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*Quantum-mechanical communication protocols:  
their limitations and super-classical capabilities*

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# Contents

<b>Abstract</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1 Communication complexity . . . . .	4
<b>2 Quantum communication complexity</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1 Limitations of quantum communication . . . . .	8
2.2 Quantum communication complexity of concrete problems . . . . .	9
2.3 Investigating subtle aspects of quantum communication protocols . . . . .	10
2.4 Using quantum communication protocols in other computational scenarios . . . . .	12
<b>3 Conclusions and further research</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Publications covered by the dissertation</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>20</b>



# Abstract

Author's humble contribution to the research area of *quantum communication complexity* is presented.

A core goal in the field is identifying those communication regimes where the laws of quantum mechanics offer qualitative advantage in comparison to the power of classical models. One of the main differences between communication models is their topology – namely, the layout of communication channels. A number of works covered in Part **II** of this dissertation can be viewed as a sequence of steps aiming for an *ultimate separation*, that is, an example of a communication problem that can be solved efficiently in the weakest quantum communication model, while being hard for the strongest classical one.

It is also interesting to understand the *limitations* of quantum communication. Two works that are covered in Part **III** of this dissertation bound the possible advantage of quantum communication over the classical one.

Another endeavour of quantum communication complexity is characterising the *complexity of concrete representative problems* in various models of interest. The two most important communication problems are *Equality (Eq)* and *Disjointness (Disj)*, and Part **IV** of this dissertation covers works that analyse the complexity of these two problems in various regimes.

Besides the physical nature of the available communication channels (either classical or quantum) and their layout, communication models can differ in terms of the *available shared resources*: either classical randomness or quantum entanglement. Several works that

study more subtle aspects of these resources are covered in Part **V** of this dissertation.

Quantum protocols are a special case of quantum algorithms, and we know how to prove that some quantum protocols outperform exponentially the best classical ones. This can be useful in those computational scenarios where quantum advantage over the classical counterpart is desired. In Part **VI** of this dissertation we cover several works where the study of quantum protocols was prolific in the fields of computational complexity, computational learning theory and computational cryptography.

Most of the works covered by this dissertation are forming natural sequences of incremental improvements, several of those sequences might even be seen as having converged to their natural goals. It is author's hope that this presentation will highlight some of the remaining interesting questions, as well as lead to new insights into them.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

The observed reality may not be classical. Among the non-classical physical theories of nowadays, *quantum mechanics* is, probably, the most adequate: on the one hand, it is very accurate in predicting the *probabilities* of experimental outcomes (and there are reasons to believe that this is the best we can hope for prophesy-wise); on the other hand, quantum mechanics is compatible with other plausible physical theories in the regimes that we have tested experimentally or can hope to be able to test any time soon.

The significance of understanding quantum mechanics seems to be at least two-fold. On the one hand, the theory is among the frontiers of our observation-predicting capabilities, and the philosophical reflection of the possibility of a priori physical knowledge has led to some of the deepest ontological and epistemological doctrines so far. On the other hand, quantum – as opposed to classical – mechanics is intimately related to the problem of causation, which might be not as fundamental as the problem of a priori synthetic knowledge, but is nevertheless very important.

Thus, we are interested in identifying and investigating those experimental scenarios where the predictions of quantum mechanics are, so to say, *most non-classical*. This problem makes sense, in particular, in the computational context: e.g., we may ask whether *computational devices that are allowed to perform every operation admitted by quantum mechanics are qualitatively stronger than*

– *apparently, more limited* – *their classical counterparts*. While addressing this question, we would naturally like to accept only the most fundamental and intuitively-indisputable assumptions in the analysis.

## 1.1 Communication complexity

Many basic questions in computer science are still destitute of any mathematical understanding, which often results in making a priori assumptions that do not represent any fundamental intuition. Among the most yawning gaps is the field of *computational complexity*: in the original and most natural form it asks whether a given computational problem has an efficient algorithm in the model of *Turing machines* – while the researchers have collected quite a few impressive algorithms, the current ability to prove that a problem admits no efficient solution on a Turing machine does not exceed a couple of somewhat insightful but mathematically-trivial imitations of Cantor’s diagonal argument.

A possible way to conduct well-grounded research in computational complexity nowadays is to study simpler computational models.<sup>1</sup> Among the richest models that we already know how to analyse – at least, in some cases – is the setting of *communication complexity*. Here is a brief informal introduction of its central concepts:

- In the model of *bipartite* communication there are two *players*, *Alice* and *Bob*, who receive one portion of input each: Alice gets  $x$  and Bob gets  $y$ . Their goal is to use the allowed type of communication (as described next) in order to compute an answer that would be correct with respect to the received pair  $(x, y)$ .
- The three principal bipartite *layouts* are *two-way (interactive) communication*, *one-way communication* and *simultaneous message passing (SMP)*. In the first case the players can ex-

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<sup>1</sup> Here simplicity does not necessarily mean being more limited computationally, but rather refers to informal *mathematical tractability*.



change messages interactively before answering, in the second case only Alice can send a message to Bob (who then answers), in the third case both Alice and Bob send one message each to a third participant – the *referee* (who then answers).

- Communication problems determine which answers are correct for the given input. The three main *types of problems* are *total functions*, *partial functions* and *relations*: in the first case there is exactly one correct answer for each possible pair of input values, and the set of those pairs equals the direct product of possible inputs of Alice and possible inputs of Bob; the second case is similar, but the set of possible inputs can be arbitrary; in the third case multiple correct answers for the same input values are allowed.
- An *efficient* solution is a communication protocol where the players use at most poly-logarithmic (in the input length) amount of communication and produce a right answer with high confidence.
- Communication models can be strengthened by *shared randomness*, which corresponds to allowing the players to use *mixed strategies* (this can be helpful only in the weakest among the layouts – the *SMP*), or by *shared entanglement*, which allows the players to share any (input-independent) quantum state and use it while running the protocol.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Sometimes in this work we call a model *bare* to emphasise that it allows no shared resources.

## Chapter 2

# Quantum communication complexity

*Quantum communication complexity* has been an active area of research over the last few decades. Among numerous results in the field, the most relevant to the context of demonstrating super-classical capabilities of quantum models are the following:

- In 1998 a *partial function* was demonstrated [BCW98] for which in *zero-error regime* quantum protocols had exponential advantage over the classical ones (both one-way and interactive).
- In 1999 a *partial function* was demonstrated [Raz99] that had an efficient *quantum two-way protocol*, but no efficient *classical two-way protocol*.
- In 2001 a *total function* was demonstrated [BCWdW01] that had an efficient *quantum simultaneous-messages protocol without shared randomness*, but no efficient *classical simultaneous-messages protocol without shared randomness*.
- In 2004 a *relation* was demonstrated [BYJK04] that had an efficient *quantum simultaneous-messages protocol without shared randomness*, but no efficient *classical one-way protocol*.
- In 2006 a *partial function* was demonstrated [GKK<sup>+</sup>08] that had an efficient *quantum one-way protocol*, but no efficient

*classical one-way protocol.*

- In 2007 a *multipartite relational problem* was demonstrated [GP08] that had an efficient *quantum simultaneous-messages protocol*, but no efficient *classical simultaneous-messages protocol* or *classical non-interactive one-way protocol*.
- In 2008 a *relation* was demonstrated [Gav08a] with an efficient *quantum one-way protocol*, but no efficient *classical two-way protocol*.
- In 2010 a *partial function* was demonstrated [KR11] with an efficient *quantum one-way protocol*, but no efficient *classical two-way protocol*.
- In 2016 a *partial function* was demonstrated [Gav20b] with an efficient *quantum simultaneous-messages protocol with shared entanglement*, but no efficient *classical two-way protocol*.
- In 2017 a *partial function* was demonstrated [Gav19] with an efficient *quantum simultaneous-messages protocol without shared randomness*, but no efficient *classical simultaneous-messages protocol*, even *with shared randomness*.
- In 2020 a *relation* was demonstrated [Gav20a] with an efficient *quantum simultaneous-messages protocol without shared randomness*, but no efficient *classical two-way protocol*.

Among the works listed above there are a few that represent the research conducted by the author and will be covered in Part II of this dissertation.

A core concrete goal in the field is identifying those communication regimes where the predictions of quantum mechanics are as far as possible from those of classical mechanics. The separations listed above can be viewed as a sequence of efforts aiming for an *ultimate separation* – a communication problem that can be solved efficiently in the *weakest* quantum communication model, while being hard for the *strongest* classical one.

Part II of this dissertation start with [GKK<sup>+</sup>08], where the same regime of one-way communication is considered in both quantum and classical cases and the supremacy of the former is argued. In [Gav08a] a stronger separation is given – namely, a problem is

presented for which a *weaker layout* of quantum communication – namely, one-way – offers exponential advantage over a *stronger layout* of classical communication – namely, two-way. In [Gav20b] the layout gap is made even wider: the *weakest bipartite layout* of quantum communication – namely, simultaneous message passing (*SMP*) – exhibits exponential advantage over two-way classical communication. The main drawback of [Gav20b] was the need of shared entanglement in order for an efficient quantum protocol to exist, and this has been addressed in the most recent separation [Gav20a] from the above list: there a relational problem is given that is easy for quantum *SMP*, but hard for classical two-way communication.

## 2.1 Limitations of quantum communication

Investigating the limitations of quantum communication models is very interesting. Although there are some known results that bound the possible advantage of quantum communication over the classical one, here our understanding is much more limited.

The following two works represent author’s research and will be presented in Part III of this dissertation:

- In 2005 two *bipartite relational problems* were demonstrated [GKRdW09] that had the following properties:
  - the first relation had an efficient *classical simultaneous-messages protocol with shared randomness*, but no efficient *quantum simultaneous-messages protocol without shared randomness* – this implied that quantum communication is, in general, not strong enough to replace shared randomness in efficient classical simultaneous-messages protocols;
  - the second relation had an efficient *classical simultaneous-messages protocol with shared entanglement*, but no efficient *quantum simultaneous-messages protocol without shared entanglement, even with shared randomness* – this implied that shared entanglement, even combined with classical communication, can be qualitatively stronger

than quantum communication.

- In 2008 it was proved [GRdW08] that the model of *simultaneous messages where one party is quantum and the other is classical* could never be qualitatively stronger than the model of *classical simultaneous message passing* with respect to *functional problems* – as opposed to the case of *relational problems*, where the quantum-classical model was already known to be exponentially stronger than its classical counterpart in some cases.

## 2.2 Quantum communication complexity of concrete problems

The results mentioned so far can be viewed as *structural*: they reflect the qualitative relation of the power of the analysed quantum communication models and their classical counterparts. Another endeavour of quantum communication complexity is characterising the complexity of concrete representative problems in various models of interest.

Arguably, the two most important and widely studied communication problems are

- *Equality (Eq)*, where Alice receives  $\mathcal{X} \in \{0, 1\}^n$ , Bob receives  $\mathcal{Y} \in \{0, 1\}^n$  and their purpose is to decide whether  $\mathcal{X} = \mathcal{Y}$ , and
- *Disjointness (Disj)*, where Alice receives  $\mathcal{X} \subseteq [n]$ , Bob receives  $\mathcal{Y} \subseteq [n]$  and their purpose is to decide whether  $\mathcal{X} \cap \mathcal{Y} = \emptyset$ .

Both *Eq* and *Disj* have been a subject of author's research:

- Computing  $Eq(\mathcal{X}, \mathcal{Y})$  is easy in any randomised model that allows at least one message to be sent by Alice to Bob (or vice versa) – that is, analysing its communication complexity can be non-trivial (and in fact is often rather challenging) only in various *SMP*-regimes (one such example is the quantum-classical regime that was analysed in [GRdW08], as addressed above). In [GBK15b] we develop a new lower bound method

for analysing the complexity of  $Eq$ , which allows us to obtain the following:

- the tight lower bounds of  $\Omega(\sqrt{n})$  for both  $Eq$  and its negation in the *non-deterministic version* of the quantum-classical *SMP*, where Merlin is also quantum – this is the strongest known version of *SMP* where the complexity of these problems remain high (previously known lower-bound techniques seem to be insufficient for this);
- a unified view of the communication complexity of both  $Eq$  and its negation, allowing to obtain tight characterisation in all previously studied and a few newly introduced versions of *SMP*, including all possible combination of either quantum or randomised Alice, Bob and Merlin in the non-deterministic case.

In the same paper [GBK15b] we presented new protocols for both  $Eq$  and its negation that achieved optimal trade-off complexities in some asymmetric versions of non-deterministic quantum-classical *SMP*.

- In [GBK15a] we studied the effect that the amount of correlation in the input distribution had on the communication complexity. In particular, we gave a tight characterisation of both the randomised and the quantum communication complexity of *Disj* under distributions with mutual information  $k$ , showing that it was, respectively,  $\Theta\left(\sqrt{n(k+1)}\right)$  and  $\tilde{\Theta}\left(\sqrt[4]{n(k+1)}\right)$  for all  $0 \leq k \leq n$ .

These two works will be presented in Part IV of this dissertation.

## 2.3 Investigating subtle aspects of quantum communication protocols

Besides the physical nature of the available communication channels (either classical or quantum) and their layout (*SMP*, one-way or two-way), communication models can differ in several other aspects. A very important parameter of a model is the *availability of shared*

*resources* (randomness or entanglement): as we saw in the beginning of this chapter, it can severely affect the resulting model strength.

There is a theorem by Newman [New91] stating that the number of shared random bits required for solving any communication problem with any constant-bounded error can be at most logarithmic in the input length. In [Gav08b] we proved that the same was not true with respect to the bits of entanglement: We presented a wide range of tight – up to poly-logarithmic factors – complexity trade-off evaluations that demonstrated the dependence between the available number of the bits of entanglement and the corresponding communication complexity. It followed that some communication problems required  $n^{\Omega(1)}$  bits of entanglement for their asymptotically-optimal solution.

In [GIW13] we studied the role of shared randomness in the context of multi-party number-in-hand *SMP* communication. This setting demonstrated some interesting properties that had no direct analogues in the two-party regimes, both classical and quantum. Similarly to the bipartite case, here quantum communication cannot, in general, replace shared randomness; on the other hand, for  $k \geq 3$  players the separations of [GIW13] are qualitatively stronger than the corresponding bipartite results (as discussed in Section 2.1):

- in the two-party case only a relational communication problem is known where shared randomness cannot be efficiently replaced by quantum communication, and for  $k \geq 3$  we construct a partial function with such properties;
- in the two-party case the advantage of classical communication with shared randomness can be at most exponential in terms of the resulting complexity, while for  $k \geq 3$  we show a gap of  $O(1)$  vs.  $n^{\Omega(1)}$ : in particular, unlike in the bipartite case, it is not in general possible to use quantum communication for efficient simulation even of a three-bit three-party classical protocol with shared randomness.

A classical *SMP*-protocol with shared randomness can be replaced by a quantum *SMP*-protocol with at most exponential complexity overhead, the corresponding technique is called *quantum*

*fingerprinting* [BCWdW01, Yao03]. In [GKdW06] we studied this technique in detail and demonstrated some of its strengths and weaknesses:

- it turned out that every many-round quantum protocol with unlimited shared entanglement could be simulated by a quantum protocol using neither shared randomness nor entanglement, with the resulting complexity overhead still being at most exponential;
- on the other hand, we tightly characterised the power of the quantum fingerprints by making a connection to arrangements of homogeneous half-spaces with maximal margin – a notion that had been studied in the context of computational learning theory; we used this correspondence between the two notions to prove that for almost all functions quantum fingerprinting protocols were exponentially worse even than classical deterministic protocols.

Works [GKdW06, Gav08b, GIW13] are presented in Part V of this dissertation.

## 2.4 Using quantum communication protocols in other computational scenarios

Quantum communication protocols are a special case of quantum algorithms, and we know how to prove that some quantum protocols outperform exponentially the best classical ones. This makes such protocols potentially useful in various quantum computational scenarios, where qualitative advantage over the classical counterparts is desired.

- In [CGJ09] we gave a protocol for a setting, closely reminding the *SMP* model: Alice and Bob were responding to random input values and it was possible to confirm that their responses were not maliciously collaborative in certain well-defined sense – even if the players were sharing entanglement (which they did not need for an honest action but could use in a conspir-



acy). That allowed us to make some interesting conclusions regarding the expressive power of a proof system where two possibly-dishonest provers could use shared entanglement in order to improve their cheating abilities.

- *Computational learning theory* is a mathematical study of protocols where a *student algorithm* interacts with a *teacher oracle* in order to deduce some knowledge. In [Gav12b] we defined a new model of quantum learning, where in order to be considered successful, the student had to be able to answer a polynomial number of testing queries. We demonstrated a relational concept class that was efficiently learnable in that model, while in any reasonable classical model exponential amount of training data would be required: that gave the first proof of the qualitative superiority of quantum over classical learning. The construction in [Gav12b] was based on the analysis of a special regime of one-way communication, which we called *single-input mode*, where Bob received no input: somewhat surprisingly, in the context of relational problems this regime became rather non-trivial and offered new insight into the framework of computational learning.
- The notion of *quantum money* seems to have been proposed with some engineering considerations in mind; nevertheless, it provides a rather natural challenge for theoretical investigation of quantum mechanics, as a classical construction is easily seen to be impossible: The goal is to design a (quantum) *asset protocol*, where genuineness would be guaranteed unconditionally by the *irreversibility* of certain evolutions in accordance with the assumed physical laws. In [Gav12a] we presented a quantum money scheme, where the asset-verification procedure only needed classical communication with a bank (all previously-known schemes had required a quantum communication channel for that). Both the construction and its analysis strongly relied on the earlier results from the area of quantum communication complexity: intuitively, the qualitative supremacy of certain one-way quantum protocol over any classical protocol was converted into the unconditional

security of the proposed quantum money scheme.

- In [GI13] we introduced a new type of primitive that we called *hiding fingerprints*. This was a mapping of binary strings of length  $n$  to  $d \ll n$  qubits, such that
  - given any string  $y$  and a fingerprint of  $x$ , one could decide with high confidence whether  $x = y$ ;
  - given a fingerprint of  $x$ , at most  $o(1)$  bits of information about  $x$  could be extracted.

These two requirements may even seem contradictory, and it is easy to see that classical schemes like that are not possible. We presented several quantum hiding fingerprinting schemes, achieving different combinations of the equality-testing confidence and the string-concealing confidentiality, and we demonstrated optimality of our constructions. Hiding fingerprints are naturally viewed as one-way protocols for the equality function ( $Eq$ ) that must obey the additional confidentiality requirements: both the constructions and their analysis in [GI13] stemmed from this connection to quantum communication complexity.

Works [CGJ09, Gav12b, Gav12a, GI13] are presented in Part VI of this dissertation.

## Chapter 3

# Conclusions and further research

The most recent work covered by this dissertation is [Gav20a] (Chapter II.6). It demonstrates that quantum *SMP*, which is the weakest reasonable quantum model, can qualitatively outperform classical two-way communication, which is the strongest model of feasible classical communication.

What interesting questions are still worth asking?

- The problem that is analysed in [Gav20a] is a *relation* – that is, allowing multiple correct answer to the same pair of input values. It remains open to understand what are the strongest separations achievable via the more restricted types of communication problems – namely, (*partial*) *functions* and *total functions* (see Chapter II.6 for details).
- A weaker form of the above question is the following: Is this true that a quantum simultaneous-messages protocol cannot exponentially outperform a classical two-way protocol when that communication problem is a total function?
- One of the known limitations of quantum communication is given in [GKRdW09] (Chapter III.1): there it is shown that quantum communication is, in general, not strong enough to replace shared randomness in efficient classical simultaneous-

messages protocols. The communication problem that is analysed in order to demonstrate this is also a relational one. If the communication problem is functional, is it still the case that shared randomness can give qualitative advantage to a classical *SMP*-protocol over a quantum one that does not have access to shared randomness?

These and some other remaining questions can be viewed as rather detail-oriented: in particular, they are focused on the restricted types of communication problems, namely partial and total functions. It seems that the majority of the fundamental problems related to bipartite quantum communication complexity have now been resolved by the joint efforts of the scientific community. While author's humble contribution to that lucky venture is presented by the dissertation, it is also his hope that some of the remaining important questions will be highlighted and new insight will come up as a result of this writing.

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