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# Impossibility of classically simulating one-clean-qubit model with multiplicative error

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The one-clean-qubit model (or the DQC1 model) is a restricted model of quantum computing where all but a single input qubits are maximally mixed. It is known that the probability distribution of measurement results on three output qubits of the one-clean-qubit model cannot be classically efficiently sampled within a constant multiplicative error unless the polynomial-time hierarchy collapses to the third level [T. Morimae, K. Fujii, and J. F. Fitzsimons, *Phys. Rev. Lett.* **112**, 130502 (2014)]. It was open whether we can keep the no-go result while reducing the number of output qubits from three to one. Here, we solve the open problem affirmatively. We also show that the third-level collapse of the polynomial-time hierarchy can be strengthened to the second-level one. The strengthening of the collapse level from the third to the second also holds for other sub-universal models such as the IQP model [M. Bremner, R. Jozsa, and D. J. Shepherd, *Proc. R. Soc. A* **467**, 459 (2011)] and the Boson Sampling model [S. Aaronson and A. Arkhipov, *STOC* 2011, p.333]. We additionally study the classical simulatability of the one-clean-qubit model with further restrictions on the circuit depth or the gate types.

What makes a quantum computing model stronger than classical computing? It is one of the most important questions in physics and computer science. Quantum advantages have been shown for several cases, such as the communication complexity [1, 2] and the query complexity [3, 4]. However, the ultimate question “is  $BPP \neq BQP$ ?” remains open [5], while there are several witnesses, such as Shor’s algorithm [6], that suggest the gap.

Some restricted quantum computing models are known to be as weak as classical computing. For example, quantum computing that uses only certain types of gates, such as Clifford gates [7] or matchgates [8–12], can be classically efficiently simulated. On the other hand, quantum computational supremacy of several sub-universal quantum computing models have been demonstrated recently [13, 15–20]. Importantly, the hardness proofs of classical simulations of these models are based on the strong belief in computer science that the polynomial-time hierarchy would not collapse [21].

Terhal and DiVincenzo [13] showed that the output probability distributions of depth-four quantum circuits cannot be classically efficiently sampled within a constant multiplicative error unless  $BQP$  is contained in  $AM$ , which is unlikely [14]. Here, we say that a probability distribution  $\{p_z\}_z$  is classically efficiently sampled within a multiplicative error  $\epsilon$  if there is a classical polynomial-time algorithm that outputs  $z$  with probability  $q_z$  such that  $|p_z - q_z| \leq \epsilon p_z$  for all  $z$ . The con-

sequence,  $BQP \subseteq AM$ , of their result can be strengthened to the collapse of the polynomial-time hierarchy to the third level by noticing the fact that non-adaptive measurement-based quantum computing is depth four.

Bremner, Jozsa, and Shepherd [15] showed that the output probability distributions of IQP circuits cannot be classically efficiently sampled within a constant multiplicative error unless the polynomial-time hierarchy collapses to the third level. Here, an IQP circuit is a restricted quantum circuit where only  $X$ -diagonal gates are applied (or, equivalently, a  $Z$ -diagonal circuit is sandwiched between the global Hadamards.) The essential for their proof is the complexity class,  $\text{postBQP}$ , which is the class of problems that can be solved with a polynomial-time quantum computer with postselection [24]. Here, postselection is a fictitious ability that a certain measurement result is given with probability one. Bremner, Jozsa, and Shepherd [15] introduced so-called the Hadamard gadget, which is a sub quantum circuit that enables an Hadamard gate at any place with a postselection. By using the gadget, they showed that any quantum circuit that uses  $H$ ,  $CZ$ , and  $e^{iZ\theta}$ , which are universal, can be written as an IQP circuit with postselections. It means that  $\text{postIQP}$ , which is the IQP version of  $\text{postBQP}$ , is equal to  $\text{postBQP}$ . Therefore, the classical efficient sampling of IQP circuits, which implies  $\text{postIQP} \subseteq \text{postBPP}$ , causes the collapse of the polynomial-time hierarchy to the third level:

$$PH \subseteq P^{PP} = P^{\text{postBQP}} = P^{\text{postIQP}} \subseteq P^{\text{postBPP}} \subseteq \Delta_3.$$

Here PH is the polynomial-time hierarchy,  $\Delta_3$  is the third level of the polynomial-time hierarchy, postBPP is the BPP version of postBQP, which is actually equal to  $\text{BPP}_{\text{path}} \subseteq \Delta_3$  [25], and it is known that postBQP is equal to PP [24, 26].

Aaronson and Arkhipov [18] showed that the output probability distributions of the Boson Sampling model, which is a quantum computer that uses non-interacting bosons, cannot be classically efficiently sampled within a constant multiplicative error unless the polynomial-time hierarchy collapses to the third level. Their proof is similar to that for the IQP model [15]: non-interacting bosons with postselections can simulate the Knill-Laflamme-Milburn (KLM) scheme [27], which is universal, and therefore  $\text{postBosonSampling} = \text{postBQP}$ .

The multiplicative error approximation is, however, somehow a strict requirement. In fact, assuming some unproven mathematical conjectures that are different from the infiniteness of the polynomial-time hierarchy, the output probability distributions of the IQP model and the Boson Sampling model were shown to be hard to classically efficiently sample within a constant additive error. Here, we say that a probability distribution  $\{p_z\}_z$  is classically efficiently sampled within an additive error  $\epsilon$  if there is a classical polynomial-time algorithm that outputs  $z$  with probability  $q_z$  such that  $\sum_z |p_z - q_z| \leq \epsilon$ . The additive error approximation is a more relaxed notion of approximation, and it is also called the L1-norm error approximation or the total-variation-distance error approximation.

For the IQP model, the no-go result with the additive error approximation was proved by Bremner, Montanaro, and Shepherd [16, 17]. The no-go result for the Boson Sampling case was given by Aaronson and Arkhipov [18]. As mentioned before, these no-go results need some unproven mathematical conjectures different from the infiniteness of the polynomial-time hierarchy. The result for the Boson Sampling model [18] needs two conjectures, the ‘‘average case vs worst case conjecture’’ and the ‘‘anti-concentration conjecture’’. The result for the IQP model [16] assumes a similar average case vs worst case conjecture, but the anti-concentration one is no longer a conjecture but a mathematically proved lemma. (Recently, it was shown that two-design systems also satisfy the anti-concentration lemma [28].)

The one-clean qubit model (or the DQC1 model) is another important example of the sub-universal quantum computing models. It was originally introduced by Knill and Laflamme [29] in 1998 to model the NMR quantum computing. The one-clean qubit model starts with the highly mixed initial state  $|0\rangle\langle 0| \otimes \frac{I^{\otimes n}}{2^n}$ , where  $I \equiv |0\rangle\langle 0| + |1\rangle\langle 1|$  is the two-dimensional identity operator. Any unitary operator  $U$  is applied on it to generate

$$U\left(|0\rangle\langle 0| \otimes \frac{I^{\otimes n}}{2^n}\right)U^\dagger, \quad (1)$$

and finally some qubits are measured in the computational basis [30]. When  $k$  output qubits are measured, the probability  $p_z$  of obtaining  $z \in \{0, 1\}^k$  is

$$p_z \equiv \text{Tr}\left[\left(|z\rangle\langle z| \otimes I^{\otimes(n+1-k)}\right)U\left(|0\rangle\langle 0| \otimes \frac{I^{\otimes n}}{2^n}\right)U^\dagger\right].$$

We call such a model the DQC1 $_k$  model.

The one-clean qubit model seems to be classically efficiently simulatable. In fact, if the pure state  $|0\rangle$  of the initial state is replaced with the maximally-mixed state  $\frac{I}{2}$ , the quantum computing is trivially simulatable with a polynomial-time classical computer, since  $U\frac{I^{\otimes(n+1)}}{2^{n+1}}U^\dagger = \frac{I^{\otimes(n+1)}}{2^{n+1}}$  for any unitary operator  $U$ . However, surprisingly, the one-clean qubit model can efficiently solve several problems whose classical efficient solutions are not known, such as the spectral density estimation [29], testing integrability [31], calculations of the fidelity decay [32], and approximations of the Jones polynomial, HOMFLY polynomial, and Turaev-Viro invariant [33–36].

Furthermore, it was shown that if the output probability distribution of the DQC1 $_3$  model is classically efficiently sampled within a multiplicative error  $\epsilon < 1$ , then the polynomial-time hierarchy collapses to the third level [19]. The proof uses the similar idea as those for the IQP model [15] and the Boson Sampling model [18]: Ref. [19] showed  $\text{postDQC1}_3 = \text{postBQP}$ , where  $\text{postDQC1}_3$  is the DQC1 $_3$  version of postBQP. (The proof idea is as follows. For a given postBQP circuit  $V$ , we construct the DQC1 $_3$  circuit in Fig. 1. The postselection on the qubit  $p_1$  prepares the pure initial state  $|0^n\rangle$ , where  $n$  is the width of  $V$ . The postselection on the qubit  $p_2$  simulates the postselection of the original postBQP circuit  $V$ . The qubit  $o$  simulates the decision qubit of  $V$ .)

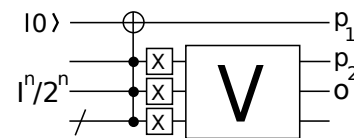


FIG. 1: The DQC1 $_3$  circuit used to show  $\text{postBQP} \subseteq \text{postDQC1}_3$  in Ref. [19]. The slash ‘‘/’’ means multiple qubits (in this case,  $n - 2$  qubits), and  $X$  is applied on each qubit.

The no-go result with the additive error approximation has been recently obtained for the DQC1 model in Ref. [20]. Like the results of the IQP model [16] and the Boson Sampling model [18], the result of Ref. [20] assumes a certain unproven mathematical conjecture, which is a slightly different form of the average case vs worst case conjecture. Interestingly, by using a special property of the DQC1 model, the anti-concentration lemma is easily shown.

One disadvantage of these results is, however, that at least three qubits must be measured: the result of

Ref. [19] is the hardness result for  $\text{DQC1}_3$ , and the result of Ref. [20] is that for  $\text{DQC1}_{n+1}$ . Is it possible to show any hardness result for  $\text{DQC1}_1$ ?

The other open problem that these previous results leave is whether we can strengthen the third-level collapse of the polynomial-time hierarchy to a more unlikely consequence. The third-level collapse is not believed to happen in computer science, but it would be better if we could show a no-go result based on a more stable belief.

In this letter, we solve these two open problems [44]. Our main result is the following theorem:

**Theorem 1.** *If the output probability distribution of the  $\text{DQC1}_1$  model is classically efficiently sampled within a multiplicative error  $\epsilon < 1$ , then the polynomial-time hierarchy collapses to the second level.*

Remember that the classical efficient sampling of  $\{p_z\}_z$  within a multiplicative error  $\epsilon$  means the existence of a classically efficiently samplable distribution  $\{q_z\}_z$  such that  $|p_z - q_z| \leq \epsilon p_z$ . The intuition behind this theorem is as follows. We construct the  $\text{DQC1}_1$  circuit of Fig. 2 from a quantum circuit  $V_w$  related to a certain quantum complexity class. If the output probability distribution of the  $\text{DQC1}_1$  circuit is classically efficiently sampled within a multiplicative error  $\epsilon < 1$ , it means that the quantum complexity class is contained in another classical complexity class. Such a containment leads to the unlikely consequence, namely, the collapse of the polynomial hierarchy, in computer science. For details, see the proof given below.

In this theorem, the number of measured qubit is reduced to one from three. Furthermore, the collapse of the polynomial-time hierarchy is now to the second level rather than the third level, which is more unlikely. It is interesting to note that in the Boson Sampling and IQP cases, polynomial number of qubits are measured, and therefore the sample space is exponentially large, while in the  $\text{DQC1}_1$  case Theorem 1 suggests that the hardness statement for the small sample space is possible.

*Proof of Theorem 1.* Using the postselection technique would not work to show the theorem because of the following two reasons: First,  $\text{postDQC1}_1$  is not well defined since  $\text{DQC1}_1$  circuit has only a single output qubit. Second, showing  $\text{postBQP} = \text{postBPP}$  is not enough to show the collapse of the polynomial-time hierarchy to the second level. Our new idea is to use another class, NQP [37], which is one possible quantum analogue of NP. NQP is defined as follows: a language  $L$  is in NQP if and only if there exists a polynomial-time uniformly generated family of quantum circuits  $\{V_w\}_w$  such that if  $w \in L$  then  $p_{acc} > 0$ , and if  $w \notin L$  then  $p_{acc} = 0$ , where  $p_{acc}$  is the acceptance probability [38]. We show that if the output probability distribution of the  $\text{DQC1}_1$  model is classically efficiently sampled within a multiplicative error  $\epsilon < 1$ , then  $\text{NQP} \subseteq \text{NP}$ . If such a containment occurs, the polynomial-time hierarchy collapses to the second level,

since

$$\text{PH} \subseteq \text{BP} \cdot \text{co-C=P} = \text{BP} \cdot \text{NQP} = \text{BP} \cdot \text{NP} = \text{AM},$$

where the first containment is from Refs. [39, 40] and the second equality is from Ref. [41]. The class  $\text{C=P}$  is defined in Ref. [42], and the BP operator is defined in Ref. [43]. To derive  $\text{NQP} \subseteq \text{NP}$ , we consider the  $\text{DQC1}_1$  circuit of Fig. 2. It is easy to verify that the probability  $\tilde{p}$  of obtaining 1 when the qubit  $o$  is measured is  $\tilde{p} = \frac{4p(1-p)}{2^n}$ , where  $p \equiv \langle 0^n | V_w^\dagger (|1\rangle\langle 1| \otimes I^{\otimes(n-1)}) V_w | 0^n \rangle$ . Therefore, if  $0 < p < 1$  then  $\tilde{p} > 0$ , and if  $p = 0$  then  $\tilde{p} = 0$ . (Without loss of generality, we can assume that  $0 \leq p < 1$ , since we can intentionally reduce the output probability by multiplying the output probability of  $V_w$  by a constant.) If  $\tilde{p}$  is classically efficiently sampled within a multiplicative error  $\epsilon < 1$ , it implies  $\text{NQP} \subseteq \text{NP}$ .

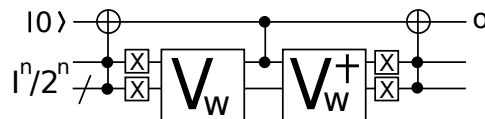


FIG. 2: The  $\text{DQC1}_1$  circuit used to show  $\text{NQP} \subseteq \text{NP}$ .

The new idea of using NQP can be applied to other sub-universal models such as the IQP model [15] and the Boson Sampling model [18]:

**Theorem 2.** *If the output probability distribution of the IQP model or the Boson Sampling model is classically efficiently sampled within a multiplicative error  $\epsilon < 1$ , then the polynomial-time hierarchy collapses to the second level.*

Note that the required approximation error,  $\epsilon < 1$ , is the same as that of the previous results [15, 18] that use the postBQP technique.

*Proof of Theorem 2.* We consider the Boson Sampling model, but it is exactly the same for the IQP model. It is known that the Boson Sampling model is universal under a postselection. It means that for any universal quantum circuit  $U$ , there exists a Boson Sampling circuit  $V$  such that  $\Pr_U(\text{accept}) = \Pr_V(\text{accept}|\text{postselect})$ . Let us consider the following quantum computing:

1. Run  $V$ .
2. Accept if the postselection is successful and  $V$  accepts.

The acceptance probability of this quantum computing is

$$\begin{aligned} & \Pr_V(\text{accept, postselect}) \\ &= \Pr_V(\text{accept}|\text{postselect})\Pr_V(\text{postselect}) \\ &= \Pr_U(\text{accept})\Pr_V(\text{postselect}). \end{aligned}$$

If the classical efficient sampling of  $\text{Pr}_V(\text{accept}, \text{postselect})$  is possible, then we have  $\text{NQP} \subseteq \text{NP}$ .

Although  $\text{postDQC1}_1$  is not well defined, we can still show that the classical efficient simulation of the  $\text{DQC1}_1$  model leads to  $\text{postBQP} = \text{postBPP}$ :

**Theorem 3.** *If the output probability distribution of the  $\text{DQC1}_1$  model is classically efficiently sampled within a multiplicative error  $\epsilon < 1$ , then  $\text{postBQP} = \text{postBPP}$ .*

Its proof is given in the supplementary material [50]. Note that a similar proof also gives the result that calculating the output probability distribution of the  $\text{DQC1}_1$  model within a multiplicative error  $\epsilon < 1$  is  $\#\text{P}$ -hard. (For a proof, see the supplementary material) [48–50].

The final contribution of our letter is studying classical simulatability of the  $\text{DQC1}$  model with additional restrictions. We first consider the logarithmic-depth  $\text{DQC1}_m$  model with polynomially large  $m$ . We show that such a model would not be classically efficiently simulatable:

**Theorem 4.** *If the output probability distribution of the logarithmic-depth  $\text{DQC1}_m$  model with polynomially large  $m$  is classically efficiently sampled within a multiplicative error  $\epsilon < 1$ , then the polynomial-time hierarchy collapses to the second level.*

We next consider the  $\text{DQC1}_m$  model with constant (or doubly logarithmic) depth, and show that such a model is classically simulatable:

**Theorem 5.** *Any marginal distribution of the output probability distribution of the constant (or doubly logarithmic) depth  $\text{DQC1}_m$  model for any  $m$  can be exactly calculated in classical polynomial time.*

Finally, we study the  $\text{DQC1}_m$  model whose circuit is restricted to the IQP type. In other words, we consider the following  $\text{DQC1}_m$  model, which we call the IQP- $\text{DQC1}_m$  model:

1. The input state is  $|0\rangle\langle 0| \otimes (\frac{I^{\otimes n}}{2^n})$ .
2. Apply  $H^{\otimes(n+1)}$ . Apply a polynomially many CZ gates and  $e^{i\theta Z}$  gates. Apply  $H^{\otimes(n+1)}$ .
3. Measure  $m$  output qubits in the computational basis.

We show that such a model is also classically efficiently simulatable:

**Theorem 6.** *Any marginal distribution of the output probability distribution of the IQP- $\text{DQC1}_m$  model for any  $m$  can be exactly calculated in classical polynomial time.*

Proofs for these theorems are given in the supplementary material [50].

*Discussion.*— In this paper, we have shown the hardness of classically simulating the  $\text{DQC1}_1$  model. It would be important to consider an experimental implementation of our results. Although multiplicative-error sampling is difficult to realize, it might be still possible to do some proof-of-principle demonstrations with few

qubits. Finally, let us conclude this paper by pointing out that our result reveals a non-trivial relation between the matchgate model [8–12] and the  $\text{DQC1}_1$  model: the computational power of the log-space  $\text{DQC1}_1$  model and that of the matchgate model are equivalent. (Here, the log-space  $\text{DQC1}_1$  model is the  $\text{DQC1}_1$  model with a log width, i.e.,  $n$  of Eq. (1) is log of the input size.) This is because, by using Fig. 2, we can show that the log-space  $\text{DQC1}_1$  model can simulate the log-space (pure) quantum circuits, which are known to be equivalent to the matchgate model [12]. (Details are given in the supplementary material [50].) Simulating Ising models with log-qubit quantum computing, which is an example of so called the “compressed quantum simulation”, has recently been studied theoretically [46] and experimentally [47]. The relation between the matchgate model and the log-space  $\text{DQC1}_1$  model therefore suggests another example of the compressed quantum simulation: fermionic systems and spin systems can be simulated with log-qubit NMR quantum computing.

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