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Sergey Bobkov Gennadiy Chistyakov Friedrich Götze

Concentration and Gaussian Approximation for Randomized Sums



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Concentration and Gaussian Approximation for Randomized Sums



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Preface

Given a random vector $X = (X_1, ..., X_n)$ on a probability space $(\Omega, \mathcal{F}, \mathbb{P})$ with values in the Euclidean space \mathbb{R}^n , $n \ge 2$, define the weighted sums

$$\langle X, \theta \rangle = \sum_{k=1}^{n} \theta_k X_k,$$

parameterized by points $\theta = (\theta_1, \dots, \theta_n)$ of the unit sphere \mathbb{S}^{n-1} in \mathbb{R}^n (with center at the origin and radius one). In general, the distribution functions of weighted sums $\langle X, \theta \rangle$, say

$$F_{\theta}(x) = \mathbb{P}\{\langle X, \theta \rangle \le x\}, \quad x \in \mathbb{R},$$

essentially depend on the parameter θ . On the other hand, a striking observation made by V. N. Sudakov [169] in 1978 indicates that, under mild correlation-type conditions on the distribution of X, and when n is large, most of the F_{θ} 's are concentrated around a certain "typical" distribution function F. Here "most" should be understood in the sense of the normalized Lebesgue measure \mathfrak{s}_{n-1} on \mathbb{S}^{n-1} . A more precise statement can be given, for example, under the isotropy condition

$$\mathbb{E}\langle X,\theta\rangle^2=1,\quad \theta\in\mathbb{S}^{n-1},$$

which frequently appears in many applications. Similar to the classical central limit theorem, Sudakov's result thus represents a rather general principle of convergence, with various interesting aspects. A related phenomenon was discovered later by Diaconis and Freedman [79] in terms of low-dimensional projections of non-random data (cf. also von Weizsäcker [176]).

The phenomenon of concentration of the family $\{F_{\theta}\}_{{\theta}\in\mathbb{S}^{n-1}}$ naturally begs the question of closeness of F_{θ} to F for all θ from a large part of the sphere in terms of standard distances d in the space of probability distributions on the real line. A canonical choice would be the Kolmogorov (uniform) distance

$$\rho(F_{\theta}, F) = \sup_{x} |F_{\theta}(x) - F(x)|.$$

vi Preface

Less sensitive alternatives would be the Lévy distance

$$L(F_{\theta}, F) = \inf \Big\{ h \ge 0 : F(x - h) - h \le F_{\theta}(x) \le F(x + h) + h \text{ for all } x \in \mathbb{R} \Big\},$$

as well as the distances in L^p -norms

$$d_p(F_\theta, F) = \left(\int_{-\infty}^{\infty} |F_\theta(x) - F(x)|^p \, \mathrm{d}x\right)^{1/p}, \quad p \ge 1,$$

among which $W=d_1$ and $\omega=d_2$ are most natural. For a given distance d, the behavior of the average value $m=\mathbb{E}_{\theta}\ d(F_{\theta},F)$, as well as the deviation from the mean in spherical probability $\mathfrak{s}_{n-1}\{d(F_{\theta},F)\geq m+r\}$, is of interest as a function of n and r>0.

In this context the model of independent random variables X_k has been intensively studied in the literature. When X_k are independent and identically distributed (the i.i.d. case) and have mean zero and variance one, the distribution functions F_{θ} are known to be close to the standard normal distribution function

$$\Phi(x) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}} \int_{-\infty}^{x} e^{-y^2/2} dy,$$

as long as $\max_k |\theta_k|$ is small. If the 3-rd absolute moment $\beta_3 = \mathbb{E} |X_1|^3$ is finite, the Berry–Esseen theorem allows us to quantify this closeness by virtue of the bound

$$\rho(F_{\theta}, \Phi) \le c\beta_3 \sum_{k=1}^{n} |\theta_k|^3,$$

which holds for some absolute constant c > 0. Although the right-hand side is greater than or equal to $c\beta_3/\sqrt{n}$ for any $\theta \in \mathbb{S}^{n-1}$, the bound above implies a similar upper bound on average: $\mathbb{E}_{\theta} \rho(F_{\theta}, \Phi) \leq c'\beta_3/\sqrt{n}$.

The i.i.d. case inspires the idea that, under some natural moment and correlation-type assumptions, most of the F_{θ} might also be close to the standard normal law. But, in light of Sudakov's theorem, this is equivalent to a similar assertion about the typical distribution – a property which is determined by the distribution of the Euclidean norm

$$|X| = (X_1^2 + \dots + X_n^2)^{1/2}.$$

Indeed, in general, the typical distribution can be identified as the spherical average

$$F(x) = \int_{\mathbb{S}^{n-1}} F_{\theta}(x) \, \mathrm{d}\mathfrak{s}_{n-1}(\theta) \equiv \mathbb{E}_{\theta} F_{\theta}(x),$$

which may be alternatively described as the distribution of $|X| \theta_1$, where the first coordinate of a point on the sphere is treated as a random variable independent of X. (In the sequel, \mathbb{E}_{θ} is always understood as the integral with respect to the measure \mathfrak{s}_{n-1} .) Since $\theta_1 \sqrt{n}$ is nearly standard normal, F will be close to Φ if and only if the random variable $R^2 = \frac{1}{n} |X|^2$ is approximately 1 in the sense of the weak topology. In

Preface vii

many situations, this can be verified directly by computing, for example, the variance of \mathbb{R}^2 , while in some others it represents a non-trivial "thin shell" type concentration problem.

This book aims to describe the current state of the art concerning Sudakov's theorem. In particular, using the metrics d mentioned above, we will focus on the derivation of various bounds for $\mathbb{E}_{\theta} d(F_{\theta}, F)$ and $\mathbb{E}_{\theta} d(F_{\theta}, \Phi)$, as well as on large deviation bounds. Our investigations rely on several basic tools. Besides classical techniques of Fourier Analysis (such as Berry–Esseen-type bounds), many arguments rely upon the spherical concentration phenomenon, that is, concentration properties of the measures \mathfrak{s}_{n-1} for growing dimensions n, including the associated Sobolev-type and infimum-convolution inequalities. Concentration tools are also used for various classes of distributions of X when trying to approximate the typical distribution F by the standard normal law.

In order to facilitate the readability of the presentation of the results related to the Sudakov phenomenon, we decided to make the presentation more self-contained by including these auxiliary techniques in the first three chapters. Thus we describe in a separate part (Part II) some general results on concentration in the setting of Euclidean and abstract metric spaces. Most of this material can also be found in other publications, including the excellent survey and monograph by M. Ledoux [129], [130], and the recent book by D. Bakry, I. Gentil, and M. Ledoux [8].

The spherical concentration is discussed separately in Part III. It is a classical well-known fact (whose importance was first emphasized by V. Milman in the early 1970s) that any mean zero smooth (say, Lipschitz) function f on the unit sphere \mathbb{S}^{n-1} has deviations at most of the order $1/\sqrt{n}$ with respect to the growing dimension n. Moreover, as a random variable, $\sqrt{n} f$ has Gaussian tails under the measure \mathfrak{s}_{n-1} . In addition to this spherical phenomenon, we present recent developments on the so-called second order concentration, which was pushed forward by the authors as an advanced tool in the theory of randomized summation. Roughly speaking, the second order concentration phenomenon indicates that, under proper normalization hypotheses in terms of the Hessian, any smooth f on \mathbb{S}^{n-1} orthogonal to all affine functions in $L^2(\mathfrak{s}_{n-1})$ actually has deviations at most of the order 1/n. Moreover, as a random variable, nf has exponential tails under the measure \mathfrak{s}_{n-1} . Part III also contains various bounds on deviations of elementary polynomials under \mathfrak{s}_{n-1} and collects asymptotic results on special functions related to the distribution of the first coordinate on the sphere.

These tools are needed to quantify Sudakov's theorem in terms of several moment and correlation-type conditions, and for various classes of distributions of X. With this aim, we shall introduce and discuss the following moment type quantities for a parameter $p \ge 1$,

$$M_{p} = \sup_{\theta \in \mathbb{S}^{n-1}} \left(\mathbb{E} \left| \left\langle X, \theta \right\rangle \right|^{p} \right)^{1/p}, \quad m_{p} = \frac{1}{\sqrt{n}} \left(\mathbb{E} \left| \left\langle X, Y \right\rangle \right|^{p} \right)^{1/p},$$

as well as the variance-type functionals

viii Preface

$$\sigma_{2p} = \sqrt{n} \left(\mathbb{E} \left| \frac{|X|^2}{n} - 1 \right|^p \right)^{1/p}, \quad \Lambda = \sup_{\sum a_{ij}^2 = 1} \operatorname{Var} \left(\sum_{i,j=1}^n a_{ij} X_i X_j \right),$$

where Y is an independent copy of X. For example, $M_2 = m_2 = 1$ in the isotropic case, and $\sigma_4^2 = \frac{1}{n} \operatorname{Var}(|X|^2)$, which can often be estimated via evaluation of the covariances of X_i^2 and X_j^2 . The relevance of these functionals will be clarified in various examples; they are also connected with analytic properties of the distribution μ of X expressed in terms of isoperimetric or Poincaré-type inequalities. For example, there is a simple bound $\Lambda \leq 4/\lambda_1^2$ via the spectral gap λ_1 associated to μ .

We shall now outline several results on upper bounds for $\mathbb{E}_{\theta} d(F_{\theta}, F)$ and $\mathbb{E}_{\theta} d(F_{\theta}, \Phi)$ involving these functionals for various distances d. They are discussed in detail in the remaining Parts IV–VI of this monograph.

• Lévy distance. Here the moments M_1 and M_2 will control quantitative bounds on fluctuations of F_{θ} around the typical distribution F in the metric L providing polynomial rates with respect to n. Namely, for some absolute constant c > 0 we have

$$\mathbb{E}_{\theta} L(F_{\theta}, F) \leq c \frac{M_1 + \log n}{n^{1/4}}, \quad \mathbb{E}_{\theta} L(F_{\theta}, F) \leq c \left(\frac{\log n}{n}\right)^{1/3} M_2^{2/3}.$$

• Kantorovich L^1 transport distance. Here rates can be improved in terms of the moments M_p of higher order. In particular, we have

$$\mathbb{E}_{\theta} W(F_{\theta}, F) \le c_p M_p n^{-\frac{p-1}{2p}} \quad (p > 1),$$

where the constants c_p depend on p only. However, a classical rate of $1/\sqrt{n}$ from other contexts will not be achievable via these bounds.

• *Kolmogorov distance*. Using the variance-type functionals σ_p , it is possible not only to replace the typical distribution F with the normal distribution function Φ , thus proving a law of attraction for F_{θ} , but also to show a standard rate as well, assuming a finite third moment. Analogously to the classical Berry–Esseen theorem, it is shown that, if $\mathbb{E}|X|^2 = n$ and $\mathbb{E}X = a$, then

$$\mathbb{E}_{\theta} \, \rho(F_{\theta}, \Phi) \leq \frac{A}{\sqrt{n}}$$

with $A = c (m_3^{3/2} + \sigma_3^{3/2} + |a|)$ up to some absolute constant c. Here, one may eliminate the parameter a, by using elementary bounds $m_3 \le M_3^2$ and $\sigma_3 \le \sigma_4$ (the latter requires, however, the finiteness of the 4-th moment). A slightly worse estimate can also be derived under less restrictive moment assumptions. For example,

$$\mathbb{E}_{\theta} \, \rho(F_{\theta}, \Phi) \le c \, (M_2^2 + \sigma_2) \, \frac{\log n}{\sqrt{n}}.$$

Preface ix

• Trigonometric and other functional models of random variables. Modulo a logarithmic factor, the upper bounds such as

$$\mathbb{E}_{\theta} \, \rho(F_{\theta}, \Phi) \le c \, \frac{\log n}{\sqrt{n}}$$

turn out to be optimal with respect to n in many examples of orthonormal systems $X = (X_1, \ldots, X_n)$ of functions in L^2 . These include in particular the trigonometric system of size n with components

$$X_{2k-1}(t) = \sqrt{2} \cos(kt),$$

 $X_{2k}(t) = \sqrt{2} \sin(kt), \quad -\pi < t < \pi, \quad k = 1, \dots, n/2 \quad (n \text{ even}),$

with respect to the normalized Lebesgue measure \mathbb{P} on $\Omega = (-\pi, \pi)$. More precisely, we derive lower bounds such as

$$\mathbb{E}_{\theta} \, \rho(F_{\theta}, \Phi) \geq \frac{c}{\sqrt{n} \, (\log n)^{s}}$$

for some positive c and s independent of n. A similar bound also holds for the sequence of the first n Chebyshev polynomials on the interval $\Omega = (-1,1)$, for the Walsh system on the Boolean cube $\{-1,1\}^p$ (with $n=2^p-1$), for systems of functions $X_k(t_1,t_2)=f(kt_1+t_2)$ with 1-periodic f (such functions X_k form a strictly stationary sequence of pairwise independent random variables on the square $\Omega = (0,1) \times (0,1)$ under the restricted Lebesgue measure), and some others.

• L^2 distance. In order to develop lower bounds as above, similar upper and lower bounds will be needed for the L^2 -distance ω , in combination with upper bounds for the Kantorovich-distance W. A number of general results in this direction will be obtained under moment and correlation-type assumptions, as in the case of Kolmogorov distance ρ . In fact, in the case of ω , the correct asymptotic behavior of $\mathbb{E}_{\theta} \omega^2(F_{\theta}, F)$ will be derived up to the order $1/n^2$. For instance, when the random vector X has an isotropic symmetric distribution and satisfies $|X| = \sqrt{n}$ a.s. (and thus all $\sigma_p = 0$), one has

$$\mathbb{E}_{\theta} \,\omega^2(F_{\theta}, F) \sim \frac{1}{n^4} \,\mathbb{E} \,\langle X, Y \rangle^4$$

with an error term of order $1/n^2$, and a similar result holds for the Gaussian limit Φ instead of the typical distribution F. Here, as before, Y denotes an independent copy of X.

• Improved rates in the i.i.d. case. Returning to the classical i.i.d. model with $\mathbb{E}X_1 = 0$, $\mathbb{E}X_1^2 = 1$, a remarkable result due to Klartag and Sodin [125] which we include in this monograph improves the pointwise Berry–Esseen bound as follows

$$\mathbb{E}_{\theta} \, \rho(F_{\theta}, \Phi) \leq \frac{c\beta_4}{n}, \quad \beta_4 = \mathbb{E} X_1^4.$$

x Preface

In fact, this result holds in the non-i.i.d. situation as well with replacement of β_4 with the arithmetic means of the 4-th moments of X_k . This bound can be complemented by corresponding large deviation bounds. Thus, for typical coefficients, the distances $\rho(F_\theta, \Phi)$ are at most of order 1/n, which is not true in general when the coefficients are equal to each other!

Moreover, we show that, if the distribution of X_1 is symmetric, and the next moment $\beta_5 = \mathbb{E} |X_1|^5$ is finite, it is possible to slightly correct the normal distribution Φ to obtain a better approximation such as

$$\mathbb{E}_{\theta} \, \rho(F_{\theta}, G) \leq \frac{c\beta_5}{n^{3/2}}.$$

Here, G is a certain function of bounded variation which is determined by β_4 and depends on n (but not on θ).

• The second order correlation condition. Certainly Sudakov's theorem begs the question whether or not similar results continue to hold for dependent components X_k . This is often the case, although the orthonormal systems mentioned above may serve as counter examples. More precisely, the variance functional $\Lambda = \Lambda(X)$ turns out to be responsible for improved rates of normal approximation for F_θ 's on average and actually for most θ 's. When X has an isotropic symmetric distribution, it will be shown by virtue of the second order spherical concentration that

$$\mathbb{E}_{\theta} \, \rho(F_{\theta}, \Phi) \leq \frac{c \log n}{n} \, \Lambda,$$

which thus extends the i.i.d. case modulo a logarithmic factor. The symmetry assumption can be removed at the expense of additional terms reflecting higher order correlations. In particular, in the presence of the Poincaré-type inequality, we have

$$\mathbb{E}_{\theta} \, \rho(F_{\theta}, \Phi) \leq \frac{c_1 \log n}{n} \, \lambda_1^{-1},$$

which may be complemented by corresponding deviation bounds.

• Distributions with many symmetries. Special attention will be devoted to the case where the distribution of X is symmetric about all coordinate axes and isotropic (which reduces to the normalization condition $\mathbb{E}X_k^2 = 1$). The Λ -functional then simplifies, and under the 4-th moment condition, the Berry–Esseen bound "on average" takes the form

$$\mathbb{E}_{\theta} \, \rho(F_{\theta}, \Phi) \le \frac{c \, \log n}{n} \left(\max_{k \le n} \, \mathbb{E} X_k^4 + V_2 \right),$$

where

$$V_2 = \sup_{\theta \in \mathbb{S}^{n-1}} \operatorname{Var}(\theta_1 X_1^2 + \dots + \theta_n X_n^2).$$

If additionally the distribution of X is invariant under permutations of coordinates, it yields a simpler bound

Preface xi

$$\mathbb{E}_{\theta} \, \rho(F_{\theta}, \Phi) \leq \frac{c \, \log n}{n} \, \big(\mathbb{E} X_1^4 + \sigma_4^2 \big).$$

Here the last term σ_4^2 may be removed in some cases, e.g. when $cov(X_1^2, X_2^2) \le 0$.

These results can be sharpened under some additional assumptions on the shape of the distribution of X. We include the proof of the following important variant of the central limit theorem due to Klartag [123]: If the random vector X has an isotropic, coordinatewise symmetric log-concave distribution, then, for all $\theta \in \mathbb{S}^{n-1}$,

$$\rho(F_{\theta}, \Phi) \le c \sum_{k=1}^{n} \theta_k^4$$

up to some absolute constant c. Here, the average value of the right-hand side is of order 1/n. Although the class of log-concave probability distributions is studied in many investigations, their basic properties are discussed in this text as well. In particular, we include the proof of the Brascamp–Lieb inequality, which serves as a main tool in Klartag's theorem.

Finally, in the last chapter we conclude with brief historical remarks on results about randomized variants of the central limit theorem, in which coefficients have a special structure.

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In Memoriam. Shortly after completion of this book, Gennadiy Chistyakov passed away after a prolonged illness in December 2022. We mourn the loss of our friend and colleague.

Contents

Part I Generalities

1	Mon	nents and Correlation Conditions	3
	1.1	Isotropy	3
	1.2	First Order Correlation Condition	5
	1.3	Moments and Khinchine-type Inequalities	6
	1.4	Moment Functionals Using Independent Copies	8
	1.5	Variance of the Euclidean Norm	11
	1.6	Small Ball Probabilities	16
	1.7	Second Order Correlation Condition	20
2	Som	e Classes of Probability Distributions	23
	2.1	Independence	23
	2.2	Pairwise Independence	29
	2.3	Coordinatewise Symmetric Distributions	30
	2.4	Logarithmically Concave Measures	34
	2.5	Khinchine-type Inequalities for Norms and Polynomials	38
	2.6	One-dimensional Log-concave Distributions	43
	2.7	Remarks	48
3	Characteristic Functions		
	3.1	Smoothing	51
	3.2	Berry–Esseen-type Inequalities	54
	3.3	Lévy Distance and Zolotarev's Inequality	57
	3.4	Lower Bounds for the Kolmogorov Distance	60
	3.5	Remarks	62
4	Sum	s of Independent Random Variables	63
	4.1	Cumulants	63
	4.2	Lyapunov Coefficients	67
	4.3	Rosenthal-type Inequalities	

xiv Contents

	4.4	Normal Approximation
	4.5	Expansions for the Product of Characteristic Functions
	4.6	Higher Order Approximations of Characteristic Functions
	4.7	Edgeworth Corrections 80
	4.8	Rates of Approximation
	4.9	Remarks
Pa	rt II S	Selected Topics on Concentration
5	Stan	dard Analytic Conditions 91
	5.1	Moduli of Gradients in the Continuous Setting
	5.2	Perimeter and Co-area Inequality
	5.3	Poincaré-type Inequalities
	5.4	The Euclidean Setting
	5.5	Isoperimetry and Cheeger-type Inequalities
	5.6	Rothaus Functionals
	5.7	Standard Examples and Conditions
	5.8	Canonical Gaussian Measures
	5.9	Remarks
6		caré-type Inequalities
	6.1	Exponential Integrability
	6.2	Growth of L^p -norms
	6.3	Moment Functionals. Small Ball Probabilities
	6.4	Weighted Poincaré-type Inequalities
	6.5	The Brascamp–Lieb Inequality
	6.6	Coordinatewise Symmetric Log-concave Distributions 126
	6.7	Remarks
7	Loga	arithmic Sobolev Inequalities
	7.1	The Entropy Functional and Relative Entropy
	7.2	Definitions and Examples
	7.3	Exponential Bounds
	7.4	Bounds Involving Relative Entropy
	7.5	Orlicz Norms and Growth of L^p -norms
	7.6	Bounds Involving Second Order Derivatives
	7.7	Remarks
8	_	remum and Infimum Convolutions
	8.1	Regularity and Analytic Properties
	8.2	Generators
	8.3	Hamilton–Jacobi Equations
	8.4	Supremum/Infimum Convolution Inequalities
	8.5	Transport-Entropy Inequalities
	8.6	Remarks

Contents xv

Part II	I Anal	vsis on	the S	nhere
1 41 t 11	1 Allai	ASIS OII	uic o	DIICIC

9	Sobo	lev-type Inequalities	. 169
	9.1	Spherical Derivatives	
	9.2	Second Order Modulus of Gradient	. 172
	9.3	Spherical Laplacian	. 175
	9.4	Poincaré and Logarithmic Sobolev Inequalities	. 178
	9.5	Isoperimetric and Cheeger-type Inequalities	. 181
	9.6	Remarks	. 183
10	Secon	nd Order Spherical Concentration	
	10.1	Second Order Poincaré-type Inequalities	
	10.2	Bounds on the L^2 -norm in the Euclidean Setup	
	10.3	First Order Concentration Inequalities	. 190
	10.4	Second Order Concentration	
	10.5	Second Order Concentration With Linear Parts	
	10.6	Deviations for Some Elementary Polynomials	. 197
	10.7	Polynomials of Fourth Degree	. 200
	10.8	Large Deviations for Weighted ℓ^p -norms	. 204
	10.9	Remarks	. 206
11	Linea	ar Functionals on the Sphere	. 207
	11.1	First Order Normal Approximation	
	11.2	Second Order Approximation	. 210
	11.3	Characteristic Function of the First Coordinate	. 212
	11.4	Upper Bounds on the Characteristic Function	. 215
	11.5	Polynomial Decay at Infinity	. 218
	11.6	Remarks	. 220
Pai	t IV	First Applications to Randomized Sums	
12	Tuni	cal Distributions	222
14	1 ypi 12.1	Concentration Problems for Weighted Sums	
	12.1	The Structure of Typical Distributions	
	12.2	Normal Approximation for Gaussian Mixtures	
	12.3	Approximation in Total Variation	
	12.4	L^p -distances to the Normal Law	
	12.5	Lower Bounds	
	12.7	Remarks	
12	Char	and a stanistic English and Sugar	241
13	13.1	Tacteristic Functions of Weighted Sums	
		Concentration Functions of Weighted Sums	
	13.2	<u> </u>	
	13.3	Deviations of Characteristic Functions	
	13.4	Deviations in the Symmetric Case	
	13.5	Deviations in the Non-symmetric Case	. 251

xvi Contents

	13.6	The Linear Part of Characteristic Functions	255
	13.7	Remarks	
14	Fluct	uations of Distributions	
	14.1	The Kantorovich Transport Distance	
	14.2	Large Deviations for the Kantorovich Distance	
	14.3	Pointwise Fluctuations	
	14.4	The Lévy Distance	
	14.5	Berry–Esseen-type Bounds	274
	14.6	Preliminary Bounds on the Kolmogorov Distance	278
	14.7	Bounds With a Standard Rate	282
	14.8	Deviation Bounds for the Kolmogorov Distance	287
	14.9	The Log-concave Case	289
	14.10	Remarks	296
Pai	rt V R	efined Bounds and Rates	
15	I ² Ex	xpansions and Estimates	200
13	15.1	General Approximations	
	15.1	Bounds for L^2 -distance With a Standard Rate	
	15.2	Expansion With Error of Order n^{-1}	
	15.4	Two-sided Bounds	
	15.5	Asymptotic Formulas in the General Case	
	15.6	General Lower Bounds	
	13.0	General Lower Bounds	314
16	Refin	ements for the Kolmogorov Distance	317
	16.1	Preliminaries	
	16.2	Large Interval. Final Upper Bound	
	16.3	Relations Between Kantorovich, L^2 and Kolmogorov distances	323
	16.4	Lower Bounds	326
	16.5	Remarks	330
17		cations of the Second Order Correlation Condition	
	17.1	Mean Value of $\rho(F_{\theta}, \Phi)$ Under the Symmetry Assumption	
	17.2	Berry–Esseen Bounds Involving Λ	
	17.3	Deviations Under Moment Conditions	
	17.4	The Case of Non-symmetric Distributions	
	17.5	The Mean Value of $\rho(F_{\theta}, \Phi)$ in the Presence of Poincaré Inequalities	
	17.6	Deviations of $\rho(F_{\theta}, \Phi)$ in the Presence of Poincaré Inequalities	
	17.7	Relation to the Thin Shell Problem	351
	17.8	Remarks	354

Contents xvii

Part VI	Distributions and	Coefficients	of Spe	cial T	Type

18	Speci	al Systems and Examples	357
	18.1	Systems with Lipschitz Condition	
	18.2	Trigonometric Systems	
	18.3	Chebyshev Polynomials	
	18.4	Functions of the Form $X_k(t,s) = f(kt+s)$	
	18.5	The Walsh System on the Discrete Cube	
	18.6	Empirical Measures	
	18.7	Lacunary Systems	
	18.8	Remarks	374
19	Distri	ibutions With Symmetries	375
	19.1	Coordinatewise Symmetric Distributions	
	19.2	Behavior On Average	
	19.3	Coordinatewise Symmetry and Log-concavity	
	19.4	Remarks	
20	Produ	uct Measures	389
	20.1	Edgeworth Expansion for Weighted Sums	389
	20.2	Approximation of Characteristic Functions of Weighted Sums	
	20.3	Integral Bounds on Characteristic Functions	
	20.4	Approximation in the Kolmogorov Distance	
	20.5	Normal Approximation Under the 4-th Moment Condition	
	20.6	Approximation With Rate $n^{-3/2}$	
	20.7	Lower Bounds	
	20.8	Remarks	
21	Coeff	icients of Special Type	411
	21.1	Bernoulli Coefficients	411
	21.2	Random Sums	413
	21.3	Existence of Infinite Subsequences of Indexes	
	21.4	Selection of Indexes from Integer Intervals	
Ref	erence	es	419
Glo	ssary		427
Ind	lov		/131