

AN APPLICATION OF THE COALESCENCE THEORY TO BRANCHING RANDOM WALKS

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Abstract

In a discrete-time single-type Galton–Watson branching random walk $\{Z_n, \zeta_n\}_{n \geq 0}$, where Z_n is the population of the n th generation and ζ_n is a collection of the positions on \mathbb{R} of the Z_n individuals in the n th generation, let Y_n be the position of a randomly chosen individual from the n th generation and $Z_n(x)$ be the number of points in ζ_n that are less than or equal to x for $x \in \mathbb{R}$. In this paper we show in the explosive case (i.e. $m = \mathbb{E}(Z_1 | Z_0 = 1) = \infty$) when the offspring distribution is in the domain of attraction of a stable law of order α , $0 < \alpha < 1$, that the sequence of random functions $\{Z_n(x)/Z_n : -\infty < x < \infty\}$ converges in the finite-dimensional sense to $\{\delta_x : -\infty < x < \infty\}$, where $\delta_x \equiv \mathbf{1}_{\{N \leq x\}}$ and N is an $N(0, 1)$ random variable.

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1. Introduction

A branching random walk is a branching tree such that with each line of descent a random walk is associated.

Let $\{Z_n\}_{n \geq 0}$ be a discrete-time single-type Galton–Watson branching process with offspring distribution $\{p_j\}_{j \geq 0}$. Let $Z_0 = 1$. Then there is a unique probability measure on the space of family trees initiated by this ancestor.

On this family tree, we impose the following movement structure. If an individual is located at x in the real line \mathbb{R} , and, upon death, produces k children, then these k children move to $x + X_{kj}$ for $1 \leq j \leq k$, where $(X_{k1}, X_{k2}, \dots, X_{kk})$ is a random vector with a joint distribution π_k on \mathbb{R}^k for each k . The random vector $X_k \equiv (X_{k1}, X_{k2}, \dots, X_{kk})$ is stochastically independent of the history up to that generation as well as the movement of the offspring of other individuals.

Let $\zeta_n \equiv \{x_{ni} : 1 \leq i \leq Z_n\}$ be the positions of the Z_n individuals of the n th generation. For each $n \geq 0$, ζ_n is a collection of random numbers on \mathbb{R} and, hence, is a point process. The sequence of pairs of $\{Z_n, \zeta_n\}_{n \geq 0}$ is called a *branching random walk*. The probability distribution of this process is completely specified by

- the offspring distribution $\{p_j\}_{j \geq 0}$;
- the family of probability measures $\{\pi_k\}_{k \geq 1}$;

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- the initial population size Z_0 ; and
- the locations $\zeta_0 \equiv \{x_{0i}, 1 \leq i \leq Z_0\}$ of the initial ancestors.

It is clear that $\{\zeta_n\}_{n \geq 0}$ is a Markov chain whose state space is the set of all finite subsets of \mathbb{R} and that the movement along any one line of descent is that of a classical random walk. Thus, if $\{X_{ki}\}_{k \geq 1, i \geq 1}$ are independent and identically distributed (i.i.d.) with mean μ and finite variance σ^2 , then the location of an individual of the n th generation should be approximately Gaussian with mean $n\mu$ and variance $n\sigma^2$ by the central limit theorem. This suggests that if $Z_n \rightarrow \infty$ as $n \rightarrow \infty$ and if $x_n = \sigma\sqrt{n}x + n\mu$, then $Z_n(x_n)/Z_n$ could have $\Phi(x)$, the standard $N(0, 1)$ cumulative distribution function (CDF), as its limit. Or, if $X_{k,1}$ is in the domain of attraction of a stable law of order α , $0 < \alpha \leq 2$, then there exist a_n and b_n such that $Z_n(a_n + b_n y)/Z_n$ converges to a standard stable law CDF as $n \rightarrow \infty$. This turns out to be true in the supercritical case ($1 < m = \sum_{j=1}^\infty jp_j < \infty$); see [2] for the details. More results related to the central limit theorem on branching random walks can be found in [1], [4], and [8].

2. Main results

In this paper we consider the explosive Galton–Watson branching process such that the offspring distribution $\{p_j\}_{j \geq 0}$ is in the domain of a stable law of order α with $0 < \alpha < 1$ and, hence, with $m \equiv \sum_{j=0}^\infty jp_j = \infty$. (See also [5], [6], and [7].)

Theorem 2.1. *Let $p_0 = 0$ and $\{p_j\}_{j \geq 0}$ satisfy $\sum_{j > x} p_j \sim x^{-\alpha}L(x)$ as $x \uparrow \infty$, where $0 < \alpha < 1$ and $L(\cdot)$ is slowly varying at ∞ . Let $\{X_{k,i}\}_{k \geq 1, 1 \leq i \leq k}$ be identically distributed. Let $\mathbb{E}X_{k,1} = 0$ and $\mathbb{E}X_{k,1}^2 = \sigma^2 < \infty$. Then, for any fixed $y \in \mathbb{R}$,*

- (a) $\mathbb{P}(Y_n \leq \sqrt{n}\sigma y) \rightarrow \Phi(y)$ as $n \rightarrow \infty$;
- (b) $Z_n(\sqrt{n}\sigma y)/Z_n \xrightarrow{D} \delta_y$ as $n \rightarrow \infty$, where δ_y is Bernoulli($\Phi(y)$), i.e. $\mathbb{P}(\delta_y = 1) = \Phi(y) = 1 - \mathbb{P}(\delta_y = 0)$.

The result in Theorem 2.1(b) can be strengthened to the joint convergence of

$$\frac{Z_n(\sqrt{n}\sigma y_i)}{Z_n}, \quad i = 1, 2, \dots, k,$$

for $y_1, y_2, \dots, y_k \in \mathbb{R}$.

We have the following theorem.

Theorem 2.2. *Under the hypothesis of Theorem 2.1,*

- (a) for any $-\infty < y_1 < y_2 < \infty$,

$$\left(\frac{Z_n(\sqrt{n}\sigma y_1)}{Z_n}, \frac{Z_n(\sqrt{n}\sigma y_2)}{Z_n} \right) \xrightarrow{D} (\delta_{y_1}, \delta_{y_2}),$$

which takes the values (0, 0), (0, 1), and (1, 1) with probabilities $1 - \Phi(y_2)$, $\Phi(y_2) - \Phi(y_1)$, and $\Phi(y_1)$, respectively;

- (b) for any $-\infty < y_1 < y_2 < \dots < y_k < \infty$,

$$\left(\frac{Z_n(\sqrt{n}\sigma y_i)}{Z_n} : 1 \leq i \leq k \right) \xrightarrow{D} (\delta_{y_1}, \dots, \delta_{y_k}),$$

where each δ_{y_i} is 0 or 1, and, furthermore,

$$\delta_{y_i} = 1 \Rightarrow \delta_{y_j} = 1 \text{ for } j \geq i$$

and

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbb{P}(\delta_{y_1} = 0, \delta_{y_2} = 0, \dots, \delta_{y_{j-1}} = 0, \delta_{y_j} = 1, \dots, \delta_{y_k} = 1) &= \mathbb{P}(\delta_{y_{j-1}} = 0, \delta_{y_j} = 1) \\ &= \Phi(y_j) - \Phi(y_{j-1}). \end{aligned}$$

Remark 2.1. Theorem 2.2 suggests that

$$\left\{ Z_n(y) = \frac{Z_n(\sqrt{n}\sigma y)}{Z_n}, -\infty < y < \infty \right\}$$

converges in the Skorokhod space $D(-\infty, \infty)$ weakly to

$$\{X(y) \equiv \mathbf{1}_{\{N \leq y\}}, -\infty < y < \infty\},$$

where N is an $N(0, 1)$ random variable.

Since we have the finite-dimensional convergence (by Theorem 2.2), only tightness needs to be established.

3. Proofs of the main results

Let $\{Z_n\}_{n \geq 1}$ be a discrete-time single-type Galton–Watson branching process with offspring distribution $\{p_j\}_{j \geq 0}$ and initiated size Z_0 . Pick two individuals from the population in the n th generation (assuming that $Z_n \geq 2$) by simple random sampling without replacement and trace their lines of descent backward in time until they meet for the first time. Call this common ancestor *the last common ancestor* or *the most recent common ancestor* of these two randomly chosen individuals. Let $\tau_{n,2}$ be the generation number of this common ancestor.

The following has been shown in [3].

Theorem 3.1. Let $p_0 = 0$, and let $m = \sum_{j=1}^{\infty} jp_j = \infty$. Furthermore, for some $0 < \alpha < 1$ and a function $L: (1, \infty) \rightarrow (0, \infty)$ slowly varying at ∞ , let

$$\frac{\sum_{j>x} P_j}{x^\alpha L(x)} \rightarrow 1 \text{ as } x \rightarrow \infty.$$

Then, for almost all trees \mathcal{T} and $k = 1, 2, \dots$, as $n \rightarrow \infty$,

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbb{P}(\tau_{n,2} < k \mid \mathcal{T}) &\rightarrow 0, \\ \mathbb{P}(n - \tau_{n,2} < k) &\rightarrow \pi_2(k) \text{ exists,} \end{aligned}$$

and $\pi_2(k) \uparrow 1$ as $k \uparrow \infty$.

To prove Theorem 2.1, we need the following result whose proof is straightforward and thus omitted.

Lemma 3.1. If $\{X_n\}_{n \geq 1}$ is a sequence of random variables with values in $[0, 1]$ such that

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \mathbb{E}X_n^2 = \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} (\mathbb{E}X_n)^2 = \lambda, \quad 0 < \lambda < 1,$$

then X_n converges in distribution to a Bernoulli random variable X with $\mathbb{P}(X = 0) = 1 - \lambda$ and $\mathbb{P}(X = 1) = \lambda$.

3.1. Proof of Theorem 2.1

(a) Recall that the $\zeta_n \equiv \{x_{ni} : 1 \leq i \leq Z_n\}$ are the positions of the Z_n individuals of the n th generation. For any fixed $y \in \mathbb{R}$, let

$$\delta_{n,i} = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } x_{n,i} \leq \sqrt{n}\sigma y, \\ 0 & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

Then we have

$$Z_n(\sqrt{n}\sigma y) = \sum_{i=1}^{Z_n} \delta_{n,i}.$$

So,

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbb{E}\left(\frac{Z_n(\sqrt{n}\sigma y)}{Z_n}\right) &= \mathbb{E}\left(\frac{1}{Z_n} \sum_{i=1}^{Z_n} \delta_{n,i}\right) \\ &= \mathbb{E}\left(\frac{1}{Z_n} \sum_{i=1}^{Z_n} \mathbb{E}(\delta_{n,i} \mid Z_n)\right) \\ &= \mathbb{E}\left(\frac{1}{Z_n} \sum_{i=1}^{Z_n} \mathbb{E}(\delta_{n,1})\right) \\ &= \mathbb{E}(\delta_{n,1}) \\ &= \mathbb{P}(x_{n,1} \leq \sqrt{n}\sigma y) \\ &= \mathbb{P}(x_{0,1} + S_n \leq \sqrt{n}\sigma y) \\ &= \mathbb{P}(S_n \leq \sqrt{n}\sigma y - x_{0,1}), \end{aligned}$$

where $S_n = \sum_{i=1}^n \eta_i$, $\{\eta_i\}_{i \geq 1}$ are i.i.d. copies with distribution π_1 , and $x_{0,1}$ is the location of the initial ancestor of the n th generation individual located at the position $x_{n,1}$. Since $\mathbb{E}X_{k,1} = 0$ and $\mathbb{E}X_{k,1}^2 = \sigma^2 < \infty$, by the central limit theorem we have

$$\mathbb{P}\left(\frac{S_n}{\sqrt{n}\sigma} \leq y - \frac{x_{0,1}}{\sqrt{n}\sigma}\right) \rightarrow \Phi(y) \quad \text{as } n \rightarrow \infty.$$

Hence, as $n \rightarrow \infty$,

$$\mathbb{P}(Y_n \leq \sqrt{n}\sigma y) = \mathbb{E}(\mathbb{P}(Y_n \leq \sqrt{n}\sigma y \mid Z_n)) = \mathbb{E}\left(\frac{Z_n(\sqrt{n}\sigma y)}{Z_n}\right) \rightarrow \Phi(y).$$

(b) From (a), we already know that, for any fixed $y \in \mathbb{R}$,

$$\mathbb{E}\left(\frac{Z_n(\sqrt{n}\sigma y)}{Z_n}\right) \rightarrow \Phi(y) \quad \text{as } n \rightarrow \infty.$$

By Lemma 3.1, it suffices to show that, for any fixed $y \in \mathbb{R}$, we also have

$$\mathbb{E}\left(\frac{Z_n(\sqrt{n}\sigma y)}{Z_n}\right)^2 \rightarrow \Phi(y) \quad \text{as } n \rightarrow \infty.$$

Recall that, for any fixed $y \in \mathbb{R}$,

$$\delta_{n,i} = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } x_{n,i} \leq \sqrt{n}\sigma y, \\ 0 & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

Then

$$\mathbb{E}\left(\frac{Z_n(\sqrt{n}\sigma y)}{Z_n}\right)^2 = \mathbb{E}\left(\frac{1}{Z_n^2} \sum_{i=1}^{Z_n} \delta_{n,i}^2\right) + \mathbb{E}\left(\frac{1}{Z_n^2} \sum_{i \neq j=1}^{Z_n} \delta_{n,i} \delta_{n,j}\right).$$

Firstly, it is known that, in the explosive case under the assumption that $p_0 = 0$, $\mathbb{P}(Z_n \rightarrow \infty) = 1$. Also, we have

$$\mathbb{P}\left(0 < \frac{1}{Z_n^2} \sum_{i=1}^{Z_n} \delta_{n,i}^2 < \frac{1}{Z_n}\right) = 1.$$

Hence,

$$\mathbb{P}\left(\frac{1}{Z_n^2} \sum_{i=1}^{Z_n} \delta_{n,i}^2 \rightarrow 0\right) = 1,$$

so, by the bounded convergence theorem,

$$\mathbb{E}\left(\frac{1}{Z_n^2} \sum_{i=1}^{Z_n} \delta_{n,i}^2\right) \rightarrow 0 \quad \text{as } n \rightarrow \infty. \tag{3.1}$$

Secondly, by the symmetry consideration conditioned on the branching tree (but not the random walk), we have

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbb{E}\left(\frac{1}{Z_n^2} \sum_{i \neq j=1}^{Z_n} \delta_{n,i} \delta_{n,j}\right) &= \mathbb{E}\left(\frac{1}{Z_n^2} \sum_{i \neq j=1}^{Z_n} \mathbb{E}(\delta_{n,i} \delta_{n,j} \mid Z_n)\right) \\ &= \mathbb{E}\left(\frac{1}{Z_n^2} \sum_{i \neq j=1}^{Z_n} \mathbb{E}(\delta_{n,1} \delta_{n,2} \mid Z_n)\right) \\ &= \mathbb{E}\left(\frac{Z_n(Z_n - 1)}{Z_n^2}\right) \mathbb{E}(\delta_{n,1} \delta_{n,2}). \end{aligned}$$

Note that, by the bounded convergence theorem,

$$\mathbb{E}\left(\frac{Z_n(Z_n - 1)}{Z_n^2}\right) \rightarrow 1 \quad \text{as } n \rightarrow \infty. \tag{3.2}$$

Now, let $\tau_{n,2}$ be the generation number of the last common ancestor of any two randomly chosen individuals in the n th generation. Then, by Theorem 3.1 we have

$$n - \tau_{n,2} \xrightarrow{D} \tilde{\tau}_2 \quad \text{as } n \rightarrow \infty$$

for some random variable $\tilde{\tau}_2$. Let x_{τ_n} be the position of the last common ancestor of these two individuals corresponding to the positions $x_{n,1}$ and $x_{n,2}$. Then we can write

$$x_{n,i} = x_{\tau_n} + Y_{n,i}, \quad i = 1, 2,$$

where $Y_{n,i}$ is the net displacement of the individual with position $x_{n,i}$ from generation τ_n to n .

Clearly, $Y_{n,1}$ and $Y_{n,2}$ are independent. Moreover, x_{τ_n} , $Y_{n,1}$, and $Y_{n,2}$ can be written as

$$x_{\tau_n} = x_{0,1} + \sum_{j=1}^{\tau_{n,2}} \eta_j \quad \text{and} \quad Y_{n,i} = \sum_{j=1}^{n-\tau_{n,2}} \eta_{i,j} \quad \text{for } i = 1, 2,$$

respectively, where $\{\eta_j\}_{j \geq 1}$, $\{\eta_{1,i}\}_{j \geq 1}$, and $\{\eta_{2,i}\}_{j \geq 1}$ are i.i.d. copies with distribution π_1 and are independent of each other. Therefore,

$$\begin{aligned} & \mathbb{E}(\delta_{n,1} \delta_{n,2}) \\ &= \mathbb{E}(\mathbb{E}(\mathbf{1}_{\{x_{n,1} \leq \sqrt{n}\sigma y\}} \mathbf{1}_{\{x_{n,2} \leq \sqrt{n}\sigma y\}} \mid n - \tau_{n,2})) \\ &= \mathbb{E}(\mathbb{E}(\mathbf{1}_{\{\sum_{j=1}^{\tau_{n,2}} \eta_j \leq \sqrt{n}\sigma y - x_{0,1} - \sum_{j=1}^{n-\tau_{n,2}} \eta_{1,j}\}} \mathbf{1}_{\{\sum_{j=1}^{\tau_{n,2}} \eta_j \leq \sqrt{n}\sigma y - x_{0,1} - \sum_{j=1}^{n-\tau_{n,2}} \eta_{2,j}\}} \mid n - \tau_{n,2})) \\ &= \mathbb{E}\left(\mathbb{P}\left(\sum_{j=1}^{\tau_{n,2}} \eta_j \leq \sqrt{n}\sigma y - x_{0,1} - \max\left\{\sum_{j=1}^{n-\tau_{n,2}} \eta_{1,j}, \sum_{j=1}^{n-\tau_{n,2}} \eta_{2,j}\right\} \mid n - \tau_{n,2}\right)\right). \end{aligned}$$

Since $n - \tau_{n,2} \xrightarrow{D} \tilde{\tau}_2$ as $n \rightarrow \infty$ and $\mathbb{P}(\tilde{\tau}_2 < \infty) = 1$, we have, for $i = 1, 2$,

$$\sum_{j=1}^{n-\tau_{n,2}} \eta_{i,j} \xrightarrow{D} \sum_{j=1}^{\tilde{\tau}_2} \eta_{i,j} \quad \text{as } n \rightarrow \infty.$$

Also, $\tau_{n,2} \xrightarrow{D} \infty$ and $\tau_{n,2}/n \xrightarrow{D} 1$ as $n \rightarrow \infty$. Hence, as $n \rightarrow \infty$,

$$\begin{aligned} & \mathbb{P}\left(\sum_{j=1}^{\tau_{n,2}} \eta_j \leq \sqrt{n}\sigma y - x_{0,1} - \max\left\{\sum_{j=1}^{n-\tau_{n,2}} \eta_{1,j}, \sum_{j=1}^{n-\tau_{n,2}} \eta_{2,j}\right\} \mid n - \tau_{n,2}\right) \\ & \rightarrow \Phi(y) \quad \text{with probability 1.} \end{aligned}$$

Then, by the bounded convergence theorem,

$$\mathbb{E}(\delta_{n,1} \delta_{n,2}) \rightarrow \Phi(y) \quad \text{as } n \rightarrow \infty. \tag{3.3}$$

So, (3.1), (3.2), and (3.3) together imply that

$$\mathbb{E}\left(\frac{Z_n(\sqrt{n}\sigma y)}{Z_n}\right)^2 \rightarrow \Phi(y) \quad \text{as } n \rightarrow \infty,$$

completing the proof.

3.2. Proof of Theorem 2.2

(a) Let $-\infty < y_1 < y_2 < \infty$ be any two fixed real numbers. Then

$$\mathbb{P}\left(\frac{Z_n(\sqrt{n}\sigma y_1)}{Z_n} \leq \frac{Z_n(\sqrt{n}\sigma y_2)}{Z_n}\right) = 1.$$

So,

$$\mathbb{P}\left(\frac{Z_n(\sqrt{n}\sigma y_1)}{Z_n} = 1, \frac{Z_n(\sqrt{n}\sigma y_2)}{Z_n} = 0\right) = 0 \quad \text{for any } n = 1, 2, \dots,$$

and, hence,

$$\mathbb{P}\left(\frac{Z_n(\sqrt{n}\sigma y_1)}{Z_n} = 1, \frac{Z_n(\sqrt{n}\sigma y_2)}{Z_n} = 0\right) \rightarrow 0 \quad \text{as } n \rightarrow \infty.$$

Also, by Theorem 2.1, we have

$$\frac{Z_n(\sqrt{n}\sigma y_i)}{Z_n} \xrightarrow{D} \delta_{y_i} \quad \text{as } n \rightarrow \infty,$$

where δ_i is a Bernoulli random variable with $\mathbb{P}(\delta_{y_i} = 1) = \Phi(y_i) = 1 - \mathbb{P}(\delta_{y_i} = 0) = 0$ for $i = 1, 2$. Therefore, as $n \rightarrow \infty$,

$$\mathbb{P}\left(\frac{Z_n(\sqrt{n}\sigma y_1)}{Z_n} = 0, \frac{Z_n(\sqrt{n}\sigma y_2)}{Z_n} = 0\right) = \mathbb{P}\left(\frac{Z_n(\sqrt{n}\sigma y_2)}{Z_n} = 0\right) \rightarrow 1 - \Phi(y_2)$$

and

$$\mathbb{P}\left(\frac{Z_n(\sqrt{n}\sigma y_1)}{Z_n} = 1, \frac{Z_n(\sqrt{n}\sigma y_2)}{Z_n} = 1\right) = \mathbb{P}\left(\frac{Z_n(\sqrt{n}\sigma y_1)}{Z_n} = 1\right) \rightarrow \Phi(y_1).$$

Moreover, since $(\delta_{y_1}, \delta_{y_2})$ only take values on the set $\{(0, 0), (0, 1), (1, 1)\}$,

$$\mathbb{P}\left(\frac{Z_n(\sqrt{n}\sigma y_1)}{Z_n} = 0, \frac{Z_n(\sqrt{n}\sigma y_2)}{Z_n} = 1\right) \rightarrow \Phi(y_2) - \Phi(y_1),$$

completing the proof of part (a).

(b) The proof of part (b) is similar to the above and is hence omitted.

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