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Citation: Polyanskiy, Yury. "Upper Bound on List-Decoding Radius of Binary Codes." 2015 IEEE International Symposium on Information Theory (ISIT) (June 2015).

As Published: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1109/ISIT.2015.7282852>

Publisher: Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE)

Persistent URL: <http://hdl.handle.net/1721.1/100999>

Version: Author's final manuscript: final author's manuscript post peer review, without publisher's formatting or copy editing

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Upper bound on list-decoding radius of binary codes

Yury Polyanskiy

Abstract—Consider the problem of packing Hamming balls of a given relative radius subject to the constraint that they cover any point of the ambient Hamming space with multiplicity at most L . For odd $L \geq 3$ an asymptotic upper bound on the rate of any such packing is proven. The resulting bound improves the best known bound (due to Blinovsky’1986) for rates below a certain threshold. The method is a superposition of the linear-programming idea of Ashikhmin, Barg and Litsyn (that was used previously to improve the estimates of Blinovsky for $L = 2$) and a Ramsey-theoretic technique of Blinovsky. As an application it is shown that for all odd L the slope of the rate-radius tradeoff is zero at zero rate.

Index Terms—Combinatorial coding theory, list-decoding, converse bounds

I. MAIN RESULT AND DISCUSSION

One of the most well-studied problems in information theory asks to find the maximal rate at which codewords can be packed in binary space with a given minimum distance between codewords. Operationally, this (still unknown) rate gives the capacity of the binary input-output channel subject to adversarial noise of a given level. A natural generalization was considered by Elias and Wozencraft [1], [2], who allowed the decoder to output a list of size L . In this paper we provide improved upper bounds on the latter question.

Our interest in bounding the asymptotic tradeoff for the list-decoding problem is motivated by our study of fundamental limits of joint source-channel communication [3]. Namely, in [4, Theorem 6] we proposed an extension of the previous result in [3, Theorem 7] that required bounding rate for the list-decoding problem.

We proceed to formal definitions and brief overview of known results. For a binary code $\mathcal{C} \subset \mathbb{F}_2^n$ we define its list-size L decoding radius as

$$\tau_L(\mathcal{C}) \triangleq \frac{1}{n} \max\{r : \forall x \in \mathbb{F}_2^n \ |\mathcal{C} \cap \{x + B_r^n\}| \leq L\},$$

where Hamming ball B_r^n and Hamming sphere S_r^n are defined as

$$B_r^n \triangleq \{x \in \mathbb{F}_2^n : |x| \leq r\}, \quad (1)$$

$$S_r^n \triangleq \{x \in \mathbb{F}_2^n : |x| = r\} \quad (2)$$

with $|x| = |\{i : x_i = 1\}|$ denoting the Hamming weight of x . Alternatively, we may define τ_L as follows:¹

$$\tau_L(\mathcal{C}) = \frac{1}{n} \left(\min \left\{ \text{rad}(S) : S \in \binom{\mathcal{C}}{L+1} \right\} - 1 \right),$$

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The research was supported by the NSF grant CCF-13-18620 and NSF Center for Science of Information (CSoI) under grant agreement CCF-09-39370. This work was presented at 2015 IEEE International Symposium on Information Theory (ISIT), Hong Kong, CN, Jun 2015.

¹ $\binom{\mathcal{C}}{j}$ denotes the set of all subsets of \mathcal{C} of size j .

where $\text{rad}(S)$ denotes radius of the smallest ball containing S (known as Chebyshev radius):

$$\text{rad}(S) \triangleq \min_{y \in \mathbb{F}_2^n} \max_{x \in S} |y - x|.$$

The asymptotic tradeoff between rate and list-decoding radius τ_L is defined as usual:

$$\tau_L^*(R) \triangleq \limsup_{n \rightarrow \infty} \max_{\mathcal{C} : |\mathcal{C}| \geq 2^{nR}} \tau_L(\mathcal{C}) \quad (3)$$

$$R_L^*(\tau) \triangleq \limsup_{n \rightarrow \infty} \max_{\mathcal{C} : \tau_L(\mathcal{C}) \geq \tau} \frac{1}{n} \log |\mathcal{C}| \quad (4)$$

The best known upper (converse) bounds on this tradeoff are as follows:

- List size $L = 1$: The best bound to date was found by McEliece, Rodemich, Rumsey and Welch [5]:

$$R_1^*(\tau) \leq R_{LP2}(2\tau), \quad (5)$$

$$R_{LP2}(\delta) \triangleq \min \log 2 - h(\alpha) + h(\beta), \quad (6)$$

where $h(x) = -x \log x - (1-x) \log(1-x)$ and minimum is taken over all $0 \leq \beta \leq \alpha \leq 1/2$ satisfying

$$2 \frac{\alpha(1-\alpha) - \beta(1-\beta)}{1 + 2\sqrt{\beta(1-\beta)}} \leq \delta$$

For rates $R < 0.305$ this bound coincides with the simpler bound:

$$\tau_1^*(R) \leq \frac{1}{2} \delta_{LP1}(R), \quad (7)$$

$$\delta_{LP1}(R) \triangleq \frac{1}{2} - \sqrt{\beta(1-\beta)}, \quad R = \log 2 - h(\beta), \quad (8)$$

where $\beta \in [0, \frac{1}{2}]$.

- List size $L = 2$: The bound found by Ashikhmin, Barg and Litsyn [6] is given as²

$$R_2^*(\tau) \leq \log 2 - h(2\tau) + R_{up}(2\tau, 2\tau),$$

where $R_{up}(\delta, \alpha)$ is the best known upper bound on rate of codes with minimal distance δn constrained to live on Hamming spheres $S_{\alpha n}^n$. The expression for $R_{up}(\delta, \alpha)$ can be obtained by using the linear programming bound from [5] and applying Levenshtein’s monotonicity, cf. [7, Lemma 4.2(6)]. The resulting expression is

$$R_2^*(\tau) \leq \begin{cases} R_{LP2}(2\tau), & \tau \leq \tau_0 \\ \log 2 - h(2\tau) + h(u(\tau)), & \tau > \tau_0, \end{cases} \quad (9)$$

where $\tau_0 \approx 0.1093$ and

$$u(\tau) = \frac{1}{2} - \sqrt{\frac{1}{4} - (\sqrt{\tau - 3\tau^2} - \tau)^2}$$

²This result follows from optimizing [6, Theorem 4]. It is slightly stronger than what is given in [6, Corollary 5].

(cf. [7, (9)]).

- For list sizes $L \geq 3$: The original bound of Blinovsky [8] appears to be the best (before this work):

$$\tau_L^*(R) \leq \sum_{i=1}^{\lceil L/2 \rceil} \frac{\binom{2i-2}{i-1}}{i} (\lambda(1-\lambda))^i, \quad R = 1 - h(\lambda), \quad (10)$$

where $\lambda \in [0, \frac{1}{2}]$. Note that [8] also gives a non-constructive lower bound on $\tau_L^*(R)$. Results on list-decoding over non-binary alphabets are also known, see [9], [10].

In this paper we improve the bound of Blinovsky for lists of odd size and rates below a certain threshold. To that end we will mix the ideas of Ashikhmin, Barg and Litsyn (namely, extraction of a large spectrum component from the code) and those of Blinovsky (namely, a Ramsey-theoretic reduction to study of symmetric subcodes).

To present our main result, we need to define exponent of Krawtchouk polynomial $K_{\beta n}(\xi n) = \exp\{nE_{\beta}(\xi) + o(n)\}$. For $\xi \in [0, \frac{1}{2} - \sqrt{\beta(1-\beta)}]$ the value of $E_{\beta}(\xi)$ was found in [11]. Here we give it in the following parametric form, cf. [12] or [13, Lemma 4]:

$$E_{\beta}(\xi) = \xi \log(1-\omega) + (1-\xi) \log(1+\omega) - \beta \log \omega \quad (11)$$

$$\xi = \frac{1}{2}(1 - (1-\beta)\omega - \beta\omega^{-1}), \quad (12)$$

where

$$\omega \in \left[\frac{\beta}{1-\beta}, \sqrt{\frac{\beta}{1-\beta}} \right].$$

Our main result is the following:

Theorem 1. Fix list size $L \geq 2$, rate R and an arbitrary $\beta \in [0, 1/2]$ with $h(\beta) \leq R$. Then any sequence of codes $\mathcal{C}_n \subset \{0, 1\}^n$ of rate R satisfies

$$\limsup_{n \rightarrow \infty} \tau_L(\mathcal{C}_n) \leq \max_{j, \xi_0} \xi_0 g_j \left(1 - \frac{\xi_1}{2\xi_0} \right) + (1 - \xi_0) g_j \left(\frac{\xi_1}{2(1 - \xi_0)} \right), \quad (13)$$

where maximization is over ξ_0 satisfying

$$0 \leq \xi_0 \leq \frac{1}{2} - \sqrt{\beta(1-\beta)} \quad (14)$$

and j ranging over $\{0, 1, 3, \dots, 2k+1, \dots, L\}$ if L is odd and over $\{0, 2, \dots, 2k, \dots, L\}$ if L is even. Quantity $\xi_1 = \xi_1(\xi_0, \delta, R)$ is a unique solution of

$$R + h(\beta) - 2E_{\beta}(\xi_0) = h(\xi_0) - \xi_0 h \left(\frac{\xi_1}{2\xi_0} \right) - (1 - \xi_0) h \left(\frac{\xi_1}{2(1 - \xi_0)} \right), \quad (15)$$

on the interval $[0, 2\xi_0(1 - \xi_0)]$ and functions $g_j(\nu)$ are defined as

$$g_j(\nu) \triangleq \frac{1}{L+j} (L\nu - \mathbb{E}[|2W - L - j|^+]), \quad W \sim \text{Bino}(L, \nu) \quad (16)$$

As usual with bounds of this type, cf. [14], it appears that taking $h(\beta) = R$ can be done without loss. Under such choice,

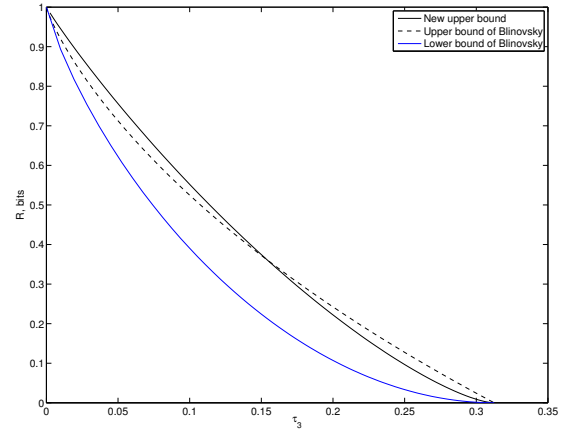


Fig. 1. Comparison of bounds on $R_L^*(\tau)$ for list size $L = 3$

TABLE I
RATES FOR WHICH NEW BOUND* IMPROVES STATE OF THE ART

List size L	Range of rates
$L = 3$	$0 < R \leq 0.361$
$L = 5$	$0 < R \leq 0.248$
$L = 7$	$0 < R \leq 0.184$
$L = 9$	$0 < R \leq 0.136$
$L = 11$	$0 < R \leq 0.100$

* This is computation of (13) with $h(\beta) = R$.

our bound outperforms Blinovsky's for all odd L and all rates small enough (see Corollary 3 below). The bound for $L = 3$ is compared in Fig. 1 with the result of Blinovsky numerically. For larger odd L the comparison is similar, but the range of rates where our bound outperforms Blinovsky's becomes smaller, see Table I.

Evaluation of Theorem 1 is computationally possible, but is somewhat tedious. Fortunately, for small L the maximum over ξ_0 and j is attained at $\xi_0 = \frac{1}{2} - \sqrt{\beta(1-\beta)}$ and $j = 1$. We rigorously prove this for $L = 3$:³

Corollary 2. For list-size $L = 3$ we have

$$\tau_L^*(R) \leq \frac{3}{4}\delta - \frac{1}{16} \left(\frac{(2\delta - \xi_1)^3}{\delta^2} + \frac{\xi_1^3}{(1-\delta)^2} \right), \quad (17)$$

where $\delta \in (0, 1/2]$ and $\xi_1 \in [0, 2\delta(1-\delta)]$ are functions of R determined from

$$R = h \left(\frac{1}{2} - \sqrt{\delta(1-\delta)} \right), \quad (18)$$

$$R = \log 2 - \delta h \left(\frac{\xi_1}{2\delta} \right) - (1-\delta) h \left(\frac{\xi_1}{2(1-\delta)} \right) \quad (19)$$

Another interesting implication of Theorem 1 is that it allows us to settle the question of slope of the curve $R_L^*(\tau)$ at zero rate. Notice that Blinovsky's converse bound (10) has a negative slope, while his achievability bound has a zero slope. Our bound always has a zero slope for odd L (but not for even L , see Remark 2 in Section II-C):

³Notice that proofs of each of the two Corollaries below contain different relaxations of the bound (13), e.g. (22), which are easier to evaluate. Notice also that in Table I for the last two entries ($L = 9, 11$) at the high endpoint of rate the maximum over ξ_0 is attained *not* at $\frac{1}{2} - \sqrt{\beta(1-\beta)}$.

Corollary 3. Fix arbitrary odd $L \geq 3$. There exists $R_0 = R_0(L) > 0$ such that for all rates $R < R_0$ we have

$$\tau_L^*(R) \leq g_1(\delta_{LP1}(R)), \quad (20)$$

where $g_1(\cdot)$ is a degree- L polynomial defined in (16). In particular,

$$\left. \frac{d}{d\tau} \right|_{\tau=\tau_L^*(0)} R_L^*(\tau) = 0, \quad (21)$$

where the zero-rate radius is $\tau_L^*(0) = \frac{1}{2} - 2^{-L-1} \left(\frac{L-1}{2} \right)$.

Before closing our discussion we make some additional remarks:

- 1) The bound in Theorem 1 can be slightly improved by replacing $\delta_{LP1}(R)$, that appears in the right-hand side of (14), with a better bound, a so-called second linear-programming bound $\delta_{LP2}(R)$ from [5]. This would enforce the usage of the more advanced estimate of Litsyn [15, Theorem 5] and complicate analysis significantly. Notice that $\delta_{LP2}(R) \neq \delta_{LP1}(R)$ only for rates $R \geq 0.305$. If we focus attention only on rates where new bound is better than Blinovsky's, such a strengthening only affects the case of $L = 3$ and results in a rather minuscule improvement (for example, for rate $R = 0.33$ the improvement is $\approx 3 \cdot 10^{-5}$).
- 2) For even L it appears that $h(\beta) = R$ is no longer optimal. However, the resulting bound does not appear to improve upon Blinovsky's.
- 3) When L is large (e.g. 35) the maximum in (13) is not always attained by either $j = 1$ or $\xi_0 = \delta_{LP1}(R)$. It is not clear whether such anomalies only happen in the region of rates where our bound is inferior to Blinovsky's.
- 4) The result of Corollary 3 follows by weakening (13) (via concavity of g_j , Lemma 8) to

$$\limsup_{n \rightarrow \infty} \tau_L(\mathcal{C}_n) \leq \max_{j, \xi_0} g_j(\xi_0) = \max_j g_j(\delta_{LP1}(R)). \quad (22)$$

The $R < R_0(L)$ condition is only used to show that the maximum is attained at $j = 1$. Note also that weakening (22) corresponds to omitting the extra Elias-Bassalygo type reduction, which is responsible for the extra optimization over ξ_1 in (13).

Finally, at the invitation of anonymous reviewer we give our intuition about why our bound outperforms Blinovsky's for odd L . It is easiest to compare with the weakening (22) of our bound. Now compare the two proofs:

- 1) Blinovsky [8] first uses Elias-Bassalygo reduction to restrict attention to a subcode \mathcal{C}' situated on a Hamming sphere of radius $\approx \delta_{GV}(R) = h^{-1}(1 - R)$. Then he proves an upper bound for $\tau_L(\mathcal{C}')$ valid as long as $|\mathcal{C}'| \gg 1$ via a Plotkin-type argument together with a great symmetrization idea.
- 2) Our bound (following Ashikhmin, Barg and Litsyn [6]) instead uses a Kalai-Linial [11] reduction to select a subcode \mathcal{C}'' situated on a Hamming sphere of radius

$\approx \delta_{LP1}(R)$. We then proceeded to prove a (Plotkin-type) upper bound on a strange quantity:

$$\tau_L^o(\mathcal{C}'') = \frac{1}{n} \left(\min \left\{ \text{rad}(\{0\} \cup S) : S \in \binom{\mathcal{C}}{L} \right\} - 1 \right),$$

which corresponds to a requirement that the code contain not more than $L - 1$ codewords in any ball of radius τ_L^o , but only for those balls that happen to also contain the origin.

Notice that the sphere returned by Kalai-Linial is bigger than that of Elias-Bassalygo (which is the reason our bound deteriorates at large rates), but the good thing is that the subcode \mathcal{C}'' has another codeword c_0 at the center of the Hamming sphere. Now, intuitively τ_L^o is roughly equivalent to τ_{L-1} . The zero-rate (Plotkin) radius for a list- L decoding of binary codes on Hamming sphere $S_{\xi_n}^n$ is given by

$$p_L(\xi) = \frac{\mathbb{E}[\min(W_\xi, L + 1 - W_\xi)]}{L + 1}, \quad W_\xi \sim \text{Bino}(L + 1, \xi).$$

So intuitively, we expect that Blinovsky's bound should give

$$\tau_L^*(R) \lesssim p_L(\delta_{GV}(R))$$

while our bound should give

$$\tau_L^*(R) \lesssim p_{L-1}(\delta_{LP1}(R)).$$

Finally, it is easy to check that for even L we have $p_L = p_{L-1}$, while for odd L , $p_L > p_{L-1}$. This is the main intuitive reason why our bound succeeds in improving Blinovsky's, but only for odd L .

II. PROOFS

A. Proof of Theorem 1

Consider an arbitrary sequence of codes \mathcal{C}_n of rate R . As in [6] we start by using Delsarte's linear programming to select a large component of the distance distribution of the code. Namely, we apply result of Kalai and Linial [11, Proposition 3.2]: For every β with $h(\beta) \leq R$ there exists a sequence $\epsilon_n \rightarrow 0$ such that for every code \mathcal{C} of rate R there is a ξ_0 satisfying (14) such that

$$\begin{aligned} A_{\xi_0 n}(\mathcal{C}) &\triangleq \frac{1}{|\mathcal{C}|} \sum_{x, x' \in \mathcal{C}} 1\{|x - x'| = \xi_0 n\} \\ &\geq \exp\{n(R + h(\beta) - 2E_\beta(\xi_0) + \epsilon_n)\}. \end{aligned} \quad (23)$$

Without loss of generality (by compactness of the interval $[0, 1/2 - \sqrt{\beta(1-\beta)}]$ and passing to a proper subsequence of codes \mathcal{C}_{n_k}) we may assume that ξ_0 selected in (23) is the same for all blocklengths n . Then there is a sequence of subcodes \mathcal{C}'_n of asymptotic rate

$$R' \geq R + h(\beta) - 2E_\beta(\xi_0)$$

such that each \mathcal{C}'_n is situated on a sphere $c_0 + S_{\xi_0}$ surrounding another codeword $c_0 \in \mathcal{C}$. Our key geometric result is: If there are too many codewords on a sphere $c_0 + S_{\xi_0}$ then it is possible to find L of them that are includable in a small ball that also contains c_0 . Precisely, we have:

Lemma 4. Fix $\xi_0 \in (0, 1)$ and positive integer L . There exist a sequence $\epsilon_n \rightarrow 0$ such that for any code $\mathcal{C}'_n \subset S_{\xi_0 n}$ of rate $R' > 0$ there exist L codewords $c_1, \dots, c_L \in \mathcal{C}'_n$ such that

$$\frac{1}{n} \text{rad}(0, c_1, \dots, c_L) \leq \theta(\xi_0, R', L) + \epsilon_n, \quad (24)$$

where

$$\theta(\xi_0, R', L) \triangleq \max_j \theta_j(\xi_0, R', L) \quad (25)$$

$$\theta_j(\xi_0, R', L) \triangleq \xi_0 g_j \left(1 - \frac{\xi_1}{2\xi_0} \right) + (1 - \xi_0) g_j \left(\frac{\xi_1}{2(1 - \xi_0)} \right), \quad (26)$$

with $\xi_1 = \xi_1(\xi_0)$ found as unique solution on interval $[0, 2\xi_0(1 - \xi_0)]$ of

$$R' = h(\xi_0) - \xi_0 h \left(\frac{\xi_1}{2\xi_0} \right) - (1 - \xi_0) h \left(\frac{\xi_1}{2(1 - \xi_0)} \right), \quad (27)$$

functions g_j are defined in (16) and j in maximization (25) ranging over the same set as in Theorem 1.

Equipped with Lemma 4 we immediately conclude that

$$\limsup_{n \rightarrow \infty} \tau_L(\mathcal{C}_n) \leq \max_{\xi_0 \in [0, \delta]} \theta(\xi_0, R + h(\beta) - 2E_\beta(\xi_0), L). \quad (28)$$

Clearly, (28) coincides with (13). So it suffices to prove Lemma 4.

B. Proof of Lemma 4

Let \mathcal{T}_L be the $(2^L - 1)$ -dimensional space of probability distributions on \mathbb{F}_2^L . If $T \in \mathcal{T}_L$ then we have

$$T = (t_v, v \in \mathbb{F}_2^L) \quad t_v \geq 0, \sum_v t_v = 1.$$

We define distance on \mathcal{T}_L to be the L_∞ one:

$$\|T - T'\| \triangleq \max_{v \in \mathbb{F}_2^L} |t_v - t'_v|.$$

Permutation group S_L acts naturally on \mathbb{F}_2^L and this action descends to probability distributions \mathcal{T}_L . We will say that T is symmetric if

$$T = \sigma(T) \iff t_v = t_{\sigma(v)} \quad \forall v \in \mathbb{F}_2^L$$

for any permutation $\sigma : [L] \rightarrow [L]$. Note that symmetric T is completely specified by $L + 1$ numbers (weights of Hamming spheres in \mathbb{F}_2^L):

$$\sum_{v: |v|=j} t_v, \quad j = 0, \dots, L.$$

Next, fix some total ordering of \mathbb{F}_2^n (for example, lexicographic). Given a subset $S \subset \mathbb{F}_2^n$ we will say that S is given in ordered form if $S = \{x_1, \dots, x_{|S|}\}$ and $x_1 < x_2 < \dots < x_{|S|}$ under the fixed ordering on \mathbb{F}_2^n . For any subset of codewords $S = \{x_1, \dots, x_L\}$ given in ordered form we define its joint type $T(S)$ as an element of \mathcal{T}_L with

$$t_v \triangleq \frac{1}{n} |\{j : x_1(j) = v_1, \dots, x_L(j) = v_j\}|,$$

where here and below $y(j)$ denotes the j -th coordinate of binary vector $y \in \mathbb{F}_2^n$. In this way every subset S is associated

to an element of \mathcal{T}_L . Note that $T(S)$ is symmetric if and only if the $L \times n$ binary matrix representing S (by combining row-vectors x_j) has the property that the number of columns equal to $[1, 0, \dots, 0]^T$ is the same as the number of columns $[0, 1, \dots, 0]^T$ etc. For any code $\mathcal{C} \subset \mathbb{F}_2^n$ we define its average joint type:

$$\bar{T}_L(\mathcal{C}) = \frac{1}{L! \cdot \binom{|\mathcal{C}|}{L}} \sum_{\sigma} \sum_{S \in \binom{\mathcal{C}}{L}} \sigma(T(S)).$$

Evidently, $\bar{T}_L(\mathcal{C})$ is symmetric.

Our proof crucially depends on a (slight extension of the) brilliant idea of Blinovsky [8]:

Lemma 5. For every $L \geq 1$, $K \geq L$ and $\delta > 0$ there exist a constant $K_1 = K_1(L, K, \delta)$ such that for all $n \geq 1$ and all codes $\mathcal{C} \subset \mathbb{F}_2^n$ of size $|\mathcal{C}| \geq K_1$ there exists a subcode $\mathcal{C}' \subset \mathcal{C}$ of size at least K such that for any $S \in \binom{\mathcal{C}'}{L}$ we have

$$\|T(S) - \bar{T}_L(\mathcal{C}')\| \leq \delta. \quad (29)$$

Remark 1. Note that if $S' \subset S$ then every element of $T(S')$ is a sum of $\leq 2^L$ elements of $T(S)$. Hence, joint types $T(S')$ are approximately symmetric also for smaller subsets $|S'| < L$.

Proof. We first will show that for any $\delta_1 > 0$ and sufficiently large $|\mathcal{C}|$ we may select a subcode \mathcal{C}' so that the following holds: For any pair of subsets $S, S' \subset \mathcal{C}'$ s.t. $|S| = |S'| \leq L$ we have:

$$\|T(S) - T(S')\| \leq \delta_1 \quad (30)$$

Consider any code $\mathcal{C}_1 \subset \mathbb{F}_2^n$ and define a hypergraph with vertices indexed by elements of \mathcal{C} and hyper-edges corresponding to each of the subsets of size L . Now define a $\delta_1/2$ -net on the space \mathcal{T}_L and label each edge according to the closest element of the $\delta_1/2$ -net. By a theorem of Ramsey there exists K_L such that if $|\mathcal{C}_1| \geq K_L$ then there is a subset $\mathcal{C}'_1 \subset \mathcal{C}$ such that $|\mathcal{C}'_1| \geq K$ and each of the internal edges, indexed by $\binom{\mathcal{C}'_1}{L}$, is assigned the same label. Thus, by triangle inequality (30) follows for all $S, S' \in \binom{\mathcal{C}'_1}{L}$.

Next, apply the previous argument to show that there is a constant K_{L-1} such that for any $\mathcal{C}_2 \subset \mathbb{F}_2^n$ of size $|\mathcal{C}_2| \geq K_{L-1}$ there exists a subcode \mathcal{C}'_2 of size $|\mathcal{C}'_2| \geq K_L$ satisfying (30) for all $S, S' \in \binom{\mathcal{C}'_2}{L-1}$. Since \mathcal{C}'_2 satisfies the size assumption on \mathcal{C}_1 made in previous paragraph, we can select a further subcode $\mathcal{C}''_2 \subset \mathcal{C}'_2$ of size $\geq K_L$ so that for \mathcal{C}''_2 property (30) holds for all S, S' of size L or $L - 1$.

Continuing similarly, we may select a subcode \mathcal{C}' of arbitrary \mathcal{C} such that (30) holds for all $|S| = |S'| \leq L$ provided that $|\mathcal{C}| \geq K_1$.

Next, we show that (30) implies

$$\|T(S_0) - \sigma(T(S_0))\| \leq C\delta_1, \quad (31)$$

where $S_0 \in \binom{\mathcal{C}'}{L}$ is arbitrary and $C = C(L)$ is a constant depending on L only.

Now to prove (31) let $T(S_0) = \{t_v, v \in \mathbb{F}_2^L\}$ and consider an arbitrary transposition $\sigma : [L] \rightarrow [L]$. It will be clear that our proof does not depend on what transposition is chosen, so

for simplicity we take $\sigma = \{(L-1) \leftrightarrow L\}$. We want to show that (30) implies

$$|t_v - t_{\sigma(v)}| \leq \delta_1, \quad \forall v \in \mathbb{F}_2^L \quad (32)$$

Since transpositions generate permutation group S_L , (31) then follows. Notice that (32) is only informative for v whose last two digits are not equal, say $v = [v_0, 0, 1]$. Suppose that $S_0 = \{c_1, \dots, c_L\}$ given in the ordered form. Let

$$S = \{c_1, \dots, c_{L-1}\}, \quad (33)$$

$$S' = \{c_1, \dots, c_{L-2}, c_L\} \quad (34)$$

Joint types $T(S)$ and $T(S')$ are expressible as functions of $T(S_0)$ in particular, the number of occurrences of element $[v_0, 0]$ in S is $t_{[v_0, 0, 1]} + t_{[v_0, 0, 0]}$ and in S' is $t_{[v_0, 0, 0]} + t_{[v_0, 1, 0]}$. Thus, from (30) we obtain:

$$|(t_{[v_0, 0, 1]} + t_{[v_0, 0, 0]}) - (t_{[v_0, 0, 0]} + t_{[v_0, 1, 0]})| \leq \delta$$

implying (32) and thus (31).

Finally, we show that (31) implies (29). Indeed, consider the chain

$$\begin{aligned} & \|T(S) - \bar{T}_L(C')\| \\ &= \left\| T(S) - \frac{1}{L! \cdot \binom{|C'|}{L}} \sum_{\sigma} \sum_{S' \in (C')} \sigma(T(S')) \right\| \end{aligned} \quad (35)$$

$$\leq \frac{1}{L! \cdot \binom{|C'|}{L}} \sum_{\sigma} \sum_{S' \in (C')} \|T(S) - \sigma(T(S'))\| \quad (36)$$

$$\begin{aligned} & \leq \frac{1}{L! \cdot \binom{|C'|}{L}} \sum_{\sigma} \sum_{S' \in (C')} \|T(S) - T(S')\| \\ & + \|T(S') - \sigma(T(S'))\| \end{aligned} \quad (37)$$

$$\leq (1 + C)\delta_1, \quad (38)$$

where (36) is by convexity of the norm, (37) is by triangle inequality and (38) is by (30) and (31). Consequently, setting $\delta_1 = \frac{\delta}{1+C}$ we have shown (29). \square

Before proceeding further we need to define the concept of an average radius (or a moment of inertia):

$$\overline{\text{rad}}(x_1, \dots, x_m) \triangleq \min_y \frac{1}{m} \sum_{i=1}^m |x_i - y|.$$

Note that the minimizing y can be computed via a per-coordinate majority vote (with arbitrary tie-breaking for even m). Consider now an arbitrary subset $S = \{c_1, \dots, c_L\}$ and define for each $j \geq 0$ the following functions

$$h_j(S) \triangleq \frac{1}{n} \overline{\text{rad}}(\underbrace{0, \dots, 0}_{j \text{ times}}, c_1, \dots, c_L).$$

It is easy to find an expression for $h_j(S)$ in terms of the joint-type of S :

$$h_j(S) = \frac{1}{L+j} (\mathbb{E}[W] - \mathbb{E}[|2W - L - j|^+]) \quad (39)$$

$$\mathbb{P}[W = w] = \sum_{v: |v|=w} t_v, \quad (40)$$

where t_v are components of the joint-type $T(S) = \{t_v, v \in \mathbb{F}_2^L\}$. To check (39) simply observe that if one arranges L codewords of S in an $L \times n$ matrix and also adds j rows of zeros, then computation of $h_j(S)$ can be done per-column: each column of weight w contributes

$$\min(w, L + j - w) = w - |2w - L - j|^+$$

to the sum. In view of expression (39) we will abuse notation and write

$$h_j(T(S)) \triangleq h_j(S).$$

We now observe that for symmetric codes satisfying (29) average-radii $h_j(S)$ in fact determine the regular radius:

Lemma 6. *Consider an arbitrary code \mathcal{C} satisfying conclusion (29) of Lemma 5. Then for any subset $S = \{c_1, \dots, c_L\} \subset \mathcal{C}$ we have*

$$\left| \text{rad}(0, c_1, \dots, c_L) - n \cdot \max_j h_j(\bar{T}_L(\mathcal{C})) \right| \leq 2^L(1 + \delta n), \quad (41)$$

where j in maximization (41) ranges over $\{0, 1, 3, \dots, 2k + 1, \dots, L\}$ if L is odd and over $\{0, 2, \dots, 2k, \dots, L\}$ if L is even.

Proof. For joint-types of size L and all $j \geq 0$ we clearly have (cf. expression (39))

$$|h_j(T_1) - h_j(T_2)| \leq 2^{L-1} \|T_1 - T_2\|, \quad \forall T_1, T_2 \in \mathcal{T}_L. \quad (42)$$

We also trivially have

$$\frac{1}{n} \text{rad}(0, c_1, \dots, c_L) \geq h_j(S) \quad \forall j \geq 0. \quad (43)$$

Thus from (29) and (42) we already get

$$\frac{1}{n} \text{rad}(0, c_1, \dots, c_L) \geq \max_j h_j(\bar{T}_L(\mathcal{C})) - 2^{L-1} \delta.$$

It remains to show

$$\frac{1}{n} \text{rad}(0, c_1, \dots, c_L) \leq \max_j h_j(\bar{T}_L(\mathcal{C})) + \delta + \frac{2^L}{n}. \quad (44)$$

This evidently requires constructing a good center y for the set $\{0, c_1, \dots, c_L\}$. To that end fix arbitrary numbers $q = (q_0, \dots, q_L) \in [0, 1]^L$. Next, for each $v \in \mathbb{F}_2^L$ let $E_v \subset [n]$ be all coordinates on which restriction of $\{c_1, \dots, c_L\}$ equals v . On E_v put y to have a fraction $q_{|v|}$ of ones and remaining set to zeros (rounding to integers arbitrarily). Proceed for all $v \in \mathbb{F}_2^L$. Call resulting vector $y(q) \in \mathbb{F}_2^n$.

Denote for convenience $c_0 = 0$. We clearly have

$$\text{rad}(c_0, c_1, \dots, c_L) \leq \min_q \max_p \sum_{i=0}^L p_i |c_i - y(q)|, \quad (45)$$

where $p = (p_0, \dots, p_L)$ is a probability distribution.

Denote

$$T(S) = \{t_v, v \in \mathbb{F}_2^L\} \quad (46)$$

$$\bar{T}_L(\mathcal{C}) = \{\bar{t}_v, v \in \mathbb{F}_2^L\} \quad (47)$$

We proceed to computing $|c_i - y(q)|$.

$$|c_i - y(q)| \leq n \sum_{v \in \mathbb{F}_2^L} t_v(q_{|v|}) 1\{v(i) = 0\} + (1 - q_{|v|}) 1\{v(i) = 1\} + 2^L, \quad (48)$$

where 2^L comes upper-bounding the integer rounding issues and we abuse notation slightly by setting $v(0) = 0$ for all v (recall that $v(i)$ is the i -th coordinate of $v \in \mathbb{F}_2^L$).

By (29) we may replace t_v with \bar{t}_v at the expense of introducing $2^L \delta n$ error, so we have:

$$|c_i - y(q)| \leq n \sum_{v \in \mathbb{F}_2^L} \bar{t}_v(q_{|v|}) 1\{v(i) = 0\} + (1 - q_{|v|}) 1\{v(i) = 1\} + 2^L(1 + \delta n). \quad (49)$$

Next notice that the sum over v only depends on whether $i = 0$ or $i \neq 0$ (by symmetry of \bar{t}_v). Furthermore, for any given weight w and $i \neq 0$ we have

$$\sum_{v: |v|=w} 1\{v(i) = 1\} = \binom{L}{w} \frac{w}{L}.$$

Thus, introducing the random variable \bar{W} , cf. (39),

$$\mathbb{P}[\bar{W} = w] \triangleq \sum_{v: |v|=w} \bar{t}_v,$$

we can rewrite:

$$\begin{aligned} \sum_{v \in \mathbb{F}_2^L} \bar{t}_v(q_{|v|}) 1\{v(i) = 0\} + (1 - q_{|v|}) 1\{v(i) = 1\} \\ = \frac{1}{L} \mathbb{E}[\bar{W} + (L - 2\bar{W})q_{\bar{W}}]. \end{aligned} \quad (50)$$

For $i = 0$ the expression is even simpler:

$$\sum_{v \in \mathbb{F}_2^L} \bar{t}_v(q_{|v|}) 1\{v(0) = 0\} + (1 - q_{|v|}) 1\{v(0) = 1\} = \mathbb{E}[q_{\bar{W}}].$$

Substituting derived upper bound on $|c_i - y(q)|$ into (45) we can see that without loss of generality we may assume $p_1 = \dots = p_L$, so our upper bound (modulo $O(\delta)$ terms) becomes:

$$\begin{aligned} \min_q \max_{p_1 \in [0, L^{-1}]} (1 - Lp_1) \mathbb{E}[q_{\bar{W}}] + p_1 \mathbb{E}[\bar{W} + (L - 2\bar{W})q_{\bar{W}}] \\ = \min_q \max_{p_1 \in [0, L^{-1}]} p_1 \mathbb{E}[\bar{W}] + \mathbb{E}[q_{\bar{W}}(1 - 2\bar{W}p_1)] \end{aligned}$$

By von Neumann's minimax theorem we may interchange min and max, thus continuing as follows:

$$= \max_{p_1 \in [0, L^{-1}]} \min_q p_1 \mathbb{E}[\bar{W}] + \mathbb{E}[q_{\bar{W}}(1 - 2\bar{W}p_1)] \quad (51)$$

$$= \max_{p_1 \in [0, L^{-1}]} p_1 \mathbb{E}[\bar{W}] - \mathbb{E}[|2\bar{W}p_1 - 1|^+]. \quad (52)$$

The optimized function of p_1 is piecewise-linear, so optimization can be reduced to comparing values at slope-discontinuities and boundaries. The point $p_1 = 0$ is easily excluded, while the rest of the points are given by $p_1 = \frac{1}{L+j}$

with j ranging over the set specified in the statement of Lemma⁴. So we continue (52) getting

$$= \max_j \frac{1}{L+j} (\mathbb{E}[\bar{W}] - \mathbb{E}[|2\bar{W} - L - j|^+]) \quad (53)$$

We can see that expression under maximization is exactly $h_j(\bar{T}_L(\mathcal{C}))$ and hence (44) is proved. \square

Lemma 7. *There exist constants C_1, C_2 depending only on L such that for any $\mathcal{C} \subset \mathbb{F}_2^n$ the joint-type $\bar{T}_L(\mathcal{C})$ is approximately a mixture of product Bernoulli distributions⁵, namely:*

$$\left\| \bar{T}_L(\mathcal{C}) - \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n \text{Bern}^{\otimes L}(\lambda_i) \right\| \leq \frac{C_1}{|\mathcal{C}|}, \quad (54)$$

where $\lambda_i = \frac{1}{|\mathcal{C}|} \sum_{c \in \mathcal{C}} 1\{c(i) = 1\}$ be the density of ones in the j -th column of a $|\mathcal{C}| \times n$ matrix representing the code. In particular,

$$\left| h_j(\bar{T}_L(\mathcal{C})) - \frac{1}{n} \sum_j g_j(\lambda_j) \right| \leq \frac{C_2}{|\mathcal{C}|}, \quad (55)$$

where functions g_j were defined in (16).

Proof. Second statement (55) follows from the first via (42) and linearity of $h_j(T)$ in the type T , cf. (39). To show the first statement, let $M = |\mathcal{C}|$, $M_i = \lambda_i M$ and p_w – total probability assigned to vectors v of weight w by $\bar{T}_L(\mathcal{C})$. Then by computing p_w over columns of $M \times n$ matrix we obtain

$$p_w = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n \frac{\binom{M_i}{w} \binom{M-M_i}{L-w}}{\binom{M}{L}}.$$

By a standard estimate we have for all $w = \{0, \dots, L\}$:

$$\frac{\binom{M_i}{w} \binom{M-M_i}{L-w}}{\binom{M}{L}} = \binom{L}{w} \lambda_i^w (1 - \lambda_i)^{L-w} + O\left(\frac{1}{M}\right),$$

with $O(\cdot)$ term uniform in w and λ_i . By symmetry of the type $\bar{T}_L(\mathcal{C})$ the result (54) follows. \square

Lemma 8. *Functions g_j defined in (16) are concave on $[0, 1]$.*

Proof. Let $W_\lambda \sim \text{Bino}(L, \lambda)$ and $V_\lambda \sim \text{Bino}(L - 1, \lambda)$. Denote for convenience $\bar{\lambda} = 1 - \lambda$ and take j_0 to be an integer

⁴The difference between odd and even L occurs due to the boundary point $p_1 = \frac{1}{L}$ not being a slope-discontinuity when L is odd, so we needed to add it separately.

⁵Distribution $\text{Bern}^{\otimes L}(\lambda)$ assigns probability $\lambda^{|v|} (1 - \lambda)^{L - |v|}$ to element $v \in \mathbb{F}_2^L$.

between 0 and L . We have then

$$\begin{aligned} & \frac{\partial}{\partial \lambda} \mathbb{E}[|W_\lambda - j_0|^+] \\ &= \sum_{w=j_0+1}^L \binom{L}{w} (w - j_0) \lambda^w \bar{\lambda}^{L-w} \{w\lambda^{-1} - (L-w)\bar{\lambda}^{-1}\} \end{aligned} \quad (56)$$

$$\begin{aligned} &= \binom{L}{j_0+1} (j_0+1) \lambda^{j_0} \bar{\lambda}^{L-j_0-1} \\ &+ \sum_{w=j_0+1}^{L-1} \left[\binom{L}{w+1} (w+1-j_0)(w+1) \right. \\ &\left. - \binom{L}{w} (w-j_0)(L-w) \right] \lambda^w \bar{\lambda}^{L-w-1} \end{aligned} \quad (57)$$

$$= L \binom{L-1}{j_0} \lambda^{j_0} \bar{\lambda}^{L-1-j_0} + L \sum_{w=j_0+1}^{L-1} \binom{L-1}{w} \lambda^w \bar{\lambda}^{L-1-w} \quad (58)$$

$$= L \mathbb{P}[V_\lambda \geq j_0], \quad (59)$$

where in (57) we shifted the summation by one for the first term under the sum in (56), and in (58) applied identities $\binom{L}{w+1} = \binom{L}{w} \frac{L-w}{w+1} = \binom{L-1}{w} \frac{L}{w+1}$. Similarly, if $\theta \in [0, 1)$ we have

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial \lambda} \mathbb{E}[|W_\lambda - j_0 - \theta|^+] = L \mathbb{P}[V_\lambda \geq j_0+1] + L(1-\theta) \mathbb{P}[V_\lambda = j_0]. \quad (60)$$

Similarly, one shows (we will need it later in Lemma 9):

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial \lambda} \mathbb{P}[W_\lambda \geq j_0] = L \mathbb{P}[V_\lambda = j_0 - 1]. \quad (61)$$

Since clearly the function in (60) is strictly increasing in λ for any j_0 and θ we conclude that

$$\lambda \mapsto \mathbb{E}[|W_\lambda - j_0 - \theta|^+]$$

is convex. This concludes the proof of concavity of g_j . \square

Proof of Lemma 4. Our plan is the following:

- 1) Apply Elias-Bassalygo reduction to pass from \mathcal{C}'_n to a subcode \mathcal{C}''_n on an intersection of two spheres $S_{\xi_0 n}$ and $y + S_{\xi_1 n}$.
- 2) Use Lemma 5 to pass to a symmetric subcode $\mathcal{C}'''_n \subset \mathcal{C}''_n$.
- 3) Use Lemmas 7-8 to estimate maxima of average radii h_j over \mathcal{C}'''_n .
- 4) Use Lemma 6 to transport statement about h_j to a statement on $\tau_L(\mathcal{C}'''_n)$.

We proceed to details. It is sufficient to show that for some constant $C = C(L)$ and arbitrary $\delta > 0$ estimate (24) holds with $\epsilon_n = C\delta$ whenever $n \geq n_0(\delta)$. So we fix $\delta > 0$ and consider a code $\mathcal{C}' \subset S_{\xi_0 n} \subset \mathbb{F}_2^n$ with $|\mathcal{C}'| \geq \exp\{nR' + o(n)\}$. Note that for any r , even m with $m/2 \leq \min(r, n-r)$ and arbitrary $y \in S_r^n$ intersection $\{y + S_m^n\} \cap S_r^n$ is isometric to the product of two lower-dimensional spheres:

$$\{y + S_m^n\} \cap S_r^n \cong S_{r-m/2}^r \times S_{m/2}^{n-r}. \quad (62)$$

Therefore, we have for $r = \xi_0 n$ and valid m :

$$\sum_{y \in S_r^n} |\{y + S_m^n\} \cap \mathcal{C}'| = |\mathcal{C}'| \binom{\xi_0 n}{\xi_0 n - m/2} \binom{n(1-\xi_0)}{m/2}.$$

Consequently, we can select $m = \xi_1 n - o(n)$, where ξ_1 defined in (27), so that for some $y \in S_r^n$:

$$|\{y + S_{\rho n}^n\} \cap \mathcal{C}'| > n.$$

Note that we focus on solution of (27) satisfying $\xi_1 < 2\xi_0(1-\xi_0)$. For some choices of R, δ and ξ_0 choosing $\xi_1 > 2\xi_0(1-\xi_0)$ is also possible, but such a choice appears to result in a weaker bound.

Next, we let $\mathcal{C}'' = \{y + S_{\rho n}^n\} \cap \mathcal{C}'$. For sufficiently large n the code \mathcal{C}'' will satisfy assumptions of Lemma 5 with $K \geq \frac{1}{\delta}$. Denote the resulting large symmetric subcode \mathcal{C}''' .

Note that because of (62) column-densities λ_i 's of \mathcal{C}''' , defined in Lemma 7, satisfy (after possibly reordering coordinates):

$$\sum_{i=1}^{\xi_0 n} \lambda_i = \xi_1 n/2 + o(n), \quad \sum_{i > \xi_0 n} \lambda_i = \xi_1 n/2 + o(n).$$

Therefore, from Lemmas 7-8 we have

$$\begin{aligned} h_j(\bar{\tau}_L(\mathcal{C}''')) &\leq \xi_0 g_j \left(1 - \frac{\xi_1}{2\xi_0}\right) \\ &+ (1 - \xi_0) g_j \left(\frac{\xi_1}{2(1-\xi_0)}\right) + \epsilon'_n + \frac{C_1}{|\mathcal{C}'''|}, \end{aligned} \quad (63)$$

where $\epsilon'_n \rightarrow 0$. Note that by construction the last term in (63) is $O(\delta)$. Also note that the first two terms in (63) equal θ_j defined in (25).

Finally, by Lemma 6 we get that for any codewords $c_1, \dots, c_L \in \mathcal{C}'''$, some constant C and some sequence $\epsilon''_n \rightarrow 0$ the following holds:

$$\frac{1}{n} \text{rad}(0, c_1, \dots, c_L) \leq \theta(\xi_0, R', L) + \epsilon''_n + C\delta.$$

By the initial remark, this concludes the proof of Lemma 4. \square

C. Proof of Corollary 3

Lemma 9. For any odd $L = 2a + 1$ there exists a neighborhood of $x = \frac{1}{2}$ such that

$$\max_j g_j(x) = g_1(x), \quad (64)$$

maximum taken over j equal all the odd numbers not exceeding L and $j = 0$. We also have for some $c > 0$

$$g_1(x) = \frac{1}{2} - 2^{-L-1} \binom{L}{\frac{L-1}{2}} + cx + O((2x-1)^2), \quad x \rightarrow \frac{1}{2}. \quad (65)$$

Proof. First, the value $g_1(1/2)$ is computed trivially. Then from (60) we have

$$\frac{d}{dx} g_j(x) = \frac{L}{L+j} \left(1 - 2\mathbb{P}\left[V_x \geq \frac{L+j}{2}\right]\right), \quad (66)$$

where $j \geq 1$ and $V_x \sim \text{Bino}(x, L-1)$. This implies (65). For future reference we note that (69) (below) and (61) imply

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{d}{dx} g_0(x) &= 1 - 2\mathbb{P}[V_x \geq \frac{L+1}{2}] - \mathbb{P}[V_x = \frac{L-1}{2}], \\ &V_x \sim \text{Bino}(x, L-1). \end{aligned} \quad (67)$$

By continuity, (64) follows from showing

$$g_1(1/2) > \max_{j \in \{0,3,5,\dots,L\}} g_j(1/2). \quad (68)$$

Next, consider $W_x \sim \text{Bino}(x, L)$ and notice the upper-bound

$$g_j(x) \leq \frac{1}{L+j} \mathbb{E} [W_x 1\{W_x \leq a\} + (L+j-W_x) 1\{W_x \geq a+1\}].$$

Then, substituting expression for $g_1(x)$ we get

$$g_1(x) - g_0(x) = \frac{1}{L} (\mathbb{P}[W_x \geq a+1] - g_1(x)) \quad (69)$$

$$g_1(x) - g_j(x) \geq \frac{j-1}{L+j} (g_1(x) - \mathbb{P}[W_x > a+1]). \quad (70)$$

Thus, to show (68) it is sufficient to prove that for $x = 1/2$ we have

$$\mathbb{P}[W_{\frac{1}{2}} > a+1] < g_1(1/2) < \mathbb{P}[W_{\frac{1}{2}} \geq a+1]. \quad (71)$$

The right-hand inequality is trivial since $\mathbb{P}[W_{\frac{1}{2}} \geq a+1] = 1/2$ while from (65) we know $g_1(1/2) < 1/2$. The left-hand inequality, after simple algebra, reduces to showing

$$\sum_{u=0}^{a-1} (2a+1-2u) \binom{2a+1}{u} < (2a+1) \binom{2a+1}{a}. \quad (72)$$

Notice, that

$$(n-2u) \binom{n}{u} = n \left[\binom{n-1}{u} - \binom{n-1}{u-1} \right] \forall u \geq 0$$

and therefore

$$\sum_{u \leq \ell} (n-2u) \binom{n}{u} = n \binom{n-1}{\ell}.$$

Plugging this identity into the right-hand side of (72) we get

$$\begin{aligned} \sum_{u=0}^{a-1} (2a+1-2u) \binom{2a+1}{u} &= (2a+1) \binom{2a}{a-1} \\ &< (2a+1) \binom{2a}{a} < (2a+1) \binom{2a+1}{a} \end{aligned} \quad (73)$$

completing the proof of (72). \square

Proof of Corollary 3. We first show that (20) implies (21). To that end, fix a small $\epsilon > 0$ so that $\frac{1}{2} - \epsilon$ belongs to the neighborhood existence of which is claimed in Lemma 9. Choose rate so that $\delta_{LP1}(R) = 1/2 - \epsilon$ and notice that this implies

$$R = h(\epsilon^2 + o(\epsilon^2)), \quad (74)$$

By Lemma 9, the right-hand side of (20) is

$$\tau_L^*(0) - \text{const} \cdot \epsilon + o(\epsilon),$$

which together with (74) implies (21).

To prove (20) we use Theorem 1 with $\delta = \delta_{LP1}(R)$. Next, use concavity of g_j 's (Lemma 8) to relax (13) to

$$\limsup_{n \rightarrow \infty} \tau_L(\mathcal{C}_n) \leq \max_{j, \xi_0} g_j(\xi_0).$$

From (66) and (67) it is clear that $\xi_0 \mapsto g_j(\xi_0)$ is monotonically increasing for all $j \geq 0$ on the interval $[0, 1/2]$. Thus, we further have

$$\limsup_{n \rightarrow \infty} \tau_L(\mathcal{C}_n) \leq \max_j g_j(\delta_{LP1}(R)). \quad (75)$$

Bound (75) is valid for all $R \in [0, 1]$ and arbitrary (odd/even L). However, when R is small (say, $R < R_0$) and L is odd, $\delta_{LP1}(R)$ belongs to the neighborhood of $1/2$ in Lemma 9 and thus (20) follows from (75) and (64). \square

Remark 2. It is, perhaps, instructive to explain why Corollary 3 cannot be shown for even L (via Theorem 1). For even L the maximum over j of $g_j(1/2 - \epsilon)$ is attained at $j = 0$ and

$$g_0\left(\frac{1}{2} - \epsilon\right) = \tau_L^*(0) + c\epsilon^2 + O(\epsilon^3), \epsilon \rightarrow 0 \quad (76)$$

Therefore, for $\delta_{LP1}(R) = \frac{1}{2} - \epsilon$ we get from (76) that the right-hand side of (75) evaluates to

$$\tau_L^*(0) - \text{const} \cdot \epsilon^2 \log \frac{1}{\epsilon}. \quad (77)$$

Thus, comparing (77) with (74) we conclude that for even L our bound on $R_L^*(\tau)$ has negative slope at zero rate. Note that Blinovsky's bound (10) has negative slope at zero rate for both odd and even L .

D. Proof of Corollary 2

Proof. Instead of working with parameter δ we introduce $\beta \in [0, 1/2]$ such that

$$\delta = \frac{1}{2} - \sqrt{\beta(1-\beta)}.$$

We then apply Theorem 1 with $h(\beta) = R$. Notice that the bound on ξ_0 in (14) becomes

$$0 \leq \xi_0 \leq \delta.$$

By a simple substitution $\omega = \sqrt{\frac{\beta}{1-\beta}}$ we get from (11)

$$E_\beta(\delta) = \frac{1}{2} (\log 2 - h(\delta) + h(\beta)).$$

Therefore, when $\xi_0 = \delta$ we notice that

$$R + h(\beta) - 2E_\beta(\xi_0) = R - \log 2 + h(\delta)$$

implying that defining equation for ξ_1 , i.e. (15), coincides with (19).

Next for $L = 3$ we compute

$$g_0(\nu) = \nu(1-\nu), \quad (78)$$

$$g_1(\nu) = \frac{3}{4}\nu - \frac{1}{2}\nu^3, \quad (79)$$

$$g_3(\nu) = \frac{1}{2}\nu. \quad (80)$$

Note that the right-hand side of (17) is precisely equal to

$$\delta g_1 \left(1 - \frac{\xi_1}{2\delta} \right) + (1-\delta) g_1 \left(\frac{\xi_1}{2(1-\delta)} \right).$$

So this corollary simply states that for $L = 3$ the maximum in (13) is achieved at $j = 1, \xi_0 = \delta$. Let us restate this last statement rigorously: The maximum

$$\max_{j \in \{0,1,3\}} \max_{\xi_0 \in \delta} \xi_0 g_j \left(1 - \frac{x}{2\xi_0}\right) + (1 - \xi_0) g_j \left(\frac{x}{2(1 - \xi_0)}\right) \quad (81)$$

is achieved at $j = 1, \xi_0 = \delta$. Here $x = x(\xi_0, \beta)$ is a solution of

$$2(h(\beta) - E_\beta(\xi_0)) = h(\xi_0) - \xi_0 h\left(\frac{x}{2\xi_0}\right) - (1 - \xi_0) h\left(\frac{x}{2(1 - \xi_0)}\right). \quad (82)$$

For notational convenience we will denote the function under maximization in (81) by $g_j(\xi_0, x)$.

We proceed in two steps:

- First, we estimate the maximum over ξ_0 for $j = 0$ as follows:

$$\max_{\xi_0} g_0(\xi_0, x) \leq \frac{\log 2 - R}{4 \log 2} \cdot \left(1 - \frac{1 - \delta}{a_{\max}(1 - a_{\max})}\right) + (1 - \delta) g_0(a_{\min}), \quad (83)$$

where $a_{\max}, a_{\min} \leq \frac{1}{2}$ are given by

$$a_{\max} = h^{-1}(\log 2 - R), \quad (84)$$

$$a_{\min} = h^{-1}\left(\log 2 - \frac{R}{1 - \delta}\right). \quad (85)$$

- Second, we prove that for $j = 1$ function

$$\xi_0 \mapsto g_j(\xi_0, x(\xi_0))$$

is monotonically increasing.

Once these two steps are shown, it is easy to verify (for example, numerically) that $g_1(\delta, x(\delta))$ exceeds both $\frac{1}{2}\delta$ (term corresponding to $j = 3$ in (81)) and the right-hand side of (83) (term corresponding to $j = 0$). Notice that this relation holds for all rates. Therefore, maximum in (81) is indeed attained at $j = 1, \xi_0 = \delta$.

One trick that will be common to both steps is the following. From the proof of Lemma 4 it is clear that the estimate (24) is monotonic in R' . Therefore, in equation (82) we may replace $E_\beta(\xi)$ with any upper-bound of it. We will use the well-known upper-bound, which leads to binomial estimates of spectrum components [15, (46)]:

$$E_\beta(\xi_0) \leq \frac{1}{2}(\log 2 + h(\beta) - h(\xi_0)). \quad (86)$$

Furthermore, it can also be argued that maximum cannot be attained by ξ_0 so small that

$$h(\beta) - \frac{1}{2}(\log 2 + h(\beta) - h(\xi_0)) < 0.$$

So from now on, we assume that

$$h^{-1}(\log 2 - h(\beta)) \leq \xi_0 \leq \delta,$$

and that $x = x(\xi_0) \leq 2\xi_0(1 - \xi_0)$ is determined from the equation:

$$\log 2 - R = \xi_0 h\left(\frac{x}{2\xi_0}\right) + (1 - \xi_0) h\left(\frac{x}{2(1 - \xi_0)}\right) \quad (87)$$

(we remind $R = h(\beta)$).

We proceed to demonstrating (83). For convenience, we introduce

$$a_1 \triangleq 1 - \frac{x}{2\xi_0}, \quad (88)$$

$$a_2 \triangleq \frac{x}{2 - 2\xi_0}. \quad (89)$$

By constraints on x it is easy to see that

$$0 \leq a_2 \leq \min(a_1, 1 - a_1).$$

Therefore, we have

$$\log 2 - R = \xi_0 h(a_1) + (1 - \xi_0) h(a_2) \geq h(a_2)$$

and thus $a_2 \leq a_{\max}$ defined in (84). Similarly, we have

$$\log 2 - R = \xi_0 h(a_1) + (1 - \xi_0) h(a_2) \leq \xi_0 \log 2 + (1 - \xi_0) h(a_2),$$

and since $\xi_0 \leq \delta$ we get that $a_2 \geq a_{\min}$ defined in (85).

Next, notice that $\frac{h(x)}{x(1-x)}$ is decreasing on $(0, 1/2]$. Thus, we have

$$h(a_1) \geq g_0(a_1) 4 \log 2 \quad (90)$$

$$\begin{aligned} h(a_2) &\geq h(a_{\max}) \frac{g_0(a_2)}{g_0(a_{\max})} \\ &= \frac{\log 2 - R}{a_{\max}(1 - a_{\max})} g_0(a_2) \triangleq c \cdot g_0(a_2), \end{aligned} \quad (91)$$

where in the last step we introduced $c > 4 \log 2$ for convenience. Consequently, we get

$$\begin{aligned} \log 2 - R &= \xi_0 h(a_1) + (1 - \xi_0) h(a_2) \\ &\geq 4 \log 2 \cdot \xi_0 g_0(a_1) + (1 - \xi_0) c \cdot g_0(a_2) \end{aligned} \quad (92)$$

$$\geq 4 \log 2 \cdot \xi_0 g_0(a_1) + (1 - \xi_0) c \cdot g_0(a_2) \quad (93)$$

$$= 4 \log 2 \cdot g_0(\xi_0, x) + (1 - \xi_0)(c - 4 \log 2) \cdot g_0(a_2) \quad (94)$$

$$\geq 4 \log 2 \cdot g_0(\xi_0, x) + (1 - \delta)(c - 4 \log 2) \cdot g_0(a_{\min}). \quad (95)$$

Rearranging terms yield (83).

We proceed to proving monotonicity of (82). The technique we will use is general (can be applied to $L > 3$ and $j > 1$), so we will avoid particulars of $L = 3, j = 1$ case until the final step.

Notice that regardless of the function $g(\nu)$ we have the equivalence:

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{d}{d\xi_0} \xi_0 g(a_1) + (1 - \xi_0) g(a_2) &\geq 0 \iff \\ \frac{1}{2} \frac{dx}{d\xi_0} (g'(a_2) - g'(a_1)) &\geq \int_{a_2}^{a_1} (1 - x)(-g''(x)) dx - g'(a_2), \end{aligned} \quad (96)$$

where we recall definition of a_1, a_2 in (88)-(89). Differentiating (87) in ξ_0 (and recalling that R is fixed, while $x = x(\xi_0)$ is an implicit function of ξ_0) we find

$$\frac{dx}{d\xi_0} = -2 \frac{\log \frac{1-a_2}{a_1}}{\log \frac{1-a_2}{a_2} \frac{a_1}{1-a_1}} < 0.$$

Next, one can notice that the map $(\xi_0, x, R) \mapsto (a_1, a_2)$ is a bijection onto the region

$$\{(a_1, a_2) : 0 \leq a_1 \leq 1, 0 \leq a_2 \leq a_1(1 - a_1)\}. \quad (97)$$

With the inverse map given by

$$\xi_0 = \frac{a_2}{1 - a_1 + a_2}, x = \frac{2a_2^2}{1 - a_1 + a_2},$$

$$R = \log 2 - \xi_0 h(a_1) - (1 - \xi_0) h(a_2).$$

Thus, verifying (96) can as well be done for all a_1, a_2 inside the region (97). Substituting $g = g_1$ into (96) we get that monotonicity in (82) is equivalent to a two-dimensional inequality:

$$\begin{aligned} & -2 \log \frac{1 - a_2}{a_1} \cdot (a_1^2 - a_2^2) \\ & \geq (2a_1^2 - \frac{4}{3}(a_1^3 - a_2^3) - 1) \log \frac{1 - a_2}{a - 2} \frac{a_1}{1 - a_1}. \end{aligned} \quad (98)$$

It is possible to verify numerically that indeed (98) holds on the set (97). For example, one may first demonstrate that it is sufficient to restrict to $a_2 = 0$ and then verify a corresponding inequality in a_1 only. We omit mechanical details. \square

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We thank Prof. A. Barg for reading and commenting on an earlier draft and anonymous reviewers for pointing out a mistake in the previous version of Table I and for simplifying proof of (72).

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