus problem to determine this integral.

$$\int_0^1 -x \log_2 x - (1-x) \log_2(1-x) dx = (-2) \left[ \frac{x^2}{2} \log_2 x - \frac{1}{4 \ln 2} x^2 \right]_{x=0}^1 = \frac{\log_2 e}{2}.$$

Summarizing we get

$$n \log_2 \frac{n-1}{\ell} < d(n-1) \frac{\log_2 e}{2}.$$

This is equivalent to  $\ell > (n-1) \exp(-\frac{d}{2} \frac{n-1}{n})$ , which is larger than  $n \exp(-d/2)$  (for  $n, d \geq 3$ ).  $\square$

#### 4. THE EXISTENCE OF LIMIT

Call a system of permutations  $\mathcal{P}$  *2-scrambling* if it reverses each pair, i.e., for every  $x, y \in P$  one can find  $\pi, \pi' \in \mathcal{P}$  with  $\pi(x) < \pi(y)$  and  $\pi'(y) < \pi'(x)$ . Let  $\ell^*(n, d) = \min\{\ell(\mathcal{P}) : \mathcal{P} \text{ is a 2-scrambling } d \times n \text{ system of permutations}\}$ . Finally, define  $g^*(d) = \max\{n : \ell^*(n, d) \leq 1\}$ . Obviously,

$$(4.1) \quad \ell^*(n, d) \geq \ell(n, d) \quad \text{and} \quad g^*(d) \leq g(d).$$

Any permutation and its reverse form a 2-scrambling system, so taking a set of permutations and joining one of the reverses to it one can make the system 2-scrambling. Hence

$$(4.2) \quad \ell^*(n, d) \leq \ell(n, d-1) \quad \text{and} \quad g^*(d) \geq g(d-1).$$

**Proposition 4.1.**  $\lim_{d \rightarrow \infty} (g(d))^{1/d} = \lim_{d \rightarrow \infty} (g^*(d))^{1/d}$ .

PROOF. First, we show that

$$(4.3) \quad \ell^*(n_1 n_2, d_1 + d_2) \leq \ell^*(n_1, d_1) \ell^*(n_2, d_2).$$

Indeed, consider the 2-scrambling systems,  $\mathcal{P}$  and  $\mathcal{Q}$  of sizes  $d_1 \times n_1$  and  $d_2 \times n_2$  and with underlying sets  $P = \{p_1, p_2, \dots, p_{n_1}\}$  and  $Q = \{q_1, \dots, q_{n_2}\}$ , respectively. Consider the product of their underlying sets,  $P \times Q$ . We define  $d_1 + d_2$  permutations of  $P \times Q$  in the following rather natural way. Take a permutation  $\pi \in \mathcal{P}$ , and form the ordered blocks  $R_p = \{(p, q_1), (p, q_2), \dots, (p, q_{n_2})\}$ . Then order these blocks using  $\pi$ . Similarly, a permutation  $\pi' \in \mathcal{Q}$  naturally extends by using the blocks  $C_q = \{(p_1, q), (p_2, q), \dots, (p_{n_1}, q)\}$ . We claim that we obtain a 2-scrambling system; if  $(p, q_i), (p', q_j) \in P \times Q$  with  $i < j$ , then their order is reversed in the extension of a permutation  $\pi' \in \mathcal{Q}$  reversing  $q_i$  and  $q_j$ .

Let  $\varepsilon \in \{1, -1\}^{d_1 + d_2}$  and write it in the form  $\varepsilon = (\varepsilon^1, \varepsilon^2)$  where  $\varepsilon^1 \in \{1, -1\}^{d_1}$ . It is obvious that  $L((p, q), \varepsilon)$  contains  $L(p, \varepsilon^1) \times L(q, \varepsilon^2)$ , and it is contained in

$$(L(p, \varepsilon^1) \cup \{p\}) \times (L(q, \varepsilon^2) \cup \{q\}) \setminus (p, q).$$

We claim that if there is any  $(p, q') \in L((p, q), \varepsilon)$ , then  $L((p, q), \varepsilon) = \{p\} \times L(q, \varepsilon^2)$ . Indeed, let  $q = q_i$  and  $q' = q_j$  and suppose that  $i < j$ . (The other case, and also the case  $(p', q) \in L((p, q), \varepsilon)$  are similar). Then  $(p, q_i)$  precedes  $(p, q_j)$  in the block  $R_p$  and so they are not reversed in each of the permutations obtained from a  $\pi \in \mathcal{P}$ . We get  $\varepsilon^1 = \{1, 1, \dots, 1\}$ . However, the permutations obtained from  $\mathcal{P}$  form a 2-scrambling system, so if  $p'' \neq p$ , then there exists a permutation  $\pi''$  placing the block  $R_{p''}$  before  $R_p$ , implying  $(p'', q'') \notin L((p, q), \varepsilon)$ .

Summarizing, we get that  $L((p, q), \varepsilon)$  is either equal to  $L(p, \varepsilon^1) \times L(q, \varepsilon^2)$  or to  $\{p\} \times L(q, \varepsilon^2)$  or to  $L(p, \varepsilon^1) \times \{q\}$ . In all of these cases its size is at most  $\ell(\mathcal{P})\ell(\mathcal{Q})$ .

Using (4.3) we get  $g^*(d_1 + d_2) \geq g^*(d_1)g^*(d_2)$ . The sequence  $(1/d) \log g^*(d)$  is bounded above, so classical calculus (Fekete's theorem) can be applied to get that  $\lim_{d \rightarrow \infty} (1/d) \log g^*(d)$  exists and equals to its supremum. Finally, (4.1) and (4.2) imply that  $(1/d) \log g(d)$  also must have the same limit.  $\square$

Note that, the  $5 \times 7$  example in Section 1 is not 2-scrambling (the pair  $\{2, 6\}$  is not reversed) so we do not have  $g^*(5) = 7$ . It is very likely that  $g^*(5)$  is only 6. However,  $\{2, 6\}$  is the only unreversed pair so with a slightly modified definition of the product  $\mathcal{P} \times \mathcal{Q}$  one can get Ishigami's lower bound (1.1), too. We omit the details.

## 5. COMPLETELY SCRAMBLING PERMUTATIONS

Call a family of permutations  $\pi_1, \dots, \pi_t$  of the  $n$ -element underlying set  $P$  *completely  $k$ -scrambling* if for every ordered  $k$ -set  $(p_1, \dots, p_k)$  of  $k$  distinct elements of  $P$  there is some  $i$  with  $\pi_i(p_1) < \pi_i(p_2) < \dots < \pi_i(p_k)$ . That is, the  $\pi_i$ 's give all the  $k!$  permutations of every  $k$ -set. The cardinality of the minimal completely  $k$ -scrambling family is denoted by  $N^*(n, k)$ . Spencer [15] proved that

$$(5.1) \quad \log_2 n \leq N^*(n, k) \leq \frac{k}{\log_2(k!/(k! - 1))} \log_2 n$$

as  $k \geq 3$ , fixed, and  $n \rightarrow \infty$ . Obviously, for a completely 3-scrambling system  $\mathcal{P}$  one has  $\ell(\mathcal{P}) = 1$ . On the other hand, starting with a 3-mixing system,  $\{\pi_1, \dots, \pi_d\}$  and reversing each of them one gets a completely 3-scrambling system of permutations. So Theorem 1.1 and Ishigami's example give

$$2 \ln 2 \log_2 n < N^*(n, 3) < (10/\log_2 7) \log_2 n + O(1).$$

The coefficients here are 1.386... and 3.562... (in (5.1) for  $k = 3$  we get 1 and 11.405...).

For  $k > 3$  Ishigami [9] have recently improved the lower bound in (5.1) to  $(k - 2)!/(\log_2 k) \log_2 n$  for  $n$  large compared to  $k$ . One of the referees noted that a very simple argument gives  $N^*(n, k) \geq (k - 2)! \log_2(n - k + 2)$  for all  $n \geq k \geq 3$ .

**Theorem 5.1.** *For all  $n \geq k \geq 3$  we have  $N^*(n, k) > \frac{1}{2}(k - 1)! \log_2 n$ .*

For the proof we have to recall an old problem of Rényi [14]. Given an arbitrary underlying set  $V$ , and consider two of its partitions  $P, P'$ . These are called *crossing* (or *qualitatively independent*) if every class of  $P$  has a non-empty intersection with every class of  $P'$ . A partition into  $t$  parts is called a  $t$ -partition. Let  $I_t(v)$  denote the largest cardinality of a family of  $t$ -partitions of a  $v$ -element set under the restriction that any two partitions in the family are crossing. Recently, Gargano, Körner and Vaccaro [6] have proved that

$$\limsup_{v \rightarrow \infty} \frac{1}{v} \log_2 I_t(v) = \frac{2}{t}$$

holds for every  $t$ . We will only use the following upper bound, which is an easy corollary of a theorem of Bollobás [2], as it was pointed out by Poljak and Tuza [13].

$$(5.2) \quad |I_t(v)| \leq \binom{\lfloor 2v/t \rfloor}{\lfloor v/t \rfloor}$$

PROOF OF THEOREM 5.1. Let  $\pi_1, \dots, \pi_d$  be a completely  $k$ -scrambling system of permutations of the set  $[n]$ . Consider the subpermutations  $(\pi_i(1), \dots, \pi_i(k-2))$  for all  $i \in [d]$ . There is a permutation of  $[k-2]$ , say it is  $(p_1, \dots, p_{k-2})$ , which occurs at most  $d/(k-2)!$  times. Let  $V := \{i : \pi_i(p_1) < \pi_i(p_2) < \dots < \pi_i(p_{k-2})\}$ . For every element  $x \in [n] \setminus [k-2]$  we define a  $k-1$ -partition of  $V$ ,  $P(x) := (P_1(x), P_2(x), \dots, P_{k-1}(x))$  as follows.  $P_1(x) := \{i \in V : \pi_i(x) < \pi_i(p_1)\}$ ,  $P_\alpha(x) := \{i \in V : \pi_i(p_{\alpha-1}) < \pi_i(x) < \pi_i(p_\alpha)\}$  for  $2 \leq \alpha \leq k-2$  and  $P_{k-1}(x) := \{i \in V : \pi_i(p_{k-2}) < \pi_i(x)\}$ . Any two partitions  $P(x)$  and  $P(y)$  are crossing because there are permutations which places  $x$  and  $y$  in all possible  $(k-1)^2$  ways between, before and after the elements  $p_1, \dots, p_{k-2}$ . So (5.2) implies  $n - (k-2) \leq \binom{2|V|/(k-1)}{|V|/(k-1)}$ . Using  $|V| \leq d/(k-2)!$ , an easy calculation gives the desired lower bound for  $d$ .  $\square$

## 6. FURTHER PROBLEMS, CONJECTURES

One can propose the more general problem of looking for the minimal number of permutations of  $n$  elements that scramble all  $k$ -element subsets up in various ways. More precisely, let  $\mathcal{S}$  be a family of families of  $k$ -permutations and call a system  $\mathcal{P}$  of  $n$ -permutations  $\mathcal{S}$ -mixing if for all  $k$ -element subsets  $K \subset [n]$  the system  $\{\pi(K) : \pi \in \mathcal{P}\} \in \mathcal{S}$ . What is the minimum size,  $f(n, \mathcal{S})$ , of a family of  $\mathcal{S}$ -mixing permutations? In other words, we are looking for the minimum number of permutations of  $[n]$  with prescribed  $k$ -subpermutations.

An important example is the following. Call the set of permutations  $\mathcal{P}$   $k$ -scrambling if for every (now unordered)  $k$ -set  $\{p_1, \dots, p_k\} \subset P$  and for every distinguished element of the set, say  $p_j$ , there is a permutation  $\pi \in \mathcal{P}$  such that  $\pi(p_j)$  precedes all the other  $(k-1)$   $p_i$ 's. The cardinality of the smallest  $k$ -scrambling family is denoted by  $N(n, k)$ . This notion goes back to Dushnik [4] who found a formula for  $N(n, k)$  when  $2\sqrt{n} \leq k \leq n$ . For  $k$  is fixed and  $n \rightarrow \infty$  an argument due to Hajnal and Spencer [15] gives that

$$\log_2 \log_2 n \leq N(n, k) \leq \frac{k-1}{\log_2(2^{k-1}/(2^{k-1}-1))} \log_2 \log_2 n.$$

In [5] the asymptotic  $N(n, 3) = \log_2 \log_2 n + (\frac{1}{2} + o(1)) \log_2 \log_2 \log_2 n$  was proved. The determination of  $N(n, k)$  is equivalent to the question of the dimension of the partially ordered set formed by the  $(k-1)$  and 1-element subsets of  $[n]$  and ordered by inclusion. More about poset dimensions and their connections with permutations can be found in [16].

It would be interesting to decide if the order of  $f(n, \mathcal{S})$  is always  $O(1)$ ,  $\Theta(\log \log n)$  or  $\Theta(\log n)$ , for *monotone* systems. Monotonicity means that  $\mathcal{A} \in \mathcal{S}$ ,  $\mathcal{A} \subset \mathcal{B}$  implies  $\mathcal{B} \in \mathcal{S}$ . (All the above results dealt with monotone properties).

In another related series of problems one considers partitions instead of permutations. For example, Körner [12] proved the following. Let  $f(d)$  be the maximum  $n$  such that one can find  $d$  partitions  $A_i \cup B_i = [n]$ ,  $A_i \cap B_i = \emptyset$ ,  $1 \leq i \leq d$  such that for every triple  $T \subset [n]$ , and element  $x \in T$  one can find an  $i$  with either  $A_i \cap T = \{x\}$  or  $B_i \cap T = \{x\}$ . Then  $(2/\sqrt{3} - o(1))^d < f(d) < (\sqrt{2} + o(1))^d$ .

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