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On span- \mathbf{P}^{cc} and related classes in structural communication complexity

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Abstract

The complexity classes $\#\mathbf{P}$, $\#\mathbf{NP}$, $\min\text{-}\mathbf{P}$, $\max\text{-}\mathbf{P}$, $\text{opt-}\mathbf{P}$ and $\text{span-}\mathbf{P}$ are well known in structural complexity. We define analogous classes in (structural) communication complexity and study some of their properties, e.g. establishing the inclusions $\#\mathbf{P}^{cc} \subseteq \text{span-}\mathbf{P}^{cc} \subseteq \#\mathbf{NP}^{cc}$ and $\max\text{-}\mathbf{P}^{cc} \subseteq \text{span-}\mathbf{P}^{cc}$. Especially, in contrast to the current state of affairs in time complexity, we are able to prove the following separations:

- $\#\mathbf{P}^{cc} \subsetneq \text{span-}\mathbf{P}^{cc} \subsetneq \#\mathbf{NP}^{cc}$
- $\max\text{-}\mathbf{P}^{cc} \not\subseteq \#\mathbf{P}^{cc}$, $\max\text{-}\mathbf{P}^{cc} \subsetneq \text{span-}\mathbf{P}^{cc}$
- $\min\text{-}\mathbf{P}^{cc} \neq \max\text{-}\mathbf{P}^{cc}$, $\min\text{-}\mathbf{P}^{cc} \not\subseteq \text{span-}\mathbf{P}^{cc}$

1 Introduction

In structural complexity theory various natural function classes have been defined by considering certain operators acting over the computation tree of a nondeterministic polynomial time Turing machine (NPTM). Valiant's classes $\#\mathbf{P}$ and $\#\mathbf{NP}$ [10] are defined as classes of functions that count the number of accepting paths of the computation tree of an NPTM which in the latter case has access to an \mathbf{NP} -oracle. Krentel [7] studied optimization problems and defined the class $\text{opt-}\mathbf{P} = \min\text{-}\mathbf{P} \cup \max\text{-}\mathbf{P}$ containing functions computing the minimum ($\min\text{-}\mathbf{P}$) or maximum ($\max\text{-}\mathbf{P}$), respectively, of the output values occurring at the leaves of computation trees of NPTMs. Motivated by the study of the graph nonisomorphism problem, Köbler, Schöning and Torán [6] introduced the class $\text{span-}\mathbf{P}$ of span functions counting the number of different output values of an NPTM. Some of their findings were the inclusions $\#\mathbf{P} \subseteq \text{span-}\mathbf{P} \subseteq \#\mathbf{NP}$, $\max\text{-}\mathbf{P} \subseteq \text{span-}\mathbf{P}$ and several equivalences relating language classes to function classes:

$$\#\mathbf{P} = \text{span-}\mathbf{P} \Leftrightarrow \mathbf{NP} = \mathbf{UP} \quad (1)$$

$$\#\mathbf{P} = \max\text{-}\mathbf{P} \Leftrightarrow \mathbf{NP} = \mathbf{PP} \quad (2)$$

$$\#\mathbf{NP} = \text{span-}\mathbf{P} \Leftrightarrow \mathbf{NP} = \mathbf{coNP} \quad (3)$$

$$\max\text{-}\mathbf{P} = \text{span-}\mathbf{P} \Leftrightarrow \mathbf{NP} = \mathbf{coNP} \quad (4)$$

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By analogous proof methods we show the \Rightarrow implications for the corresponding communication complexity classes. As the right hand sides do not hold in the setting of communication complexity, this yields separations for the function classes $\#\mathbf{P}^{cc}$, $\text{span-}\mathbf{P}^{cc}$, $\#\mathbf{NP}^{cc}$, $\text{opt-}\mathbf{P}^{cc}$, $\text{min-}\mathbf{P}^{cc}$ and $\text{max-}\mathbf{P}^{cc}$.

We consider the basic model of communication complexity, introduced by Yao [11]. In this model, there are two players (parties) Alice and Bob, who want to cooperatively compute a function $f: \mathcal{X} \times \mathcal{Y} \rightarrow \mathcal{Z}$, where \mathcal{X} , \mathcal{Y} and \mathcal{Z} are finite sets. Both have complete information about f and unlimited computational power but receive only parts of the inputs. Alice is given $x \in \mathcal{X}$, Bob is given y , and they exchange messages in order to compute $f(x, y)$. The communication is carried out according to a fixed *protocol* Π (over domain $\mathcal{X} \times \mathcal{Y}$ with range \mathcal{Z}), which is a labeled binary tree. An inner node specifies the player who sends a bit of communication next. For a *deterministic* protocol, this bit solely depends on the player's input and the bits communicated so far. For a *nondeterministic* protocol, it can also depend on the player's *guess string*. Each leaf l is labeled with an output value $z_l \in \mathcal{Z}$. On inputs x, y we denote the *transcript*, i.e. the sequence of the bits communicated, by $\Pi(x, y)$. The output of the protocol is defined as the label associated with the leaf reached by the execution of the protocol. The set R_v of inputs going through a node v (including the case of leaves) of a protocol forms a (*combinatorial*) *rectangle*, i.e. $R_v = A \times B$, $A \subseteq \mathcal{X}$, $B \subseteq \mathcal{Y}$. A rectangle R is *z-chromatic for f* if $f^{-1}(R) = \{z\}$, and *monochromatic*, if there exists a z -value such that R is z -chromatic for f . The *communication matrix* M^f of f is the $\mathcal{X} \times \mathcal{Y}$ -matrix $(f(x, y))_{x \in \mathcal{X}, y \in \mathcal{Y}}$, i.e. f written in matrix form. We denote with f_Π the function computed by Π . A nondeterministic protocol computing a Boolean function f induces a cover of $f^{-1}(1)$ with 1-chromatic rectangles. A deterministic protocol induces a disjoint cover of M^f with monochromatic rectangles. The (non-)deterministic communication complexity of f is the minimum number of bits a (non-)deterministic protocol needs to compute f . For a thorough introduction to communication complexity we refer the reader to the book of Kushilevitz and Nisan [8].

Research in the field of structural communication complexity started with the article of Babai, Frankl and Simon [1], where some analogies between Turing machine classes like \mathbf{P} , \mathbf{NP} , \mathbf{PP} , \mathbf{PSPACE} , the polynomial hierarchy $\mathbf{PH} = \bigcup_k \Sigma_k^P$, etc. and the corresponding communication complexity classes \mathbf{P}^{cc} , \mathbf{NP}^{cc} , \mathbf{PP}^{cc} , \mathbf{PSPACE}^{cc} , $\mathbf{PH}^{cc} = \bigcup_k \Sigma_k^{cc}$, etc. were shown. For more ground work, especially on closure properties, the boolean communication hierarchy, or counting communication complexity classes like $\text{MOD}_m \mathbf{P}^{cc}$, see Halstenberg and Reichuk [4] or Damm et al. [2]. To the best of the author's knowledge, except for the class $\#\mathbf{P}^{cc}$, none of the communication complexity function classes under consideration in this paper have been defined and studied before.

2 Notation and basic definitions

We only work with the *binary alphabet* $\mathbb{B} := \{0, 1\}$. The length of a string $x \in \mathbb{B}^*$ is denoted by $|x|$. A prefix-free encoding of x is $\bar{x} := 0^{|x|}1x$. In order to encode pairs of strings $x, y \in \mathbb{B}^*$ we use the pairing function $\langle x, y \rangle := \bar{x}y$. $\text{bin}(n)$ is the binary representation of n , and $(\cdot)_2$ is its inverse. The *set of pairs of strings of equal length* is denoted by $\mathbb{B}^{**} := \{(x, y) \mid x, y \in \mathbb{B}^*, |x| = |y|\}$. A *language* L is a subset of \mathbb{B}^{**} , its *characteristic function* χ^L is defined as $\chi^L := (\chi_n^L)$,

where $\chi_n^L: \mathbb{B}^n \times \mathbb{B}^n \rightarrow \mathbb{N}$, $\chi_n^L(x, y) := 1$, if $(x, y) \in L$, and 0 otherwise. The *set of all languages* is denoted by \mathcal{L} . A *(communication) complexity class* is a subset $\mathcal{C} \subseteq \mathcal{L}$. We define **poly** $:= \{f: \mathbb{R}^+ \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^+ \mid \exists \text{polynomial } p: f \leq p\}$, the *set of functions with polynomial growth*. Let $\mathcal{F}_n := \{f \mid f: \mathbb{B}^n \times \mathbb{B}^n \rightarrow \mathbb{N}\}$, and let $\mathcal{F} := \{f = (f_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}} \mid f_n \in \mathcal{F}_n\}$. We say that the function family $f := (f_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}} \in \mathcal{F}$ is *bounded*, if there exists a bound $b \in \mathbf{poly}$ such that for all natural numbers n we have $f_n(x, y) \leq 2^{\lceil b(\log_2 n) \rceil}$ for all inputs $x, y \in \mathbb{B}^n$. A protocol over domain $\mathcal{X} \times \mathcal{Y}$ is an n -bit protocol, if $\mathcal{X} = \mathcal{Y} = \mathbb{B}^n$. A deterministic, randomized or nondeterministic protocol Π over \mathcal{X}, \mathcal{Y} is an *oracle protocol* with oracle family $O \in \mathcal{F}$, if Π contains *oracle nodes* in its protocol tree. Associated with an oracle node v are two functions $a_v: \mathcal{X} \rightarrow \mathbb{B}^{m_v}$ and $b_v: \mathcal{Y} \rightarrow \mathbb{B}^{m_v}$. If Alice and Bob reach an oracle node v during a computation on inputs $x \in \mathcal{X}, y \in \mathcal{Y}$, they compute by themselves $x' := a_v(x)$ and $y' := b_v(y)$, respectively, and call O on (x', y') . The oracle node v has exactly $|\mathbf{range}(O)|$ many successors. Alice and Bob continue the computation on one of them according to the returned value $O(x', y')$. The communication costs for each oracle call are $\lceil \log_2 |\mathbf{range}(O)| \rceil$. If a language L is used as an oracle family, we write L instead of χ^L .

3 Counting classes

Executing an NPTM on a specific input one can count the number of accepting computations or the number of different output values, etc. The same can be done for communication protocols:

Definition 3.1 (Transducer, Acceptor). *A nondeterministic protocol Π (with oracle family O) is a transducer, if its output nodes are marked with elements (b, z) , $b \in \mathbb{B}, z \in \mathbb{B}^*$. We say that Π (with oracle family O) accepts inputs (x, y) , $x \in \mathcal{X}, y \in \mathcal{Y}$ with output $z \in \mathbb{B}^*$, if there exists a guess (g_A, g_B) such that Alice and Bob arrive at an output node labeled with $(1, z)$ when executing $\Pi(O)$ on inputs x, y and guess strings g_A, g_B . Otherwise, we say that Π (with oracle family O) rejects inputs (x, y) . We define its output set as*

$$\text{out}_{\Pi}^O(x, y) := \{z \in \mathbb{B}^* \mid \Pi(O) \text{ accepts } (x, y) \text{ with output } z\} \quad (5)$$

In addition, we define

$$\text{span}_{\Pi}^O(x, y) := |\text{out}_{\Pi}^O(x, y)| \quad (6)$$

$$(\text{out}_{\Pi}^O)_2(x, y) := \{(z)_2 \mid z \in \text{out}_{\Pi}^O(x, y)\} \quad (7)$$

$$\min_{\Pi}^O(x, y) := \min(\text{out}_{\Pi}^O)_2(x, y) \quad (8)$$

$$\max_{\Pi}^O(x, y) := \max(\text{out}_{\Pi}^O)_2(x, y) \quad (9)$$

A transducer Π is an *acceptor*, if Π outputs its transcript in the event of acceptance. For an acceptor Π , we define the number of accepting transcripts as

$$\text{acc}_{\Pi}^O := \text{span}_{\Pi}^O. \quad (10)$$

Considering a single protocol does not make sense in structural communication complexity, because we are interested in the asymptotic behaviour as input size increases. Accordingly, we have to define special classes of protocol families with constraints on the resources used.

Definition 3.2 (\mathbf{NP}^{cc} -transducer, \mathbf{NP}^{cc} -acceptor). Let $O = (O_m)_{m \in \mathbb{N}} \in \mathcal{F}$ be an oracle family. An \mathbf{NP}^{cc} -transducer (with oracle family O) is a family $\Pi = (\Pi_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$ of n -bit transducers together with transcript, guess, query and output bounds $t, g, q, o \in \mathbf{poly}$ such that when executing Π_n Alice and Bob communicate $\lceil t(\log_2 n) \rceil$ many bits, they use guess strings of length $\lceil g(\log_2 n) \rceil$, they are allowed to use the oracles $O_1, \dots, O_{\lceil p(\log_2 n) \rceil}$, and their output has length at most $\lceil o(\log_2 n) \rceil$. Π is a \mathbf{P}^{cc} -transducer, if each Π_n is a deterministic protocol, and an \mathbf{NP}^{cc} -acceptor, if each Π_n is an acceptor.

We also define

$$\text{out}_{\Pi}^O := (\text{out}_{\Pi_n}^O)_{n \in \mathbb{N}} \quad (11)$$

$$\text{span}_{\Pi}^O := (\text{span}_{\Pi_n}^O)_{n \in \mathbb{N}} \quad (12)$$

$$(\text{out}_{\Pi}^O)_2 := ((\text{out}_{\Pi_n}^O)_2)_{n \in \mathbb{N}} \quad (13)$$

$$\min_{\Pi}^O := (\min_{\Pi_n}^O)_{n \in \mathbb{N}} \quad (14)$$

$$\max_{\Pi}^O := (\max_{\Pi_n}^O)_{n \in \mathbb{N}} \quad (15)$$

and in case of an \mathbf{NP}^{cc} -acceptor

$$\text{acc}_{\Pi}^O := \text{span}_{\Pi}^O. \quad (16)$$

Definition 3.3. For a complexity class \mathcal{C} define

$$\mathbf{FC} := \{f_{\Pi(O)} \mid \Pi \text{ is a } \mathbf{P}^{cc}\text{-transducer with oracle family } O \in \mathcal{C}\} \quad (17)$$

$$\#\mathbf{P}^{cc} := \{\text{acc}_{\Pi} \mid \Pi \text{ is an } \mathbf{NP}^{cc}\text{-acceptor}\} \quad (18)$$

$$\#\mathcal{C} := \{\text{acc}_{\Pi}^O \mid \Pi \text{ is an } \mathbf{NP}^{cc}\text{-acceptor with oracle family } O \in \mathcal{C}\} \quad (19)$$

$$\text{min-}\mathcal{C} := \{\min_{\Pi}^O \mid \Pi \text{ is an } \mathbf{NP}^{cc}\text{-transducer with oracle family } O \in \mathcal{C}\} \quad (20)$$

$$\text{max-}\mathcal{C} := \{\max_{\Pi}^O \mid \Pi \text{ is an } \mathbf{NP}^{cc}\text{-transducer with oracle family } O \in \mathcal{C}\} \quad (21)$$

$$\text{span-}\mathcal{C} := \{\text{span}_{\Pi}^O \mid \Pi \text{ is an } \mathbf{NP}^{cc}\text{-transducer with oracle family } O \in \mathcal{C}\} \quad (22)$$

For the time complexity class \mathbf{NP} one can give a characterization via witnesses and polynomial time predicates for its languages. An analogous statement also holds for \mathbf{NP}^{cc} .

Fact 3.4. The following statements hold:

1. A language L is in \mathbf{P}^{cc} iff there exists a \mathbf{P}^{cc} -acceptor for L .
2. A language L is in \mathbf{NP}^{cc} iff there exists an \mathbf{NP}^{cc} -acceptor for L .
3. A language L is in \mathbf{NP}^{cc} iff there exists a language L' in \mathbf{P}^{cc} and a $p \in \mathbf{poly}$ such that for all $(x, y) \in \mathbb{B}^{**}$, $n := |x| = |y|$,

$$(x, y) \in L \Leftrightarrow \exists (w_A, w_B): |w_A|, |w_B| = \lceil p(\log_2 n) \rceil, \\ (\langle x, w_A \rangle, \langle y, w_B \rangle) \in L'. \quad (23)$$

Lemma 3.5. Let $f = \text{acc}_{\Pi}^O$ for an \mathbf{NP}^{cc} -acceptor $\Pi = (\Pi_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$ and an oracle O in \mathbf{NP}^{cc} , then $f = \text{acc}_{\Pi'}^{O'}$ for an oracle O' in \mathbf{NP}^{cc} and an \mathbf{NP}^{cc} -acceptor Π' that for every input and every possible transcript asks at most one question to the oracle.

Proof. Let $f = \text{acc}_\Pi^O$ with O in \mathbf{NP}^{cc} . There is a language Q in \mathbf{P}^{cc} and a bound $p_O \in \mathbf{poly}$ such that for all $(x, y) \in \mathbb{B}^{**}$, $(x, y) \in O$ iff $\exists(w_A, w_B)$, $|w_A|, |w_B| = \lceil p_O(\log_2 |x|) \rceil$ and $(\langle x, w_A \rangle, \langle y, w_B \rangle) \in Q$. Let $g, t, q \in \mathbf{poly}$ be the guess, transcript and query bounds of Π . Consider the following \mathbf{NP}^{cc} -acceptor $\Pi' = (\Pi'_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$, where each protocol on n -bit inputs (x, y) does the following: Alice and Bob privately guess $\lceil g(\log_2 n) \rceil$ bits g_A and g_B , respectively, and simulate Π_n on $(\langle x, g_A \rangle, \langle y, g_B \rangle)$. Each time they reach an oracle node v_i , $i \in [m]$, $m \leq \lceil t(\log_2 n) \rceil$, instead of calling an oracle, Alice guesses the answer $z_i \in \mathbb{B}$ and sends it to Bob. If Π_n rejects, they reject. If Π_n accepts, for each i with $z_i = 1$ Alice and Bob privately guess w_A^i, w_B^i of length $\lceil p_O(\log_2 n) \rceil$ and check $(\langle x, w_A^i \rangle, \langle y, w_B^i \rangle) \in Q$. If one of the checks fails, they reject. Otherwise, they call oracle O' on input $(\langle \langle a_{v_i}(x), w_A^i \mid z_i = 1 \rangle, \langle a_{v_i}(x) \mid z_i = 0 \rangle \rangle, \langle \langle b_{v_i}(y), w_B^i \mid z_i = 1 \rangle, \langle b_{v_i}(y) \mid z_i = 0 \rangle \rangle)$. Alice and Bob accept iff O' rejects.

The \mathbf{NP}^{cc} -language O' contains all pairs $(\langle \langle p_A^i, w_A^i \mid i \in [m_1] \rangle, \langle q_A^i \mid i \in [m_2] \rangle \rangle, \langle \langle p_A^i, w_A^i \mid i \in [m_1] \rangle, \langle q_A^i \mid i \in [m_2] \rangle \rangle)$ such that there exists an n with $m_1 + m_2 \leq \lceil t(\log_2 n) \rceil$, $|p_A^i|, |p_B^i|, |q_A^i|, |q_B^i| \leq 2^{\lceil q(\log_2 n) \rceil}$, $|p_A^i| = |p_B^i|$, $|q_A^i| = |q_B^i|$, $|w_A^i|, |w_B^i| = \lceil p_O(\log_2 |p_A^i|) \rceil$, and $(\exists i \in [m_2]: (q_A^i, q_B^i) \in O)$ or $(\exists i \in [m_1]: \exists r_A, r_B: |r_A| = |r_B| = |w_A^i|, (r_A r_B)_2 < (w_A^i w_B^i)_2 \text{ and } (\langle p_A^i, r_A \rangle, \langle p_B^i, r_B \rangle) \in Q)$. \square

Definition 3.6. Let $f \in \mathcal{F}_n$ be a function. We define the \leq - and \geq -graph of f as

$$\text{Graph}_{\leq}(f) := \{(\langle x, \text{bin}(z) \rangle, \langle y, \text{bin}(z) \rangle) \mid x, y \in \mathbb{B}^n, z \leq f(x, y)\} \quad (24)$$

$$\text{Graph}_{\geq}(f) := \{(\langle x, \text{bin}(z) \rangle, \langle y, \text{bin}(z) \rangle) \mid x, y \in \mathbb{B}^n, z \geq f(x, y)\} \quad (25)$$

Let $f = (f_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}} \in \mathcal{F}$ be a function family.

$$\text{Graph}_{\leq}(f) := (\text{Graph}_{\leq}(f_n))_{n \in \mathbb{N}} \quad (26)$$

$$\text{Graph}_{\geq}(f) := (\text{Graph}_{\geq}(f_n))_{n \in \mathbb{N}} \quad (27)$$

Corollary 3.7. Let $f \in \mathcal{F}$ be bounded. Then $f \in \mathbf{FP}^{cc}(\text{Graph}_{\leq}(f))$.

Proof. As there exists a bound $b \in \mathbf{poly}$ with $f(x, y) \leq 2^{\lceil b(\log_2 n) \rceil}$ for every $x, y \in \mathbb{B}^n$, Alice and Bob can determine the value $f(x, y)$ simply by binary search using $\lceil b(\log_2 n) \rceil$ many oracle calls. \square

Lemma 3.8. For bounded $f \in \mathcal{F}$ it holds

1. $\text{Graph}_{\leq}(f) \in \mathbf{NP}^{cc} \iff \text{Graph}_{\geq}(f) \in \mathbf{co-NP}^{cc}$,
2. $f \in \max\text{-}\mathbf{P}^{cc} \iff \text{Graph}_{\leq}(f) \in \mathbf{NP}^{cc}$,
3. $f \in \min\text{-}\mathbf{P}^{cc} \iff \text{Graph}_{\geq}(f) \in \mathbf{NP}^{cc}$.

Proof. 1. Clearly, $z \leq f(x, y) \iff \neg(z - 1 \geq f(x, y))$.

2. (\Rightarrow) Let $f := \max_\Pi$ for an \mathbf{NP}^{cc} -transducer $\Pi = (\Pi_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$. Then for each n we have $\text{Graph}_{\leq}(f_n) = \{(\langle x, \text{bin}(z) \rangle, \langle y, \text{bin}(z) \rangle) \mid x, y \in \mathbb{B}^n, \text{ there exists an accepting transcript } \Pi_n(x, y) \text{ with output } u \geq z\}$.

This implies $\text{Graph}_{\leq}(f) \in \mathbf{NP}^{cc}$.

(\Leftarrow) Let $b \in \mathbf{poly}$ be a bound for f . We construct an \mathbf{NP}^{cc} -transducer $\Pi = (\Pi_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$ such that $f = \max_\Pi$: In Π_n on inputs $x, y \in \mathbb{B}^n$ Alice guesses a number $z \leq 2^{\lceil b(\log_2 n) \rceil}$ and sends it to Bob. They output z , if the verification of $(\langle x, \text{bin}(z) \rangle, \langle y, \text{bin}(z) \rangle) \in \text{Graph}_{\leq}(f_n)$ succeeds.

3. Immediate consequence of (i) and (ii). □

Now, we have the tools at hand to show an analog of a theorem of Krentel proved in [7]. The classes $\Delta_k^{cc} := \mathbf{P}^{cc}(\Sigma_k^{cc})$ are related to the polynomial hierarchy.

Theorem 3.9. $\min\text{-}\mathbf{P}^{cc}, \max\text{-}\mathbf{P}^{cc} \subseteq \mathbf{F}\Delta_2^{cc}$.

Proof. Follows from Lemma 3.8 and Corollary 3.7. □

Definition 3.10. For a pair of n -bit transducers Π, Π' define the function $\text{span}_{\Pi-\Pi'}$ such that $\text{span}_{\Pi-\Pi'}(x, y)$ is the number of different outputs that Π on inputs (x, y) can produce that cannot be produced by Π' .

For a pair of \mathbf{NP}^{cc} -transducers $\Pi = (\Pi_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}, \Pi' = (\Pi'_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$ define

$$\text{span}_{\Pi-\Pi'} := (\text{span}_{\Pi_n-\Pi'_n})_{n \in \mathbb{N}}. \quad (28)$$

Proposition 3.11 ($\#\mathbf{NP}^{cc}$ -characterization). $\#\mathbf{NP}^{cc} = \{f \mid f = \text{span}_{\Pi-\Pi'} \text{ for some pair of } \mathbf{NP}^{cc}\text{-transducers } \Pi, \Pi'\}$.

Proof. For the forward inclusion let $f \in \#\mathbf{NP}^{cc}$. By Lemma 3.5 there is an \mathbf{NP}^{cc} -transducer $\Pi = (\Pi_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$ and an oracle O in \mathbf{NP}^{cc} such that $f = \text{acc}_{\Pi}^O$, and for every n and every transcript the transducer Π_n asks at most one question to the oracle. Let Q be a language in \mathbf{P}^{cc} and let $q \in \mathbf{poly}$ such that for all (x, y) , $|x| = |y| = n$ it holds: $(x, y) \in O$ iff $\exists(w_A, w_B) : |w_A|, |w_B| = \lceil q(\log_2 n) \rceil$ and $(\langle x, w_A \rangle, \langle y, w_B \rangle) \in Q$. Consider the following \mathbf{NP}^{cc} -transducers $\Pi' = (\Pi'_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$ and $\Pi'' = (\Pi''_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$, respectively:

Π'_n : On n bit inputs (x, y) Alice and Bob simulate Π_n . If Π_n asks the question $(q_A, q_B) \in \mathbb{B}^{**}$ to the oracle, then Alice and Bob guess (w_A, w_B) , $|w_A|, |w_B| = \lceil q(\log_2 |q_A|) \rceil$. If $(\langle q_A, w_A \rangle, \langle q_B, w_B \rangle) \in Q$, they continue with answer 1, else with answer 0. If Π_n accepts (x, y) with transcript t , Alice and Bob accept with output t and reject, otherwise.

Π''_n : The protocol begins exactly as Π'_n until Alice and Bob get the oracle answer. If $(\langle q_A, w_A \rangle, \langle q_B, w_B \rangle) \in Q$, they continue with answer 1, else they reject. If Π_n rejects (x, y) with transcript t , Alice and Bob accept with output t and reject, otherwise.

It follows that for all (x, y) , $|x| = |y| = n$, $f(x, y) = \text{span}_{\Pi'_n-\Pi''_n}(x, y)$, since Π'_n on inputs (x, y) will output a different value for every accepting transcript of Π_n , and every output value in Π'_n corresponding to a simulation of Π_n in which the oracle question was wrongly guessed, will also be in the span of Π''_n and therefore, it will not be counted.

For the backward inclusion, let $f = \text{span}_{\Pi^1-\Pi^0}$ with \mathbf{NP}^{cc} -transducers $\Pi^0 = (\Pi_n^0)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}, \Pi^1 = (\Pi_n^1)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$. The language O contains all pairs $(\langle x, b, z \rangle, \langle y, b, 0^{|z|} \rangle)$ such that $|x| = |y| = n$ and z is an output value of Π_n^b . Clearly, $O \in \mathbf{NP}^{cc}$. Let $r_b \in \mathbf{poly}$ be the output bound of Π^b , $b \in \{0, 1\}$. Consider the following \mathbf{NP}^{cc} -acceptor $\Pi = (\Pi_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$: When executing Π_n on n bit inputs (x, y) , Alice guesses a string z of length $\leq \lceil \max\{r_0(\log_2 n), r_1(\log_2 n)\} \rceil$ and sends $|z|$ to Bob. They accept iff $(\langle x, 1, z \rangle, \langle x, 1, 0^{|z|} \rangle) \in O$ and $(\langle x, 0, z \rangle, \langle x, 0, 0^{|z|} \rangle) \notin O$. □

Corollary 3.12. If $f \in \#\mathbf{NP}^{cc}$, then there exist two functions $g_1, g_2 \in \text{span}\text{-}\mathbf{P}^{cc}$ such that for every $(x, y) \in \mathbb{B}^{**}$, $f(x, y) = g_1(x, y) - g_2(x, y)$.

Proof. Let $f \in \#\mathbf{NP}^{cc}$. By Proposition 3.11, there is a pair of \mathbf{NP}^{cc} -transducers $\Pi = (\Pi_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$, $\Pi' = (\Pi'_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$ such that $f = \text{span}_{\Pi - \Pi'}$. Define the \mathbf{NP}^{cc} -transducer $\Pi'' = (\Pi''_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$ as follows: When executing Π''_n on inputs (x, y) , Alice and Bob simulate Π_n and Π'_n on (x, y) . They accept with output z iff both Π_n and Π'_n accept with output z . Define $g_1 := \text{span}_{\Pi}$ and $g_2 := \text{span}_{\Pi'}$. It follows that $f = g_1 - g_2$. \square

Theorem 3.13 (Inclusions). *It holds:*

1. $\mathbf{FP}^{cc} \subseteq \min\text{-}\mathbf{P}^{cc}, \max\text{-}\mathbf{P}^{cc}, \text{opt}\text{-}\mathbf{P}^{cc}, \#\mathbf{P}^{cc} \subseteq \#\mathbf{NP}^{cc}$
2. $\#\mathbf{P}^{cc} \subseteq \text{span}\text{-}\mathbf{P}^{cc} \subseteq \#\mathbf{NP}^{cc}$
3. $\max\text{-}\mathbf{P}^{cc} \subseteq \text{span}\text{-}\mathbf{P}^{cc}$

Proof. 1. The inclusion $\mathbf{FP}^{cc} \subseteq \min\text{-}\mathbf{P}^{cc}, \max\text{-}\mathbf{P}^{cc}, \text{opt}\text{-}\mathbf{P}^{cc}, \#\mathbf{P}^{cc}$ is an immediate consequence of the definitions in Def. 3.3. As $\mathbf{FP}^{cc} \subseteq \#\mathbf{P}^{cc}$ relativizes, $\mathbf{F}\Delta_2^{sc} \subseteq \#\mathbf{NP}^{cc}$ follows. The inclusion $\min\text{-}\mathbf{P}^{cc}, \max\text{-}\mathbf{P}^{cc} \subseteq \mathbf{F}\Delta_2^{sc}$ was shown in Theorem 3.9.

2. Again, the first inequality follows directly from the definitions, as every \mathbf{NP}^{cc} -acceptor is an \mathbf{NP}^{cc} -transducer. For the second inequality, let $f = \text{span}_{\Pi}$ for some \mathbf{NP}^{cc} -transducer Π . Obviously, $f = \text{span}_{\Pi - \Pi'}$, where Π' is an \mathbf{NP}^{cc} -transducer rejecting every input.

3. Let $f = \max_{\Pi}$ for some \mathbf{NP}^{cc} -transducer $\Pi = (\Pi_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$. Let $o \in \mathbf{poly}$ be the output bound of Π . We can construct a new transducer $\Pi' = (\Pi'_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$ such that for Π'_n Alice and Bob on inputs (x, y) simulate Π_n and for every output z Alice guesses a positive integer $z' \leq z$, sends it to Bob using $[o(n)]$ many bits, and both accept with output z' . Π'_n will have as many different output values as the maximum of the output values of Π_n . This proves $f = \text{span}_{\Pi'}$. \square

We need to define the analog of the *unambiguous nondeterministic polynomial time class* \mathbf{UP} defined by Valiant [9].

Definition 3.14. *A \mathbf{UP}^{cc} -acceptor is an \mathbf{NP}^{cc} -acceptor Π with $\text{acc}_{\Pi} \leq 1$. \mathbf{UP}^{cc} is the class of all languages recognized by \mathbf{UP}^{cc} -acceptors.*

While the separation of the time class \mathbf{P} and \mathbf{UP} is equivalent to the existence of certain kinds of one-way functions [3, 5], separating the communication classes \mathbf{P}^{cc} from \mathbf{UP}^{cc} would disprove the famous log rank conjecture (see [8, Open Problem 2.20, p.26]). Thus, separating \mathbf{P}^{cc} from \mathbf{UP}^{cc} seems to be hard. In contrast, separating \mathbf{UP}^{cc} from \mathbf{NP}^{cc} is easy. Luckily, only the latter is needed in the sequel.

For a function $f: \mathbb{B}^n \times \mathbb{B}^n \rightarrow \mathbb{B}$ the measure $C^{D,1}(f)$ denotes the number of 1-chromatic rectangles needed to partition $f^{-1}(1)$ (the *protocol partition number* for the ones in the communication matrix M^f). With $D(f)$ we denote the *deterministic communication complexity* of f .

Proposition 3.15. *It holds:*

1. $\mathbf{UP}^{cc} = \{L \in \mathcal{L} \mid \exists p \in \mathbf{poly}: \log_2 C^{D,1}(\chi_n^L) \leq [p(\log_2 n)]\}$

2. $\mathbf{UP}^{cc} \subsetneq \mathbf{NP}^{cc}$

3. *The log rank conjecture implies $\mathbf{P}^{cc} = \mathbf{UP}^{cc}$.*

Proof. 1. Let Π be a nondeterministic protocol for a function f such that $\text{acc}_\Pi \leq 1$. Then the protocol induced cover of $f^{-1}(1)$ with 1-chromatic rectangles is actually a **disjoint** cover, i.e. a partition of $f^{-1}(1)$. Thus, the \mathbf{UP}^{cc} -complexity of a function f is just $\log_2 C^{D,1}(f)$.

2. The inclusion is trivial; the separation is witnessed by the nonequality function $\text{NE} = (\text{NE}_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$ (see [8, Example 2.17, p.24]). On the one hand, the nondeterministic communication complexity of NE is logarithmic [8, Example 2.5, p. 19]. On the other hand, the rank lower bound ($\text{rank } M^f \leq C^{D,1}(f)$, [8, Lemma 1.28, p.13; Example 1.29, p.14]) yields a linear lower bound for $\log_2 C^{D,1}(\text{NE}_n)$.

3. If the log rank conjecture holds, then for every function family $f = (f_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$ of Boolean functions $f_n: \mathbb{B}^n \times \mathbb{B}^n \rightarrow \mathbb{B}$ there exists a bound $q \in \mathbf{poly}$ such that $D(f_n) \leq \lceil q(\log_2 \text{rank } M^{f_n}) \rceil$. In addition, $\text{rank } M^{f_n} \leq C^{D,1}(f_n)$. Thus, if $\log_2 C^{D,1}(f_n)$ is polynomially bounded, then $D(f_n)$ is, too. \square

Theorem 3.16 (Separations). *It holds:*

1. $\#\mathbf{P}^{cc} \subsetneq \text{span-}\mathbf{P}^{cc}$
2. $\text{span-}\mathbf{P}^{cc} \subsetneq \#\mathbf{NP}^{cc}$
3. $\min\text{-}\mathbf{P}^{cc} \neq \max\text{-}\mathbf{P}^{cc}$
4. $\min\text{-}\mathbf{P}^{cc} \not\subseteq \text{span-}\mathbf{P}^{cc}$
5. $\min\text{-}\mathbf{P}^{cc}, \max\text{-}\mathbf{P}^{cc} \not\subseteq \#\mathbf{P}^{cc}$

Proof. 1. We show that $\#\mathbf{P}^{cc} = \text{span-}\mathbf{P}^{cc}$ implies $\mathbf{UP}^{cc} = \mathbf{NP}^{cc}$ in contradiction to Proposition 3.15: Suppose $\#\mathbf{P}^{cc} = \text{span-}\mathbf{P}^{cc}$, and let L be a language in \mathbf{NP}^{cc} . Let $\Pi = (\Pi_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$ be an \mathbf{NP}^{cc} -acceptor for L . Define an \mathbf{NP}^{cc} -transducer $\Pi' = (\Pi'_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$ such that Π'_n outputs 1 if Π_n accepts, and nothing otherwise. Then $\text{span}_{\Pi'}$ is the characteristic function of L , which is in $\#\mathbf{P}^{cc}$ by the assumption. That is, there exists an \mathbf{NP}^{cc} -acceptor Π'' with $\text{acc}_{\Pi''} = \text{span}_{\Pi'} \leq 1$. Thus, $L \in \mathbf{UP}^{cc}$.

2. We show that $\text{span-}\mathbf{P}^{cc} = \#\mathbf{NP}^{cc}$ implies $\mathbf{NP}^{cc} = \mathbf{co-}\mathbf{NP}^{cc}$, a contradiction: Let L be a language in \mathbf{NP}^{cc} and $\Pi = (\Pi_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$ an \mathbf{NP}^{cc} -acceptor for L . Let $\Pi^1 = (\Pi_n^1)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$ be an \mathbf{NP}^{cc} -transducer such that Π_n^1 outputs 1 on every input, and $\Pi^2 = (\Pi_n^2)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$ an \mathbf{NP}^{cc} -transducer such that Π_n^2 simulates Π_n and outputs 1 in every accepting transcript of Π_n . Define the function $f := (f_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}} := \text{span}_{\Pi^1 - \Pi^2}$. It follows that $f_n(x, y) > 0$ iff $(x, y) \notin L$. By Proposition 3.11 we have $f \in \#\mathbf{NP}^{cc}$. By the hypothesis, f is the span function of some \mathbf{NP}^{cc} -transducer $\Pi^3 = (\Pi_n^3)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$. Consider the \mathbf{NP}^{cc} -acceptor $\Pi^4 = (\Pi_n^4)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$ such that Π_n^4 accepts iff Π_n^3 accepts (with some output). Π^4 witnesses that $\bar{L} \in \mathbf{NP}$, and it follows $\mathbf{NP}^{cc} = \mathbf{co-}\mathbf{NP}^{cc}$.

3. Assume $\min\text{-}\mathbf{P}^{cc} = \max\text{-}\mathbf{P}$. For every language L in $\mathbf{co}\text{-}\mathbf{NP}^{cc}$ we have $\chi^L \in \min\text{-}\mathbf{P}^{cc}$ as $\text{Graph}_{\leq}(\chi^L)$ is in $\mathbf{co}\text{-}\mathbf{NP}^{cc}$. But $\chi^L \in \max\text{-}\mathbf{P}$ implies $L \in \mathbf{NP}^{cc}$, a contradiction.
4. Assume $\min\text{-}\mathbf{P}^{cc} \subseteq \text{span}\text{-}\mathbf{P}^{cc}$. For every language L in $\mathbf{co}\text{-}\mathbf{NP}^{cc}$ we have $\chi^L \in \min\text{-}\mathbf{P}^{cc}$. But $\chi^L \in \text{span}\text{-}\mathbf{P}$ implies $L \in \mathbf{NP}^{cc}$, a contradiction.
5. This follows from $L \in \mathbf{UP}^{cc} \Leftrightarrow \chi^L \in \#\mathbf{P}^{cc}$.

□

We close this section with some examples of natural function classes contained in $\#\mathbf{P}^{cc}$ and $\text{span}\text{-}\mathbf{P}^{cc}$.

Example 3.17. *Consider the following families of functions.*

1. $f := (f_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}} \in \mathcal{F}$, where f_n is defined as

$$f_n(A, B) := |A \text{ op } B| \quad (29)$$

for subsets $A, B \subseteq [n]$ and a set operation like $\text{op} \in \{\cup, \cap, -\}$. It is easy to see that f is in $\#\mathbf{P}^{cc}$.

2. $g := (g_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}} \in \mathcal{F}$, where g_n is defined as

$$g_n(A, B) := |A \text{ op } B| \quad (30)$$

for subsets $A, B \subseteq \mathbb{Z}_n$ and an arithmetic operation $\text{op} \in \{+, *, -\}$, where $A \text{ op } B := \{a \text{ op } b \mid a \in A, b \in B\}$. Clearly, f is in $\text{span}\text{-}\mathbf{P}^{cc}$.

4 Conclusion and open problems

We defined various function classes in communication complexity motivated by existing well known classes in structural complexity theory and established several separation results. In structural complexity theory also higher level versions of $\#\mathbf{P}$, $\text{span}\text{-}\mathbf{P}$, $\#\mathbf{NP}$ via the levels Σ_k^p , Π_k^p of the polynomial hierarchy are considered, i.e. $\#\Sigma_k^p$, $\text{span}\text{-}\Sigma_k^p$, $\#\Pi_k^p$. The corresponding function communication classes are $\#\Sigma_k^{cc}$, $\text{span}\text{-}\Sigma_k^{cc}$, $\#\Pi_k^{cc}$. It would be interesting to prove separations for these classes, if possible, and to present natural function families demonstrating their computational strength.

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