The Number of Generalized Balanced Lines

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Abstract Let $S$ be a set of $r$ red points and $b = r + 2\delta$ blue points in general position in the plane, with $\delta \geq 0$. A line $\ell$ determined by them is balanced if in each open half-plane bounded by $\ell$ the difference between the number of blue points and red points is $\delta$. We show that every set $S$ as above has at least $r$ balanced lines. The proof is a refinement of the ideas and techniques of Pach and Pinchasi (Discrete Comput. Geom. 25:611–628, 2001), where the result for $\delta = 0$ was proven, and introduces a new technique: sliding rotations.

Keywords Balanced partitions · Halving triangles · Generalized Lower Bound Theorem · Circular sequences · Allowable sequences · Sliding rotations

1 Introduction

Let $B$ and $R$ be, respectively, sets of blue and red points in the plane, and let $S = B \cup R$ be in general position. Let $r = |R|$ and $b = |B| = r + 2\delta$ with $\delta \geq 0$. Furthermore, we are given weights $\omega(p) = +1$ for $p \in B$ and $\omega(q) = -1$ for $q \in R$.

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Given a halfplane $H$, its weight is then defined as $\omega(H) = \sum_{s \in S \cap H} \omega(s)$. Here and throughout this paper, halfplanes are open unless otherwise stated.

**Definition 1** A line $\ell$ determined by two points of $S$ is balanced if the two halfplanes it defines have weight $\delta$. Observe that this implies that the two points of $S$ spanning $\ell$ have different colors.

The main result of this paper is an elementary, geometric proof for the following lower bound on the number of balanced lines.

**Theorem 1** Let $B$ and $R$ be, respectively, sets of blue and red points in the plane, and let $S = B \cup R$ be in general position. Let $r = |R|$ and $b = |B| = r + 2\delta$ with $\delta \geq 0$. The number of lines defined by two points of $S$ that divide the plane in two halfplanes of weight $\delta$ is at least $r$. This number is attained if $R$ and $B$ can be separated by a line.

For $\delta = 0$, we obtain the result conjectured by George Baloglou and proved by Pach and Pinchasi via circular sequences:

**Theorem 2** ([3]) Let $|R| = |B| = n$. Every set $S$ as above determines at least $n$ balanced lines. This bound is tight.

The result for $\delta > 0$ was proved by Sharir and Welzl [4] in an indirect manner, via an equivalence with the following very special case of the Generalized Lower Bound Theorem. This motivated them to ask for a more direct and simpler proof.

Let $P$ be a convex polytope which is the intersection of $d + 4$ halfspaces in general position in $\mathbb{R}^d$. Let its edges be oriented according to a generic linear function (edges are directed from smaller to larger value; “generic” means that the function evaluates to distinct values at the vertices of $P$).

**Theorem 3** ([4]) The number of vertices with $\lceil \frac{d}{2} \rceil - 1$ outgoing edges is at most the number of vertices with $\lceil \frac{d}{2} \rceil$ outgoing edges.

Finally, let us remark that in [4] it is also shown that Theorem 1 is equivalent to the following result about halving triangles:

**Theorem 4** Every set $S \subset \mathbb{R}^3$ of $2n + 1$ points in general position has at least $n^2$ halving triangles.

All proofs in this paper can be easily translated to the more general setting of circular sequences (see [2]).

2 Geometric Tools

We assume that coordinate axes are chosen in such a way that all points have different abscissa. The tools we use are inspired in the rotational movement introduced by Erdős et al. [1].
Definition 2 Let $P \subseteq S$. A $P^k$-rotation is a family of directed lines $P^k_t$, where $t \in [0, 2\pi]$ is the angle measured from the vertical axis, defined as follows: $P^0_0$ contains a single point of $P$, and as $t$ increases, it rotates counterclockwise in such a way that

(i) $|P \cap P^k_t| = 1$ except for a finite number of events when $|P \cap P^k_t| = 2$.
(ii) Whenever $|P \cap P^k_t| = 1$, there are exactly $k$ points of $P$ to the right of $P^k_t$.

The common point $P \cap P^k_t = \{p\}$ is called the pivot, and it changes precisely when $|P \cap P^k_t| = 2$. Observe that $P^k_0 = P^k_{2\pi}$.

Definition 3 Let $\ell^+$ and $\ell^-$ denote, respectively, the open halfplanes to the right and to the left of $\ell$. Let $\omega(\ell)$ be the weight of $\ell^+$. Given a $P^k$-rotation, we say that $P^k \geq \delta$ if $\omega(P^k_t) \geq \delta$ for every $t \in [0, 2\pi]$, and similarly for the rest of inequalities. A rotation $B^k$ is $\delta$-preserving if either $B^k \geq \delta$ or $B^k < \delta$. Symmetrically, $R^k$ is $\delta$-preserving if either $R^k \leq \delta$ or $R^k > \delta$.

Lemma 5 In an $R^k$-rotation, transitions $\delta \leadsto \delta + 1$ and $\delta + 1 \leadsto \delta$ in $\omega(R^k_t)$ are always through a balanced line. In a $B^k$-rotation, transitions $\delta \leadsto \delta - 1$ and $\delta - 1 \leadsto \delta$ in $\omega(B^k_t)$ are always through a balanced line.

Proof When a red point is found during an $R^k$-rotation, the weight of the halfplane is preserved because the pivot point changes. Therefore, the change $\delta \leadsto \delta + 1$ happens when a blue point is found in the head of $R^k_t$ (Fig. 1, left), while $\delta + 1 \leadsto \delta$ happens when a blue point is found in the tail of $R^k_t$ (Fig. 1, right). In both cases, the points define a balanced line. For a $B^k$-rotation, the proof is identical. □

Claim 8.1 in [3] has now a more direct proof:

Lemma 6 If $r$ is odd, there exists a balanced line which is a halving line of $S$.

Proof Let $k = \lfloor \frac{r}{2} \rfloor$ and consider an $R^k$-rotation. If $R^k_0 \leq \delta$, then $R^k_\pi > \delta$, and conversely. Therefore, there exist transitions $\delta \leadsto \delta + 1$ and $\delta + 1 \leadsto \delta$ in $\omega(R^k_t)$ which, by Lemma 5, are always through a balanced line. Observe that both transitions are through the same balanced line, with angles $t_0$ and $t_0 + \pi$. □

Remark 1 Let us observe that Theorem 1.4 in [3], which states that Theorem 2 is true when $R$ and $B$ are separated by a line $\ell$, has now an easier proof: if we start $R^k$-rotations with a line parallel to $\ell$, for each $k$, there exist exactly one transition $\delta \leadsto \delta + 1$ and one transition $\delta + 1 \leadsto \delta$ which, by Lemma 5, correspond always to a balanced line. If $r$ is even, there are two balanced lines for $k = 0, \ldots, \lfloor \frac{r}{2} \rfloor - 1$, for a total of $r$ balanced lines, while if $r$ is odd, there are two balanced lines for $k = 0, \ldots, \lfloor \frac{r}{2} \rfloor - 1$ and one balanced line for $k = \lfloor \frac{r}{2} \rfloor$. □
Remark 2 Lemmas 5 and 6 conclude the proof of Theorem 2 if no \( R_k \)-rotation is \( \delta \)-preserving or if no \( B^k \)-rotation (with \( k \geq \delta \)) is \( \delta \)-preserving. Hence, in the following we assume that there exists either at least one \( R_k \)-rotation or one \( B^k \)-rotation (with \( k \geq \delta \)) which is \( \delta \)-preserving.

Lemma 7 Let \( 0 \leq j \leq \lfloor \frac{r}{2} \rfloor \). If \( R_j > \delta \), then \( B^{j+\delta} \geq \delta \), while if \( B^{j+\delta} < \delta \), then \( R_j \leq \delta \).

Proof Consider the line \( R^j \). The halfplane \( (R^j)^+ \) contains \( j \) red points and \( b > j + \delta \) blue points. Therefore, the line \( B^{j+\delta} \) is to the right of \( (R^j)^+ \) and contains at most \( j \) red points. Then, \( \omega(B^{j+\delta}) \geq \delta \). The proof of the second statement is analogous. □

The next definition generalizes the concept of \( P^k \)-rotation in two different ways: parallel movements are permitted, and the number of points to the right of the line can change.

Definition 4 A \( P \)-sliding rotation consists in moving a directed line \( \ell \) continuously, starting with an \( \ell_0 \) which contains a single point \( p_0 \in P \), and composing rotation around a point of \( P \) (the pivot) and parallel displacement (in either direction) until the next point of \( P \) is found. Furthermore, after a \( 2\pi \) rotation is completed, the line \( \ell_0 \) must be reached again.

This movement is clearly a continuous curve in the space of lines in the plane. For instance, if a line is parameterized as a point in \( S^1 \times \mathbb{R} \), a \( P \)-sliding rotation describes a (nonstrictly) angular-wise monotone curve, with vertical segments corresponding to parallel displacements.

Let \( \Sigma \) be a \( P \)-sliding rotation. Let us denote by \( \Sigma_t \) the line with angle \( t \) with respect to the vertical axis defined as follows: if there is no parallel displacement at angle \( t \), then \( \Sigma_t \) denotes the corresponding line. Otherwise, it denotes the leftmost line corresponding to angle \( t \).

Definition 5 A \( P \)-sliding rotation \( \Sigma \) is simple if \( \Sigma_{t+\pi} \) is to the left of \( \Sigma_t \) for all \( t \in [0, \pi) \).

The inequality \( \Sigma \geq \delta \), as well as the remaining inequalities, is defined exactly as in Definition 3. Similarly, a \( B \)-sliding rotation \( \Sigma \) is \( \delta \)-preserving if \( \Sigma \geq \delta \), while an \( R \)-sliding rotation is \( \delta \)-preserving if \( \Sigma \leq \delta \). The following definition is the crux of the rest of the paper.

Definition 6 Let \( \Delta \) be the set of all simple, \( \delta \)-preserving \( B \)-sliding rotations and \( R \)-sliding rotations. The waist of a \( P \)-sliding rotation \( \Sigma \in \Delta \) is

\[
\min_{t \in [0, \pi]} \left| P \cap \Sigma_t^- \cap \Sigma_{t+\pi}^- \right|.
\]

We denote by \( \Gamma \) the sliding rotation of \( \Delta \) with the smallest waist.
Note that the set $\Delta$ is nonempty because we have assumed that there exist $\delta$-preserving $B^k$- or $R^k$-rotations, which are a particular type of sliding rotations. Furthermore, the waist takes only a finite number of values, so it has a minimum. If the minimum is not unique, we can pick any of the sliding rotations achieving it.

3 Main Result

Assume that $\Gamma$ is a $\delta$-preserving $R$-sliding rotation (i.e., $\Gamma \leq \delta$). In this case, we will manage to prove that there exist at least $r$ balanced lines. For the case of $\Gamma$ being a $\delta$-preserving $B$-sliding rotation, the same arguments would show that there exist at least $b$ balanced lines.

**Lemma 8** Let $\Gamma_0$ and $\Gamma_\pi$ be the lines achieving the waist of $\Gamma$, let $\Gamma_0^+$ be the closed halfplane to the right of $\Gamma_0$, and let $F = R \cap \Gamma_0^+$. For every $k \in \{0, \ldots, |F| - 1\}$, during an $F^k$-rotation, a balanced line is found. Similarly, let $H = R \cap \Gamma_\pi^+$. For every $k \in \{0, \ldots, |H| - 1\}$, during an $H^k$-rotation, a balanced line is found.

**Proof** Figure 2 illustrates the situation. On the one hand, $F_0^k$ is to the right of $\Gamma_0$, and, since $\Gamma$ is simple, $F_\pi^k$ is to the left of $\Gamma_\pi$. This implies that there is a $t_1 \in [0, \pi]$ such that $F^k_{t_1} = \Gamma_{t_1}$, and therefore $\omega(F^k_{t_1}) \leq \delta$. On the other hand, $F_0^k$ is to the left of $\Gamma_\pi$, and $F_\pi^k$ is to the right of $\Gamma_0$; therefore, there exists a $t_2 \in [0, \pi]$ such that $F^k_{t_2}$ and $\Gamma_{t_2+\pi}$ are the same line with opposite directions. Since $\omega(\Gamma_{t_2+\pi}) \leq \delta$, then $\omega(F^k_{t_2}) \geq \delta$. If $\omega(\Gamma_{t_2+\pi}) = \delta$ and the line contains a blue point, then it is a balanced line found in a transition $\delta \sim \delta + 1$. Otherwise, $\omega(F^k_{t_2}) > \delta$, and hence a transition $\delta \sim \delta + 1$ has occurred for a $t \in (t_1, t_2)$.

Now, observe that $R \setminus F \subset \Gamma_0^-$. Hence, in the $F^k$-rotation for $t \in [0, \pi]$, all the points in $R \setminus F$ are found by the head of the line. This implies that a change $\delta \sim \delta + 1$ in the weight of the right halfplane can only occur when a blue point is found in the head of the ray (as in Fig. 1, left), hence defining a balanced line. The proof for $H$ is identical.

Observe that balanced lines found in this process are different, because they have exactly $k$ points of $F$, respectively $H$, to the right. $\square$

Let now $\mathcal{C}_t^\Gamma$ be the **central region** of the sliding rotation $\Gamma$ at instant $t$ defined as $\mathcal{C}_t^\Gamma = \Gamma_t^- \cap \Gamma_{t+\pi}^-$. Observe that, for the corresponding $t$, the transitions $\delta \sim \delta + 1$ in the proof of Lemma 8 correspond to balanced lines inside or in the boundary of the central region.

**Fig. 2** Illustration of the proof of Lemma 8
Lemma 9  Let $G = R \setminus (F \cup H)$. For $k \in \{0, \ldots, \lceil |G|/2 \rceil - 1\}$, every $G^k$-rotation has transitions $\delta \leadsto \delta + 1$ and $\delta + 1 \leadsto \delta$, which correspond to lines inside or in the boundary of the central region., i.e., for the corresponding $t$, $G^k_t \in C^\Gamma_t$.

Proof  Let us consider first the case where $r$ is odd and $k = \lfloor |G|/2 \rfloor$. $G^0_0$ and $G^\pi_\pi$ are the same line with opposite directions. Therefore, if $\omega(G^0_0) \leq \delta$, then $\omega(G^\pi_\pi) > \delta$, and there must be at least two transitions as stated. These transitions correspond to lines in the central region because $\Gamma$ is simple.

For the remaining cases, observe that, by construction, $G^k_0 \in C^\Gamma_0$. According to the value of $\omega(G^0_0)$, we distinguish two cases:

- $\omega(G^0_0) \leq \delta$. If there exist some values for which $G^k_t = \Gamma_t$, let $t_1$ and $t_2$ be, respectively, the minimum and maximum of them. If there is no such value, take $t_1 = t_2 = 2\pi$. If $G^k$ takes the value $\delta + 1$ in the interval $(0, t_1)$, it must have transitions $\delta \leadsto \delta + 1$ and $\delta + 1 \leadsto \delta$, and the same is true for $(t_2, 2\pi)$. Finally, observe that $G^k$ must take the value $\delta + 1$ at least once, because in the other case the sliding rotation obtained by concatenating $G^k$ in $(0, t_1)$, $\Gamma$ in $(t_1, t_2)$, and $G^k$ in $(t_2, 2\pi)$ would be a $\delta$-preserving sliding rotation of waist smaller than the waist of $\Gamma$.

- $\omega(G^0_0) > \delta$. If there exist some values for which $G^k_t = \Gamma_t$, let $t_1$ and $t_2$ be, respectively, the minimum and maximum of them. $G^k_t$ takes the value $\delta$ in the intervals $(0, t_1)$ and $(t_2, 2\pi)$, and therefore the lemma follows. In other case, if $G^k_t$ takes the value $\delta$ in the central region, it must have also transition $\delta \leadsto \delta + 1$. Finally, if $\omega(G^k_t) > \delta$ for all $t \in [0, 2\pi]$, we could construct a sliding rotation $\Sigma$ contradicting the choice of $\Gamma$: for each $t$, consider as $\Sigma_t$ the parallel to $G^k_t$ which passes through the first blue point to the right of $G^k_t$. It is easy to see that $\Sigma_t \geq \delta$, because between $\Gamma_t$ and $G^k_t$ there are always at least two blue points.

The following lemma, which already appeared as Claim 6.4 in [3], will be enough to conclude the proof of Theorem 2.

Lemma 10 Transitions $\delta \leadsto \delta + 1$ and $\delta + 1 \leadsto \delta$ in a $G^k$-rotation are always either a balanced line or a $\delta + 1 \leadsto \delta$ transition in an $F^j$-rotation, $j \in \{0, \ldots, |F| - 1\}$, or an $H^j$-rotation, $j \in \{0, \ldots, |H| - 1\}$.

Proof  On the one hand, a balanced line is achieved if there is such a transition because a blue point is found. See Fig. 1. On the other hand, if the point inducing the transition is $r \in R$, then necessarily $r \in R \setminus G$ (since the $G^k$-rotation changes pivot whenever a point of $G$ is found). Figure 3 illustrates that a $\delta + 1 \leadsto \delta$ transition appears for an $F^j$-rotation with pivot $g$, both if $f \in F$ is found in the tail (left picture) or if $f \in F$ is found in the head (right picture). Note that in the right picture the
weight of both halfplanes is $\delta + 1$. The case in which the point found is $h \in H$ works similarly.

Proof of Theorem 1

(a) Lemma 8 gives $|F| + |H|$ different balanced lines.
(b) Lemmas 9 and 10 give $|G|$ lines which are either a balanced line or a $\delta + 1 \Rightarrow \delta$ transition at the central region for an $F^j$- or $H^j$-rotation.
(c) Each $\delta + 1 \Rightarrow \delta$ transition in (b) forces a new $\delta \Rightarrow \delta + 1$ transition at the central region for an $F^j$- or $H^j$-rotation which correspond, as in the proof of Lemma 8, to a new balanced line.

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