Preface

The raison d'être of computational complexity theory is to understand and classify computational problems according to their inherent complexity. In the past fifteen years or so, there have been enormous advances in the study of the complexity of counting problems. A substantial theory has been developed that classifies every problem in a class of Sum-of-Product computations as being either polynomial-time computable or #P-hard. Such theorems are called complexity dichotomies.

This book presents the dichotomy theory for counting problems, expressible as Sum-of-Product computations. More specifically, it presents dichotomy theorems for partition functions of Spin Systems, Graph Homomorphisms, Constraint Satisfaction Problems, and Holant Problems. The theorems have the consequence that, assuming the complexity theory hypothesis $\mathrm{P} \neq \#\mathrm{P}$, which is implied by $\mathrm{P} \neq \mathrm{NP}$, in broad classes of counting problems, up to polynomial-time equivalence, there are only exactly two distinct levels for exact counting complexity.

Volume I presents the theory on the Boolean domain; Volume II presents the theory on general domains. In Volume I a particular feature is a thorough presentation of holographic algorithms, culminating in classifications of computational problems studied in Exactly Solvable Models from statistical mechanics.

Much of the material in the book is presented in book form for the first time. The book assumes minimal prior knowledge of computational complexity theory. The proof techniques are developed as needed. The dichotomy theorems are carefully organized, so that the theory is presented in gradually increasing generality and abstraction.

We want to thank many colleagues who have read parts of the manuscript and shared their thoughts on the subject. Their comments and criticisms have been a source of inspiration, and we wish to express our gratitude for their help. They are Manuel Blum, Andrei Bulatov, Sitan Chen, Martin Dyer, Alan Frieze,

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781107477063.001 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Zhiguo Fu, Leslie Ann Goldberg, Aaron Gorenstein, Heng Guo, Juris Hartmanis, Pavol Hell, Miki Hermann, Steve Homer, Mark Jerrum, Ravi Kannan, Dick Karp, Michael Kowalczyk, JM Landsberg, Liang Li, Dick Lipton, Martin Loebl, Pinyan Lu, Janos Makowsky, Jo Ellis-Monaghan, Jason Morton, Jaroslav Nešetřil, Mike Paterson, David Richerby, Les Valiant, Osamu Watanabe, Tyson Williams, Mingji Xia, Yitong Yin, and Standa Zivny. Two colleagues, Dr. Michael Kowalczyk and Dr. Tyson Williams, deserve our special gratitude. They helped us with early drafts of Chapter 5 and Chapter 8 respectively, which we made use of with their permission. They ought to be coauthors of these chapters. We also thank Mr. Artem Govorov who found a subtle gap in the proof of a lemma in an early draft, which was corrected. Of course, any remaining error is the sole responsibility of the authors.

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https://doi.org/10.1017/9781107477063.001 Published online by Cambridge University Press