Nested Polar Codes for Wiretap and Relay Channels

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***Abstract*—We show that polar codes asymptotically achieve the whole capacity-equivocation region for the wiretap channel when the wiretapper's channel is degraded with respect to the main channel, and the weak secrecy notion is used. Our coding scheme also achieves the capacity of the physically degraded receiver-orthogonal relay channel. We show simulation results for moderate block length for the binary erasure wiretap channel, comparing polar codes and two edge type LDPC codes.**

***Index Terms*—Polar codes, wiretap channel, relay channel, decode-and-forward.**

I. Introduction

POLAR codes were introduced by Arikan and were shown to be capacity achieving for a large class of channels [1]. Polar codes are block codes of length $N = 2^n$ with binary input alphabet $\mathcal{X}$. Let $G = RF^{\otimes n}$, where R is the bit-reversal mapping defined in [1], $F = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 1 & 1 \end{bmatrix}$, and $F^{\otimes n}$ denotes the n^{th} Kronecker power of F. Apply the linear transformation G to N bits $\{u_i\}_{i=1}^N$ and send the result through N independent copies of a binary input memoryless channel $W(y|x)$. This gives an N-dimensional channel $W_N(y_1^N|u_1^N)$, and Arikan's observation was that the channels seen by individual bits, defined by

$$W_N^{(i)}(y_1^N, u_1^{i-1}|u_i) = \sum_{u_{i+1}^N \in \mathcal{X}^{N-i}} \frac{1}{2^{N-1}} W_N(y_1^N|u_1^N), \quad (1)$$

polarize, i.e as N grows $W_N^{(i)}$ approaches either an error-free channel or a completely noisy channel.

We define the polar code $P(N, \mathcal{A})$ of length N as follows. Given a subset $\mathcal{A}$ of the bits, set $u_i = 0$ for $i \in \mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{C}}$. We call $\mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{C}}$ the frozen set, and the bits $\{u_i\}_{i\in\mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{C}}}$ frozen bits. The codewords are given by $x^N = u_{\mathcal{A}} G_{\mathcal{A}}$, where $G_{\mathcal{A}}$ is the submatrix of G formed by rows with indices in $\mathcal{A}$. The rate of $P(N, \mathcal{A})$ is $|\mathcal{A}|/N$.

The block error probability using the successive cancellation (SC) decoding rule defined by

$$\hat{u}_i = \begin{cases} 0 & i \in \mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{C}} \text{ or } \frac{W_N^{(i)}(y_1^N, \hat{u}_1^{i-1}|u_i=0)}{W_N^{(i)}(y_1^N, \hat{u}_1^{i-1}|u_i=1)} \geq 1 \text{ when } i \in \mathcal{A} \\ 1 & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

can be upper bounded by $\sum_{i\in\mathcal{A}} Z_N^{(i)}$, where $Z_N^{(i)}$ is the Bhattacharyya parameter for the channel $W_N^{(i)}$ [1]. It was shown in [2] that for any $\beta < 1/2$,

$$\liminf_{n\to\infty} \frac{1}{N} |\{i : Z_N^{(i)} < 2^{-N^\beta}\}| = I(W), \quad (2)$$

where $I(W)$ is the symmetric capacity of W, which equals the Shannon capacity for symmetric channels. Thus if we let $\mathcal{A}_N = \{i : Z_N^{(i)} < 2^{-N^\beta}\}$, the rate of $P(N, \mathcal{A}_N)$ approaches $I(W)$ as N grows. Also the block error probability P_e using SC decoding is upper bounded by

$$P_e \leq N 2^{-N^\beta}. \quad (3)$$

We define the nested polar code $P(N, \mathcal{A}, \mathcal{B})$ of length N where $\mathcal{B} \subset \mathcal{A}$ as follows. The codewords of $P(N, \mathcal{A}, \mathcal{B})$ are the same as the codewords for $P(N, \mathcal{A})$. The nested structure is defined by partitioning $P(N, \mathcal{A})$ as cosets of $P(N, \mathcal{B})$. Thus codewords in $P(N, \mathcal{A}, \mathcal{B})$ are given by $x^N = u_{\mathcal{B}} G_{\mathcal{B}} \oplus u_{\mathcal{A}\setminus\mathcal{B}} G_{\mathcal{A}\setminus\mathcal{B}}$, where $u_{\mathcal{A}\setminus\mathcal{B}}$ determines which coset the codeword lies in. Note that each coset will be a polar code with $\mathcal{B}^{\mathcal{C}}$ as the frozen set. The frozen bits u_i are either 0 (if $i \in \mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{C}}$) or they equal the corresponding bits in $u_{\mathcal{A}\setminus\mathcal{B}}$.

Let W and $\tilde{W}$ be two symmetric binary input memoryless channels. Let $\tilde{W}$ be degraded with repect to W. Denote the polarized channels as defined in (1) by $W_N^{(i)}$ (resp. $\tilde{W}_N^{(i)}$), and their Bhattacharyya parameters by $Z_N^{(i)}$ (resp. $\tilde{Z}_N^{(i)}$). We will use the following Lemma which is Lemma 4.7 from [3]:

Lemma I.1. *If $\tilde{W}$ is degraded with respect to W then $\tilde{W}_N^{(i)}$ is degraded with respect to $W_N^{(i)}$ and $\tilde{Z}_N^{(i)} \geq Z_N^{(i)}$.*

In Sections II and III we use Lemma I.1 to show that nested polar codes are capacity achieving for the degraded wiretap channel and the physically degraded relay channel.

To our knowledge this work[1] is the first to consider polar codes for the (degraded) relay channel. Independent recent work concerning the wiretap channel includes [4] and [5].

II. Nested Polar Wiretap Codes

We consider the wiretap channel introduced by Wyner [6]. The sender, Alice, wants to transmit a message S chosen uniformly at random from the set $\mathcal{S}$ to the intended receiver, Bob, while trying to keep the message secure from a wiretapper, Eve. We assume that the input alphabet $\mathcal{X}$ is binary, and Bob's output alphabets $\mathcal{Y}$ and Eve's output alphabet $\mathcal{Z}$ are discrete. We assume that the main channel (given by $P_{Y|X}$) and the wiretapper's channel (given by $P_{Z|X}$) are symmetric. We also assume that $P_{Z|X}$ is stochastically degraded with respect to $P_{Y|X}$, i.e. there exists a probability distribution $P_{Z|Y}$ such that $P_{Z|X}(z|x) = \sum_{y\in\mathcal{Y}} P_{Z|Y}(z|y) P_{Y|X}(y|x)$.

A codebook with block length N for the wiretap channel is given by a set of disjoint subcodes $\{\mathcal{C}(s) \subset \mathcal{X}^N\}_{s\in\mathcal{S}}$, where $\mathcal{S}$ is the set of possible messages. To encode the message $s \in \mathcal{S}$, Alice chooses one of the codewords in $\mathcal{C}(S)$ uniformly at random and transmits it. Bob uses a decoder $\phi : \mathcal{Y}^N \to \mathcal{S}$ to determine which message was sent.

A rate-equivocation pair (R, R_e) is said to be achievable if $\forall\epsilon > 0$ and for a sufficiently large N, there exists a message

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set $\mathcal{S}$, subcodes $\{C(s)\}_{s\in\mathcal{S}}$, and a decoder ϕ such that

$$\frac{1}{N}\log|\mathcal{S}| > R-\epsilon, \quad P(\phi(Y^N)\neq S)<\epsilon, \tag{4}$$

$$\frac{1}{N}\mathbb{H}(S|Z^N) > R_e-\epsilon, \tag{5}$$

where $\mathbb{H}(S|Z^N)$ denotes the conditional entropy of S given Z^N. The set of achievable pairs (R,R_e) for this setting is

$$R_e \le R \le C_M, \quad 0\le R_e \le C_M - C_W, \tag{6}$$

where C_M is the capacity of the main channel, and C_W is the capacity of the wiretapper's channel [7].

In Theorem II.1 we give a nested polar coding scheme [8] for the wiretap channel that achieves the whole rate-equivocation rate region. Let the wiretapper's channel be denoted by $\tilde{W}$ and the main channel by W. We assume that W and $\tilde{W}$ are symmetric, so $C_M = I(W)$ and $C_W = I(\tilde{W})$.

Theorem II.1. *Let (R,R_e) satisfy (6). For all $\epsilon>0$ there exists a nested polar code of length $N=2^n$ that satisfies (4) and (5) provided n is large enough.*

Proof: Let $\beta<1/2$, $\mathcal{A}_N = \{i : Z_N^{(i)} < 2^{-N^\beta}\}$, and let $\mathcal{B}_N$ be the subset of $\mathcal{A}_N$ of size $N(C_M-R)$ whose members have the smallest $\tilde{Z}_N^{(i)}$. Since (2) implies $\liminf_{n\to\infty}|\mathcal{A}_N|/N = C_M \ge C_M - R$ such a subset exists if n is large enough. This defines our nested polar code $P(N,\mathcal{A}_N,\mathcal{B}_N)$, and the subcodes $\mathcal{C}(s_N)$ are the cosets of $P(N,\mathcal{B}_N)$.

To send the message s_N, Alice generates the codeword

$$X^N = T_N G_{\mathcal{B}_N} \oplus s_N G_{\mathcal{A}_N\setminus\mathcal{B}_N}, \tag{7}$$

where T_N is a binary vector of length $N(C_M-R)$ chosen uniformly at random.

From (3) the block error probability for Bob goes to zero as n goes to infinity. The rate of the coding scheme is $\frac{1}{N}|\mathcal{A}_N\setminus\mathcal{B}_N|$, which goes to $C_M-(C_M-R)=R$ as n goes to infinity, since $\liminf_{n\to\infty}|\mathcal{A}_N|/N = C_M$. Thus our coding scheme satisfies (4).

To show (5) we look at the equivocation for Eve. We first look at the case where $R\ge C_M-C_W$. We expand $I(X^N,S_N;Z^N)$ in two different ways and obtain

$$\begin{aligned} I(X^N,S_N;Z^N) &= I(X^N;Z^N) + I(S_N;Z^N|X^N) \\ &= I(S_N;Z^N) + I(X^N;Z^N|S_N). \end{aligned} \tag{8}$$

Note that $I(S_N;Z^N|X^N)=0$ as $S_N\to X^N\to Z^N$ is a Markov chain. By (8) and noting $I(S_N;Z^N)=\mathbb{H}(S_N)-\mathbb{H}(S_N|Z^N)$, we write the equivocation rate $\mathbb{H}(S_N|Z^N)/N$ as

$$\begin{aligned} &\frac{\mathbb{H}(S_N)+I(X^N;Z^N|S_N)-I(X^N;Z^N)}{N} = \underbrace{\frac{\mathbb{H}(S_N)}{N}}_{=R-\delta(N)} + \\ &\underbrace{\frac{\mathbb{H}(X^N|S_N)}{N}}_{=C_M-R} - \frac{\mathbb{H}(X^N|Z^N,S_N)}{N} - \underbrace{\frac{I(X^N;Z^N)}{N}}_{\le C_W} \\ &\qquad \ge C_M - C_W - \delta(N) - \frac{\mathbb{H}(X^N|Z^N,S_N)}{N}, \end{aligned}$$

where $\delta(N)$ is the difference between $|\mathcal{A}_N\setminus\mathcal{B}_N|/N$ and R which goes to zero as $n\to\infty$.

We now look at $\mathbb{H}(X^N|Z^N,S_N)$. For a fixed $S_N=s_N$ we see that $X^N\in\mathcal{C}(s_N)$. Let P_e' be the error probability of decoding this code using an SC decoder. By Lemma I.1, the set $\tilde{\mathcal{A}}_N = \{i:\tilde{Z}_N^{(i)} < 2^{-N^\beta}\}$ is a subset of $\mathcal{A}_N$. Also, $\liminf_{n\to\infty}\frac{1}{N}|\tilde{\mathcal{A}}_N| = C_W$, so if $|\mathcal{B}_N|\le NC_W$ we have $\mathcal{B}_N\subset\tilde{\mathcal{A}}_N$ for large n, by the definition of $\mathcal{B}_N$. Since $|\mathcal{B}_N| = N(C_M-R)\le NC_W$, we have $\tilde{Z}_N^{(i)} < 2^{-N^\beta}$ $\forall i\in\mathcal{B}_N$ for large enough n. This implies $P_e' \le \sum_{i\in\mathcal{B}_N}\tilde{Z}_N^{(i)} \le N2^{-N^\beta}$. We use Fano's inequality to show that $\mathbb{H}(X^N|Z^N,S_N)\to 0$:

$$\liminf_{n\to\infty}\mathbb{H}(X^N|Z^N,S_N) \le \liminf_{n\to\infty}\left[\mathbb{H}(P_e') + P_e'|\mathcal{B}_N|\right] = 0.$$

Thus we have shown that $\frac{\mathbb{H}(S_N|Z^N)}{N} \ge C_M - C_W - \epsilon \ge R_e - \epsilon$ for n large enough.

We now consider the case when $R < C_M - C_W$. The only difference from the analysis above is the term $\mathbb{H}(X^N|Z^N,S_N)$. Since $|\mathcal{B}_N| = N(C_M-R) > NC_W$, the code defined by (7) is not decodable. Instead, let $\mathcal{B}_{1N} = \{i:\tilde{Z}_N^{(i)} < 2^{-N^\beta}\}$, $\mathcal{B}_{2N} = \mathcal{B}_N\setminus\mathcal{B}_{1N}$, and rewrite (7) as $X^N = T_{1N}G_{\mathcal{B}_{1N}} \oplus T_{2N}G_{\mathcal{B}_{2N}} \oplus S_N G_{\mathcal{A}_N\setminus\mathcal{B}_N}$. Note that, since $\liminf_{n\to\infty}|\mathcal{B}_{1N}|/N = C_W$, this code is decodable using SC given T_{2N}. If T_{2N} is unknown we can try all possible combinations and come up with $2^{|\mathcal{B}_{2N}|}$ equally likely solutions (all solutions are equally likely since T_N is chosen uniformly at random). Thus $\mathbb{H}(X^N|Z^N,S_N)$ should tend to $\mathbb{H}(T_{2N})$. We make this argument precise by bounding $\mathbb{H}(X^N|Z^N,S_N)$ as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbb{H}(X^N|Z^N,S_N) &= \mathbb{H}(X^N,T_{2N}|Z^N,S_N) \\ &= \mathbb{H}(T_{2N}|Z^N,S_N) + \mathbb{H}(X^N|Z^N,S_N,T_{2N}) \\ &\le \mathbb{H}(T_{2N}) + \mathbb{H}(X^N|Z^N,S_N,T_{2N}) \end{aligned}$$

where in the last step we have used the fact that conditioning reduces entropy. We can show that the second term goes to zero using Fano's inequality as above. Since $\liminf_{n\to\infty}\frac{\mathbb{H}(T_{2N})}{N} = \liminf_{n\to\infty}\frac{|\mathcal{B}_{2N}|}{N} = C_M - R - C_W$, we get $\mathbb{H}(S_N|Z^N)/N \ge R-\epsilon$ for n large enough. ■

In Section III we show that the nested polar code scheme can be used to achieve capacity for the physically degraded receiver-orthogonal relay channel (PDRORC).

III. Nested Polar Relay Channel Codes

The PDRORC is a three node channel with a sender, a relay, and a destination [9]. The sender wishes to convey a message to the destination with the aid of the relay. Let the input at the sender and the relay be denoted by X and X_1 respectively, and let the corresponding alphabets $\mathcal{X}$ and $\mathcal{X}_1$ be binary. We denote the source to relay (SR) channel output by Y_1, the source to destination (SD) channel output by Y', and the relay to destination (RD) channel output by Y''. We assume that the corresponding output alphabets $\mathcal{Y}_1, \mathcal{Y}'$, and $\mathcal{Y}''$ are discrete. The SR and SD channel transition probabilities are given by $P_{Y'Y_1|X}$ and the RD channel transition probability is given by $P_{Y''|X_1}$. Note that the receiver components are orthogonal, i.e. $P_{Y'Y''|XX_1} = P_{Y'|X}P_{Y''|X_1}$. We further assume that the SD channel is physically degraded with respect to the SR channel, i.e $P_{Y'Y_1|X} = P_{Y_1|X}P_{Y'|Y_1}$, and that all the channels $P_{Y'|X}, P_{Y_1|X}$, and $P_{Y''|X_1}$ are symmetric. The capacity of the PDRORC channel is given by $C = \max_{p(x)p(x_1)}\min\{I(X;Y') + I(X_1;Y''), I(X;Y',Y_1)\}$. In the symmetric physically degraded case this simplifies to

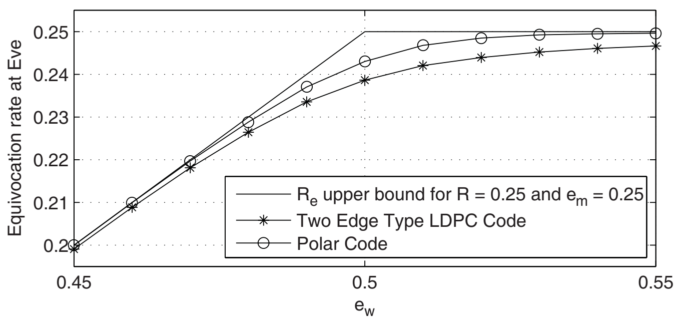

Fig. 1. Equivocation rate versus e_w. Codes designed for $R = 0.25$, $e_m = 0.25$, $e_w = 0.5$, and block length $N = 1024$.

$C = \min\{C_{SD} + C_{RD}, C_{SR}\}$, where C_{SD}, C_{SR}, and C_{RD} are the capacities of the SD, SR, and RD channels respectively.

Theorem III.1. *Let $R < C$. For all $\epsilon > 0$ there exists a nested polar code of rate R and length $(B+1)N = (B+1)2^n$ such that the error probability at the destination is smaller than ϵ provided B and n are large enough.*

Proof: We use a block-Markov coding scheme and transmit B codewords of length N in $B+1$ blocks. Let W and $\tilde{W}$ denote the SR and SD channels respectively. Let $Z_N^{(i)}$ and $\tilde{Z}_N^{(i)}$ be the Bhattacharyya parameters of the corresponding polarized channels.

First assume that $C_{SR} \leq C_{SD} + C_{RD}$. Let $\beta < 1/2$, $\mathcal{A}_N = \{i : Z_N^{(i)} < 2^{-N^\beta}\}$, and let $\mathcal{B}_N = \{i : \tilde{Z}_N^{(i)} < 2^{-N^\beta}\}$. By Lemma I.1, $\mathcal{B}_N \subset \mathcal{A}_N$. The source will transmit in each block using the nested polar code $P(N, \mathcal{A}_N, \mathcal{B}_N)$. After receiving the whole codeword the relay decodes the bits in $\mathcal{A}_N$. The probability that the relay makes an error when decoding can be made smaller than $\epsilon/(3B)$ by choosing n large enough. The relay then reencodes the bits in $\mathcal{A}_N \setminus \mathcal{B}_N$ and transmits them using a polar code of rate $(|\mathcal{A}_N| - |\mathcal{B}_N|)/N$ in the next block. In general, in block k the source transmits the k^{th} codeword while the relay transmits the bits in $\mathcal{A}_N \setminus \mathcal{B}_N$ from the $(k-1)^{\text{th}}$ block. The destination first decodes the bits in $\mathcal{A}_N \setminus \mathcal{B}_N$ using the transmission from the relay. This can be done with error probability smaller than $\epsilon/(3B)$ provided n is large enough since the rate of the relay to destination code tends to $C_{SR} - C_{SD} \leq C_{RD}$ as n grows. Finally the destination decodes the source transmission from the $(k-1)^{\text{th}}$ block. It uses the bits from the relay transmission in block k to determine which coset of $P(N, \mathcal{B}_N)$ the codeword lies in. The rate of $P(N, \mathcal{B}_N)$ approaches C_{SD} so the destination can decode with block error probability smaller than $\epsilon/(3B)$. By the union bound the overall error probability over all B blocks is then smaller than ϵ. The rate of the scheme is $B|\mathcal{A}_N|/N(B+1)$ which can be made arbitrarily close to C_{SR} provided B and n are large enough since $\liminf_{n\to\infty} |\mathcal{A}_N|/N = C_{SR}$.

Now assume that $C_{SR} > C_{SD} + C_{RD}$. Let $\mathcal{B}_N = \{i : \tilde{Z}_N^{(i)} < 2^{-N^\beta}\}$ and let $\mathcal{A}_N$ be a subset of $\{i : Z_N^{(i)} < 2^{-N^\beta}\}$ of size $N(C_{SD} + C_{RD})$ containing $\mathcal{B}_N$. Such a subset exists provided n is large enough since $C_{SR} > C_{SD} + C_{RD}$. The analysis of the block error probability is the same as in the first case, and the rate of the coding scheme is $B|\mathcal{A}_N|/N(B+1)$ which approaches $C_{SD} + C_{RD}$ when n and B are large. ■

IV. Simulations

We show simulation results comparing Eve's equivocation for nested polar wiretap codes and two edge type LDPC codes over a wiretap channel where both the main channel and the wiretapper's channel are binary erasure channels with erasure probabilities e_m and e_w respectively. The LDPC codes are optimized using the methods in [10] and for the LDPC codes the curve shows the ensemble average. The equivocation at Eve is calculated using an extension of a result in [11][2]:

Lemma IV.1. *Let H be a parity check matrix for the overall code ($P(N, \mathcal{A}_N)$ in the polar case) and let $H^{(s)}$ be a parity check matrix for the subcode $(P(N, \mathcal{B}_N))$ in a nested coding scheme for the binary erasure channel. Then the equivocation at Eve is rank$(H_{\mathcal{E}}^{(s)})$ − rank$(H_{\mathcal{E}})$, where $H_{\mathcal{E}}$ is the matrix formed from the columns of H corresponding to erased codeword positions.*

Proof: The equivocation at Eve can be written as

$$\mathbb{H}(S_N|Z^N) = \mathbb{H}(X^N|Z^N) - \mathbb{H}(X^N|S_N, Z^N). \tag{9}$$

For a specific received z we have $H_{\mathcal{E}} x_{\mathcal{E}}^T + H_{\mathcal{E}^c} x_{\mathcal{E}^c}^T = 0$, where $x_{\mathcal{E}}^T$ is unknown. The above equation has $2^{N-\text{rank}(H_{\mathcal{E}})}$ solutions, all of which are equally likely since the original codewords X^N are equally likely. In the same way $\mathbb{H}(X^N|S_N, Z^N) = N - \text{rank}(H_{\mathcal{E}}^{(s)})$. This implies $\mathbb{H}(S_N|Z^N) = \text{rank}(H_{\mathcal{E}}^{(s)}) - \text{rank}(H_{\mathcal{E}})$. ■

Fig. 1 shows the equivocation rate at Eve, and also the upper bound for R_e as a function of e_w for fixed $R = 0.25$ and $e_m = 0.25$. It is interesting to note that even with a block length of only 1024 bits the curves are close to the upper bound.

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[2]Note that the polar codes $P(N, \mathcal{A}_N)$ and $P(N, \mathcal{B}_N)$ are linear codes and we therefore can calculate the corresponding parity check matrices.