An Entropic Uncertainty Principle for Quantum Measurements

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Dedicated to the memory of D. Basu

Abstract

The entropic uncertainty principle as outlined by Maassen and Uffink in [4] for a pair of non-degenerate observables in a finite level quantum system is generalized here to the case of a pair of arbitrary quantum measurements. In particular, our result includes not only the case of projective measurements (or equivalently, observables) exhibiting degeneracy but also an uncertainty principle for a single measurement.

1 Introduction

In the context of quantum computation and information, the notion of a measurement for a finite level quantum system has acquired great importance. (See, for example, Nielsen and Chuang [5]). Suppose that a finite level quantum system is described by pure states which are unit vectors in a $d$-dimensional complex Hilbert Space $\mathcal{H}$ with scalar product $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle$ which is linear in the second variable. By a measurement $X$ we mean $X = (X_1, X_2, \ldots, X_m)$, a finite sequence of positive operators satisfying the relation $\sum_{i=1}^{m} X_i = I$. If $\psi \in \mathcal{H}$ is a unit vector, then (in the Dirac notation) $p_i = \langle \psi | X_i | \psi \rangle$, $i = 1, \ldots, m$ is a probability distribution on the set $\{1, 2, \ldots, m\}$ which is interpreted as a labeling of the possible elementary
outcomes of the measurement. The corresponding uncertainty involved in such a measurement is measured by the entropy

\[ H(X, \psi) = - \sum_{i=1}^{m} p_i \log_2 p_i. \] (1)

Now consider two different measurements, \( X = (X_1, X_2, \ldots, X_m) \) and \( Y = (Y_1, Y_2, \ldots, Y_m) \) in the state \( \psi \). We would then like to describe the entropic uncertainty principle by a sharp lower bound for the sum \( H(X, \psi) + H(Y, \psi) \) of the two entropies. Such an approach for observables was first initiated by Bialynicki-Birula and Mycielski [1]. Pursuing a conjecture of Kraus [3], Maassen and Uffink [4] obtained a sharp lower bound for the sum of entropies of two measurements \( X \) and \( Y \) when all the \( X_i \) and \( Y_j \) are one-dimensional projections, i.e., when \( X \) and \( Y \) reduce to observables without degeneracy. Following the arguments of Maassen and Uffink [4] closely in using the Riesz-Thorin interpolation theorem and combining it with an application of Naimark’s theorem [2] as outlined in [6] we obtain a lower bound in the case of a pair of arbitrary measurements of a finite level system. Our lower bound does coincide with the Maassen-Uffink lower bound in the case of observables without degeneracy.

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### 2 The Main Result

We say that a measurement \( X = (X_1, X_2, \ldots, X_m) \) is *projective* if each \( X_i \) is an orthogonal projection. In such a case one has

\[ X_i X_j = \delta_{ij} X_j \text{ for all } i, j \in \{1, 2, \ldots, m\}. \] (2)

**Theorem 2.1.** Let \( P = (P_1, P_2, \ldots, P_m) \), \( Q = (Q_1, Q_1, \ldots, Q_n) \) be two projective measurements and let \( \psi \) be a pure state in \( \mathcal{H} \). Then

\[ H(P, \psi) + H(Q, \psi) \geq -2 \log_2 \max_{i,j} \frac{|\langle \psi | P_i Q_j | \psi \rangle|}{\|P_i \psi\| \|Q_j \psi\|}, \] (3)
where, on the right hand side, the maximum is taken over all the $1 \leq i \leq m$, $1 \leq j \leq n$ satisfying the conditions $P_i \psi \neq 0$, $Q_j \psi \neq 0$.

Before proceeding to the proof of this theorem we shall present the well-known Riesz-Thorin interpolation theorem in a convenient form. Let $T = ((t_{ij}))$, $1 \leq i \leq m, 1 \leq j \leq n$ be any matrix of order $m \times n$ with entries from the field $\mathbb{C}$ of complex scalars. In any space $\mathcal{C}^k$ we define the norms

$$\|x\|_p = \begin{cases} \left( \sum_{i=1}^{k} |x_i|^p \right)^{1/p} & \text{if } 1 \leq p < \infty, \\ \max_{1 \leq i \leq k} |x_i| & \text{if } p = \infty, \end{cases}$$

where $x' = (x_1, x_2, \ldots, x_k)$.

Consider the operator $T : \mathcal{C}^n \to \mathcal{C}^m$ defined by

$$(T \mathbf{x})_i = \sum_{j=1}^{n} t_{ij} x_j$$

and define

$$\|T\|_{p,q} = \sup_{\|\mathbf{x}\|_p = 1} \|T \mathbf{x}\|_q \text{ where } \frac{1}{p} + \frac{1}{q} = 1.$$  

With these notations we have the following theorem.

**Theorem 2.2.** Suppose $p_0, q_0, p_1, q_1$ are in the interval $[1, \infty]$ and $\frac{1}{p_1} + \frac{1}{q_1} = 1$ and $\frac{1}{p_0} + \frac{1}{q_0} = 1$ and

$$\|T\|_{p_0,q_0} \leq m_0, \quad \|T\|_{p_1,q_1} \leq m_1.$$  

Define $p_t, q_t$ for $0 < t < 1$ by

$$\frac{1}{p_t} = t \frac{1}{p_1} + (1-t) \frac{1}{p_0}, \quad \frac{1}{q_t} = t \frac{1}{q_1} + (1-t) \frac{1}{q_0}.$$  

Then

$$\|T\|_{p_t,q_t} \leq m_t, \quad \text{where } m_t = m_0^{1-t} m_1^t,$$

for every $0 < t < 1$. 

3
Proof: This is a very special case of Theorem IX.17, pages 27-28 of Reed and Simon [7].

Proof of Theorem 2.1: Without loss of generality we can assume that $P_i \psi \neq 0, Q_j \psi \neq 0$ for every $1 \leq i \leq m, 1 \leq j \leq n$. Otherwise, we can restrict the following argument to the subset of indices which obey this condition. Define

$$
\phi_i = \frac{P_i \psi}{\|P_i \psi\|}, \quad \psi_i = \frac{Q_i \psi}{\|Q_i \psi\|}
$$

and observe that $\{\phi_i\}$ and $\{\psi_j\}$ are orthonormal sets. Put

$$t_{ij} = \langle \phi_i | \psi_j \rangle, \quad 1 \leq i \leq m, 1 \leq j \leq n. \quad (11)$$

For any $x \in \mathbb{C}^n$ we have,

$$\sum_{i=1}^{m} \left| \sum_{j=1}^{n} t_{ij} x_j \right|^2 = \sum_{i=1}^{m} \left| \sum_{j=1}^{n} x_j | \psi_j \rangle \right|^2 \leq \| \sum_{j=1}^{n} x_j | \psi_j \rangle \|^2 = \sum_{j=1}^{n} |x_j|^2. \quad (12)$$

Thus the operator $T : \mathbb{C}^n \rightarrow \mathbb{C}^m$ defined by the matrix T satisfies the inequality

$$\|T\|_{2,2} \leq 1. \quad (13)$$

On the other hand

$$\max_i \left| \sum_{j=1}^{n} t_{ij} x_j \right| \leq \max_j |t_{ij}| \sum_{j=1}^{n} |x_j|. \quad (14)$$

In other words,

$$\|T\|_{1,\infty} \leq R, \quad \text{where} \quad R = \max_j |t_{ij}|. \quad (15)$$

Now apply Theorem 2.2 after putting

$$p_0 = q_0 = 2, p_1 = 1, q_1 = \infty, m_0 = 1, m_1 = R.$$
Then we have,
\[ \|T\|_{p,q,t} \leq R^t, \quad 0 < t < 1, \]  \hspace{1cm} (16)
where a computation shows that \( p_t = \frac{2}{1+t} \) and \( q_t = \frac{2}{1-t} \). Define the vectors \( a \in \mathbb{C}^n, b \in \mathbb{C}^m \) by
\[ a_j = \langle \psi_j | \psi \rangle, \quad j = 1, 2, \ldots, n \quad \text{and} \quad b_i = \langle \phi_i | \psi \rangle, \quad i = 1, 2, \ldots, m. \]  \hspace{1cm} (17)
We have
\[ (Ta)_i = \sum_{j=1}^{n} t_{ij} a_j \]
\[ = \sum_{j=1}^{n} \langle \phi_i | \psi_j \rangle \langle \psi_j | \psi \rangle \]
\[ = \sum_{j=1}^{n} \frac{\langle \phi_i | Q_j \psi \rangle \langle Q_j \psi | \psi \rangle}{\|Q_j \psi\|^2} \]
\[ = \sum_{j=1}^{n} \langle \phi_i | Q_j \psi \rangle \]
\[ = \langle \phi_i | \sum_{j=1}^{n} Q_j \psi \rangle \]
\[ = \langle \phi_i | \psi \rangle = b_i. \]  \hspace{1cm} (18)

By inequality (16) we now conclude that
\[ \left( \sum_{i=1}^{m} | \langle \phi_i | \psi \rangle |^{2/t} \right)^{\frac{1-t}{2}} \leq R^t \left( \sum_{j=1}^{n} | \langle \psi_j | \psi \rangle |^{2/t} \right)^{\frac{1-t}{2}}, \]  \hspace{1cm} (19)
for every \( 0 < t < 1 \). Denoting
\[ p_i = \langle \psi | P_i | \psi \rangle = | \langle \phi_i | \psi \rangle |^2, \quad q_j = \langle \psi | Q_j | \psi \rangle = | \langle \psi_j | \psi \rangle |^2, \]
we see that the inequality (19) can be expressed as, after raising both sides to power \( 2/t \) and transferring the second factor on the right hand side to the
left,
\[ \left( \sum_{i=1}^{m} p_i \right) t - \left( \sum_{j=1}^{n} q_j \right) t - 1 \leq R^2, \quad 0 < t < 1. \] (20)

Taking natural logarithms, letting \( t \to 0 \) and using L'Hospital's rule we get
\[ \sum_{i=1}^{m} p_i \log p_i + \sum_{j=1}^{n} q_j \log q_j \leq 2 \log R. \]

This completes the proof of the theorem. \( \square \)

**Corollary 2.3.** Let \( \mathbf{P} \) and \( \mathbf{Q} \) be projective measurements and let \( \psi \) be any pure state. Then
\[ H(\mathbf{P}, \psi) + H(\mathbf{Q}, \psi) \geq -2 \log \max_{i,j} \| P_i Q_j \|. \] (21)

**Proof:** This is immediate from Theorem [2.1] when we note that
\[ | < \psi | P_i Q_j | \psi > | = | < P_i | P_i Q_j | Q_j \psi > | \]
\[ \leq \| P_i Q_j \| \| P_i \psi \| \| Q_j \psi \|. \] (22)

**Remark:** Inequality (21) becomes trivial, in the sense that the right hand side vanishes, if and only if \( \| P_i Q_j \| = 1 \) for some \( i, j \). This, in turn, is equivalent to finding a nonzero vector in the intersection of the ranges of \( P_i \) and \( Q_j \) for some \( i, j \).

One can also consider a mixed state of the form
\[ \rho = \sum_{i=1}^{r} \pi_i | \psi_i > < \psi_i |, \quad \pi_i > 0, \quad \sum_{i=1}^{r} \pi_i = 1, \]
where \( \psi_i, \ i = 1, 2, \ldots, r \) are unit vectors. Then for any measurement \( \mathbf{X} = (X_1, X_2, \ldots, X_m) \) one obtains a probability distribution
\[ p_k = Tr(\rho X_k) = \sum_{i=1}^{r} \pi_i < \psi_i | X_k | \psi_i >, \quad 1 \leq k \leq m. \]

We write
\[ H(\mathbf{X}, \rho) = - \sum_{k=1}^{m} p_k \log_2 p_k. \]
Then we note that \((p_1, p_2, \ldots, p_m)\) is a convex combination of the probability distributions \((p_{i1}, p_{i2}, \ldots, p_{im})\), \(1 \leq i \leq r\), where

\[
p_{ik} = \langle \psi_i | X_k | \psi_i \rangle, \quad 1 \leq k \leq m.
\]

If now \(P\) and \(Q\) are two projective measurements it follows from the concavity property of entropy (see section 11.3.5, pages 516-518 of Nielsen and Chuang \[5\]) that

\[
H(P, \rho) + H(Q, \rho) \geq \sum_{i=1}^{r} \pi_i [H(P, \psi_i) + H(Q, \psi_i)] \\
\geq -2 \log \max_{i,j} \| P_i Q_j \|.
\]

(23)

The importance of this inequality lies in the fact that the right hand side is independent of the state \(\rho\).

**Theorem 2.4.** Suppose \(P = (P_1, P_2, \ldots, P_m)\) is a projective measurement and \(Y = (Y_1, Y_2, \ldots, Y_n)\) is an arbitrary measurement. Then for any pure state \(\psi\),

\[
H(P, \psi) + H(Y, \psi) \geq -2 \log \max_{i,j} \frac{|\langle \psi | P_i Y_j | \psi \rangle|}{\| P_i \psi \| \| Y_j^\dagger \psi \|}.
\]

(24)

where the maximum is over all \(i, j\) for which \(P_i \psi \neq 0, Y_j^{1/2} \psi \neq 0\).

**Proof:** We look upon \(Y\) as a positive operator valued measure on the finite set \(\{1, 2, \ldots, n\}\). In an orthonormal basis of \(\mathcal{H}\), the operators \(P_i, Y_j, 1 \leq i \leq m, 1 \leq j \leq n\) can all be viewed as positive semidefinite matrices. By Naimark’s theorem \[2\] as interpreted in \[3\] for finite dimensional Hilbert spaces we can construct matrices of the form

\[
\tilde{Q}_j = \begin{bmatrix} Y_j & L_j \\ L_j^\dagger & Z_j \end{bmatrix}, \quad 1 \leq j \leq n
\]

(25)

so that \(\tilde{Q}_j\)'s are projections in an enlarged Hilbert space \(\mathcal{H} \oplus \mathcal{K}\) where \(\mathcal{K}\) is also a finite dimensional Hilbert space and

\[
\sum_{j=1}^{n} \tilde{Q}_j = I_{\mathcal{H} \oplus \mathcal{K}}
\]
Define
\[
\tilde{P}_1 = \begin{bmatrix} P_1 & 0 \\ 0 & I_K \end{bmatrix}, \\
\tilde{P}_i = \begin{bmatrix} P_i & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}, \quad 2 \leq i \leq m
\]
(26)
\[
\tilde{\psi} = \begin{bmatrix} \psi \\ 0 \end{bmatrix},
\]
where the vectors in \( H \oplus K \) are expressed as column vectors \([u \, v] \) with \( u \in H \) and \( v \in K \). Then \( \tilde{\psi} \) is a pure state and \( \tilde{\mathbf{P}} = (\tilde{P}_1, \tilde{P}_2, \ldots, \tilde{P}_m), \tilde{\mathbf{Q}} = (\tilde{Q}_1, \tilde{Q}_2, \ldots, \tilde{Q}_n) \) are projective measurements in an enlarged system. By Theorem 2.1 we have
\[
H(\tilde{\mathbf{P}}, \tilde{\psi}) + H(\tilde{\mathbf{Q}}, \tilde{\psi}) \geq -2 \log_{\max i,j} \frac{|<\psi|\tilde{P}_i \tilde{Q}_j |\tilde{\psi}>|}{\|\tilde{P}_i \tilde{\psi}\| \|\tilde{Q}_j \tilde{\psi}\|}.
\]
(27)
On the other hand we have
\[
\tilde{P}_i \tilde{\psi} = \begin{bmatrix} P_i \psi \\ 0 \end{bmatrix}, \quad \tilde{Q}_j \tilde{\psi} = \begin{bmatrix} Y_j \psi \\ L_j^\dagger \psi \end{bmatrix}.
\]
(28)
This implies
\[
<\tilde{\psi}|\tilde{P}_i \tilde{Q}_j |\tilde{\psi}> = <\psi|P_i Y_j |\psi > \quad \text{and} \quad <\tilde{\psi}|\tilde{P}_i |\tilde{\psi}> = <\psi|P_i |\psi >.
\]
Since \( \tilde{Q}_j \) is a projection we have
\[
\|\tilde{Q}_j \tilde{\psi}\|^2 = <\tilde{\psi}|\tilde{Q}_j |\tilde{\psi}> = <\psi|Y_j |\psi > = \|Y_j^{1/2} \psi\|^2.
\]
Thus (using the above two equations) inequality (27) reduces to inequality (24).

Theorem 2.5. Let \( \mathbf{X} = (X_1, X_2, \ldots, X_m), \mathbf{Y} = (Y_1, Y_2, \ldots, Y_n) \) be two arbitrary measurements. Then for any pure state \( \psi \),
\[
H(\mathbf{X}, \psi) + H(\mathbf{Y}, \psi) \geq -2 \log_{\max i,j} \frac{|<\psi|X_i Y_j |\psi >|}{\|X_i^{1/2} \psi\| \|Y_j^{1/2} \psi\|},
\]
(29)
where the maximum is over all \( i, j \) for which \( X_i^{1/2} \psi \neq 0, Y_j^{1/2} \psi \neq 0 \).
Proof: As in the proof of Theorem 2.4, use Naimark's theorem \[2\] and construct the projections $\tilde{Q}_j$ as in equation (25). Define

\[
\begin{align*}
\tilde{X}_1 &= \begin{bmatrix} X_1 & 0 \\ 0 & I_K \end{bmatrix}, \\
\tilde{X}_i &= \begin{bmatrix} X_i & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}, \quad 2 \leq i \leq m,
\end{align*}
\]

and consider the state $\tilde{\psi}$ as defined by equation (26). Then $\tilde{Q} = (\tilde{Q}_1, \tilde{Q}_2, \ldots, \tilde{Q}_n)$ is a projective measurement and $\tilde{X} = (\tilde{X}_1, \tilde{X}_2, \ldots, \tilde{X}_m)$ is a measurement. Hence by Theorem 2.4,

\[
H(\tilde{Q}, \tilde{\psi}) + H(\tilde{X}, \tilde{\psi}) \geq -2 \log_2 \max_{i,j} \left| \frac{\langle \tilde{\psi} | \tilde{Q}_j \tilde{X}_i | \tilde{\psi} \rangle}{\| \tilde{X}_i \tilde{\psi} \| \cdot \| \tilde{Q}_j \tilde{\psi} \|} \right|.
\]

(31)

As in the proof of Theorem 2.4 we note that

\[
\langle \tilde{\psi} | \tilde{Q}_j | \tilde{\psi} \rangle = \| \tilde{Q}_j \tilde{\psi} \|^2 = \langle \psi | Y_j | \psi \rangle = \| Y_j^1 \psi \|^2.
\]

Clearly, inequality (31) reduces to

\[
H(X, \psi) + H(Y, \psi) \geq -2 \log_2 \max_{i,j} \left| \frac{\langle \psi | Y_j X_i | \psi \rangle}{\| Y_j^1 \psi \| \cdot \| X_i \tilde{\psi} \|} \right|,
\]

(32)

which is the same as equation (29) owing to the self-adjointness of $X_i$ and $Y_j$.

Corollary 2.6. Let $X = (X_1, X_2, \ldots, X_m)$, $Y = (Y_1, Y_2, \ldots, Y_n)$ be arbitrary measurements and let $\rho$ be any state. then

\[
H(X, \rho) + H(Y, \rho) \geq -2 \log_2 \max_{i,j} \| X_i^2 Y_j^2 \|.
\]

(33)

Proof: Owing to the concavity of Shannon entropy it is enough to prove the Corollary when $\rho$ is a pure state determined by a unit vector $\psi$. Now the required result is immediate from the theorem above if we observe that

\[
\left| \langle \psi | Y_j X_i | \psi \rangle \right| = \left| \langle X_i^{1/2} \psi | X_i^{1/2} Y_j^{1/2} Y_j^{1/2} \psi \rangle \right| \leq \| X_i^{1/2} \psi \| \cdot \| Y_j \tilde{\psi} \|.
\]

(34)

\[\blacksquare\]
Remark: Putting $X = Y$ in inequality (33) we get

$$H(X, \rho) \geq -\log_2 \max_{i,j} \| X_i^\frac{1}{2} X_j^\frac{1}{2} \|.$$ 

This yields a nontrivial uncertainty principle even for a single measurement since the right hand side need not vanish.

Example: Let $G$ be a finite group of cardinality $N$ and let $\hat{G}$ denote its dual space consisting of all the inequivalent irreducible unitary representations of $G$. Denote by $L^2(G)$, the $N$-dimensional complex Hilbert space of all functions on $G$ with the scalar product

$$\langle f | g \rangle = \sum_{x \in G} f(x) g(x), \quad f, g \in L^2(G).$$

For any $\pi \in \hat{G}$, let $d(\pi)$ denote the dimension of the representation space of $\pi$ and let $\{\pi_{ij}(\cdot), 1 \leq i, j \leq d(\pi)\}$ denote the matrix elements of $\pi$ in some orthonormal basis of its representation space. From the Peter-Weyl theory of representations we have two canonical orthonormal bases for $L^2(G)$:

1. $\{ |x \rangle = 1_{\{x\}}, \ x \in G \}$;

2. $\{ \sqrt{\frac{d(\pi)}{N}} \pi_{ij}(\cdot), \ 1 \leq i, j \leq d(\pi), \pi \in \hat{G} \}$,

where $1_{\{x\}}$ denotes the indicator function of the singleton set $\{x\}$ in $G$. Consider the projective measurements

$$Q = \{ Q_x, x \in G \}, \quad Q_x = |x \rangle \langle x |, \quad P = \{ P_{i,j,\pi}, \ \pi \in \hat{G}, 1 \leq i, j \leq d(\pi) \},$$

where

$$P_{i,j,\pi} = \frac{d(\pi)}{N} |\pi_{ij} \rangle \langle \pi_{ij}|.$$ 

For any unit vector $\psi$ in $L^2(G)$, we have

$$\langle \psi | Q_x P_{i,j,\pi} | \psi \rangle = \frac{d(\pi)}{N} \langle \psi | x \rangle \langle x | \psi \rangle \pi_{ij} (x),$$

$$\| Q_x \psi \|^2 = \langle \psi | Q_x \psi \rangle = |\psi(x)\|^2,$$

$$\| P_{i,j,\pi} \psi \|^2 = \frac{d(\pi)}{N} |\langle \pi_{ij} | \psi \rangle|^2.$$

(35)
Thus our entropic uncertainty principle assumes the form

\[- \sum_{x \in G} |\psi(x)|^2 \log_2 |\psi(x)|^2 - \sum_{1 \leq i, j \leq d(\pi)} \left| \hat{\psi}(i, j, \pi) \right|^2 \log_2 \left| \hat{\psi}(i, j, \pi) \right|^2 \]

\[\geq -2 \log_2 \max_{i, j, \pi, x} \sqrt{\frac{d(\pi)}{N}} |\pi_{ij}(x)|, \tag{36}\]

where

\[\hat{\psi}(i, j, \pi) = \sqrt{\frac{d(\pi)}{N}} < \pi_{ij} | \psi >\]

is the (noncommutative ) Fourier transform of $\psi$ at the $ij^{th}$ entry of the irreducible representation $\pi$. Since $\pi_{ij}(x)$ is the $ij^{th}$ entry of the unitary matrix $\pi(x)$ and $\pi(e) = I_d(\pi)$ at the identity element $e$ we have

\[\max_{i, j, \pi, x} |\pi_{ij}(x)| = 1.\]

Thus the entropic uncertainty principle reduces to

\[- \sum_{x \in G} |\psi(x)|^2 \log_2 |\psi(x)|^2 - \sum_{1 \leq i, j \leq d(\pi)} \left| \hat{\psi}(i, j, \pi) \right|^2 \log_2 \left| \hat{\psi}(i, j, \pi) \right|^2 \]

\[\geq \log_2 N - \log_2 \max_{\pi \in \hat{G}} d(\pi), \tag{37}\]

for every unit vector $\psi \in L^2(G)$. When $G$ is abelian every $\pi$ is one dimensional and the right hand side reduces to $\log_2 N$. In this case, when $\psi(x) \equiv 1/\sqrt{N}$, the inequality in (37) becomes an equality.

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