

Miklós Z. Rácz

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Research interests

Solving statistical inference problems in complex systems.

In particular, I am interested in statistical inference problems on random graphs and in genomics. I am also interested more broadly in applied probability, combinatorial statistics, information theory, control theory, interacting particle systems, and voting.

Employment

2017 — present **Princeton University**, Princeton, NJ, USA.

Assistant Professor in the ORFE Department

2015 — 2017 **Microsoft Research**, Redmond, WA, USA.

Postdoctoral researcher in the Theory Group

Education

2010 — 2015 **PhD**, Statistics, **University of California, Berkeley**.

MS, Computer Science, **University of California, Berkeley**.

Dissertation (PhD): *Influences in Voting and Growing Networks*

Thesis (MS): *A quantitative Gibbard-Satterthwaite theorem without neutrality*

Advisor: Elchanan Mossel

2005 — 2010 **MS**, Mathematics, **Budapest University of Technology and Economics (BUTE)**.

Thesis: *Competing Prices: Analyzing a Stochastic Interacting Particle System*

Advisors: Márton Balázs and Bálint Tóth

1999 — 2005 **Fazekas Mihály High School**, Budapest, Hungary.

Special mathematics class, graduated with honors

Experience

2017 — present **Microsoft Research**, Redmond, WA.

Consulting Researcher

2015 — 2017 **Microsoft Research**, Redmond, WA & **University of Washington**, Seattle, WA.

Mentor: Sergey Yekhanin

I worked on statistical error correction algorithms for DNA sequencing.

This is part of a larger MSR-UW group effort to make DNA Storage a reality. DNA Storage aims to use synthetic DNA as a high-density, durable, and easy-to-manipulate storage medium of digital data.

Summer 2014 **Microsoft Research**, Redmond, WA.

Mentor: Sébastien Bubeck

I was a research intern in the Theory Group, working on statistical inference problems on random graphs.

Summer 2009 **University of Oxford**, Oxford, UK.

Mentors: Jotun Hein, Rune Lyngsø, and István Miklós

I was a summer research student in the Department of Statistics, working on the infinite sites model in population genetics.

Summer 2008 **University of California, Los Angeles, CA.**

Mentors: Susana Serna and Gilles Gnacadja

I was a summer research student in the Research in Industrial Projects for Students (RIPS) program at the Institute for Pure and Applied Mathematics (IPAM). I worked on a team of four students, modeling and measuring unstable behavior in hematopoiesis.

Awards and Honors

- Outstanding Graduate Student Instructor Award, UC Berkeley, 2014 - 2015
- UC Berkeley Graduate Fellowship, 2010 - 2012
- Scholarship of the Hungarian Republic, 2009 - 2010
- SIAM Award for Outstanding Talk in Applied Mathematics, MAA MathFest 2009
- Outstanding Student of the Faculty of Natural Sciences, BUTE, 2008 - 2009
- Second Prize, National Scientific Student Conference, Hungary, April 2009
- Scholarship of the Faculty of Natural Sciences, BUTE, Fall 2008, Spring 2009

Funding and Grants

- NSF grant DMS 1811724, *Dynamic Networks: Probabilistic Models and Inference Problems*, \$150k, 2017 - 2020

Publications

[Combinatorial Statistics](#) / [Statistical Network Analysis](#) / [Random Graphs](#)

- **Finding cliques using few probes**
Uriel Feige, David Gamarnik, Joe Neeman, Miklos Z. Racz, and Prasad Tetali
Submitted, October 2018.
- **How fragile are information cascades?**
Yuval Peres, Miklos Z. Racz, Allan Sly, and Izabella Stuhl
Submitted, November 2017.
- **Optimal control for diffusions on graphs**
Laura Florescu, Yuval Peres, and Miklos Z. Racz
SIAM Journal on Discrete Mathematics, to appear, 2018.
- **A smooth transition from Wishart to GOE**
Miklos Z. Racz and Jacob Richey
Journal of Theoretical Probability, to appear, 2018.
- **Basic models and questions in statistical network analysis**
Miklos Z. Racz and Sébastien Bubeck
Statistics Surveys, 11:1–47, 2017.
- **Beta-gamma tail asymptotics**
Jim Pitman and Miklos Z. Racz
Electronic Communications in Probability, 20(84):1–7, 2015.
- **Braess's paradox for the spectral gap in random graphs and delocalization of eigenvectors**
Ronen Eldan, Miklos Z. Racz, and Tselil Schramm
Random Structures & Algorithms, 50(4):584–611, 2017.
- **Testing for high-dimensional geometry in random graphs**
Sébastien Bubeck, Jian Ding, Ronen Eldan, and Miklos Z. Racz
Random Structures & Algorithms, 49(3):503–532, 2016.

- **From trees to seeds: on the inference of the seed from large trees in the uniform attachment model**
Sébastien Bubeck, Ronen Eldan, Elchanan Mossel, and Miklos Z. Racz
Bernoulli, 23(4A):2887–2916, 2017.
- **On the influence of the seed graph in the preferential attachment model**
Sébastien Bubeck, Elchanan Mossel, and Miklos Z. Racz
IEEE Transactions on Network Science and Engineering, 2(1):30–39, 2015.
- **Coexistence in preferential attachment networks**
Tonći Antunović, Elchanan Mossel, and Miklos Z. Racz
Combinatorics, Probability and Computing, 25(6):797–822, 2016.

Mathematics & Statistics in Biology

- **Clustering Billions of Reads for DNA Data Storage**
Cyrus Rashtchian, Konstantin Makarychev, Miklos Racz, Siena Dumas Ang, Djordje Jevdjic, Sergey Yekhanin, Luis Ceze, and Karin Strauss
Advances in Neural Information Processing Systems (NIPS), 2017.
Selected for a spotlight presentation (top 4.7% of submissions).
- **Scaling up DNA data storage and random access retrieval**
Lee Organick, Siena Dumas Ang, Yuan-Jyue Chen, Randolph Lopez, Sergey Yekhanin, Konstantin Makarychev, Miklos Z. Racz, Govinda Kamath, Parikshit Gopalan, Bichlien Nguyen, Christopher Takahashi, Sharon Newman, Hsing-Yeh Parker, Cyrus Rashtchian, Kendall Stewart, Gagan Gupta, Robert Carlson, John Mulligan, Douglas Carmean, Georg Seelig, Luis Ceze, and Karin Strauss
Nature Biotechnology, 36:242–248, 2018.
- **Sequence assembly from corrupted shotgun reads**
Shirshendu Ganguly, Elchanan Mossel, and Miklos Z. Racz
IEEE International Symposium on Information Theory (ISIT), 2016.
- **Can one hear the shape of a population history?**
Junhyong Kim, Elchanan Mossel, Miklos Z. Racz, and Nathan Ross
Theoretical Population Biology, 100:26–38, 2015.
- **Analysis of unstable behavior in a mathematical model for erythropoiesis**
Susana Serna, Jasmine A. Nirody, and Miklos Z. Racz
Journal of Mathematical Biology, 66(3):595–625, 2013.

Voting / Social Choice Theory / Social Media

- **Geographic and Temporal Trends in Fake News Consumption During the 2016 US Presidential Election**
Adam Fourney*, Miklos Z. Racz*, Gireeja Ranade*, Markus Mobius, Eric Horvitz
International Conference on Information and Knowledge Management (CIKM), 2017.
* These authors contributed equally and are presented in alphabetical order.
- **A Smooth Transition from Powerlessness to Absolute Power**
Elchanan Mossel, Ariel D. Procaccia, and Miklos Z. Racz
Journal of Artificial Intelligence Research, 48:923–951, 2013.
- **Election Manipulation: The Average Case**
Elchanan Mossel and Miklos Z. Racz
ACM SIGecom Exchanges, 11(2):22–24, 2012.
- **A quantitative Gibbard-Satterthwaite theorem without neutrality**
Elchanan Mossel and Miklos Z. Racz
Combinatorica, 35(3):317–387, 2015.
An extended abstract appeared at the *Symposium on Theory of Computing (STOC)*, 2012.

Information and Control Theory

- **Rate-limited control of systems with unknown gain**
Victoria Kostina, Yuval Peres, Miklos Z. Racz, and Gireeja Ranade
IEEE Allerton Conference on Communication, Control, and Computing, 2016.

Interacting Particle Systems

- **Multidimensional sticky Brownian motions as limits of exclusion processes**
Miklos Z. Racz and Mykhaylo Shkolnikov
Annals of Applied Probability, 25(3):1155–1188, 2015.
- **Modeling Flocks and Prices: Jumping Particles with an Attractive Interaction**
Márton Balázs, Miklos Z. Racz, and Bálint Tóth
Annales de l'Institut Henri Poincaré – Probabilités et Statistiques, 50(2):425–454, 2014.

Pricing Mechanisms

- **Dynamic Budget-Constrained Pricing in the Cloud**
Eric Friedman, Miklos Z. Racz, and Scott Shenker
Canadian Conference on Artificial Intelligence, 2015.

Patents

- **Trace reconstruction from noisy polynucleotide sequencer reads**
Parikshit Gopalan, Karin Strauss, Siena Dumas Ang, Miklos Racz, Luis Ceze, Sergey Yekhanin, and Nebojsa Jojic
Patent filed, May 2016.

Teaching

- Fall 2018 **ORF 526: Probability Theory**, Princeton University.
I am the Instructor for this graduate introduction to probability theory with a focus on stochastic processes.
- Spring 2018 **ORF 309: Probability and Stochastic Systems**, Princeton University.
I was the Instructor for this undergraduate introduction to probability and its applications.
- Fall 2017 **ORF 526: Probability Theory**, Princeton University.
I was the Instructor for this graduate introduction to probability theory with a focus on stochastic processes.
- Summer 2016 **Basic models and questions in statistical network analysis.**
I co-designed (together with Sébastien Bubeck) this graduate minicourse, consisting of five one-hour lectures, which aim to explain in an elementary way some of the key ideas involved in cutting-edge statistical network analysis research. I also wrote lecture notes which are available online (38 pages, 10 figures). I taught this minicourse twice:
- **June 6 – 10, 2016: University of Washington**
Approx. 30 graduate students attended from a variety of departments (math, stat, CS, EE).
 - **July 4 – 8, 2016: XX Brazilian School of Probability**
Approx. 100 participants attended, ranging from masters students to professors.
- 2011 — 2015 **Berkeley Math Circle**, Berkeley, CA.
I volunteered as a mathematics teacher and held problem-solving sessions for talented youth at the elementary, middle, and high school level. I designed several problem sets, with topics including probability games and graph theory.
- Spring 2014 **Stanford Math Circle**, Stanford, CA.
I volunteered as a mathematics teacher and held problem-solving sessions for talented middle school students. The sessions were on probability games, based on problem sets that I designed.

- Spring 2014 **Stat 150: Stochastic Processes**, UC Berkeley.
I was a Graduate Student Instructor (GSI) for this upper-division course of approx. 60 students, taught by Ani Adhikari. I designed and held weekly discussion sections and held office hours.
- Summer 2013 **Probability Models of Information Exchange on Networks**, Cornell University.
I designed and held a tutorial session for Elchanan Mossel's short course at the Cornell Probability Summer School.
- Spring 2013 **Stat 155: Game Theory**, UC Berkeley.
I was a Graduate Student Instructor (GSI) for this upper-division course of approx. 60 students, taught by Elchanan Mossel. I designed and held weekly discussion sections, held office hours, and graded homework, quizzes, and exams.
- Summer 2011 **Stat W21: Introductory Statistics**, UC Berkeley.
I was a Graduate Student Instructor (GSI) for this lower-division course of approx. 250 students, taught by Philip Stark. This was an online course and I held in-person and online office hours.
- 2008 — 2009 **Calculus for civil engineer students**, Budapest University of Technology and Economics.
I was a Teaching Assistant for three semesters. I held discussion sections and graded exams.
- 2007 — 2010 **Mathematics Institute**, Budapest University of Technology and Economics.
I graded homework for various courses in calculus, linear algebra, algebra, and probability theory. I also served as a tutor at the walk-in tutoring center.

Mentoring

Graduate students

- Jun 2016 - present **Jacob Richey**, University of Washington PhD student.
Working on random matrices, random geometric graphs, and diffusions on networks.
- Summer 2016 **Govinda Kamath**, Stanford EE PhD student.
Together with Sergey Yekhanin, I co-mentored Govinda's 12-week internship at Microsoft Research on a project involving statistical inference and coding theory problems in genomics, motivated by applications in DNA Storage. His work also included the analysis of a large DNA synthesis-sequencing dataset.

Undergraduate senior theses advised at Princeton University

- 2018 Jan — Dec **José Pabón**, Mathematics
- 2017 — 2018 **Hassan Ejaz Chaudhry**, ORFE
- 2017 — 2018 **Kevin Sun**, ORFE
- 2017 — 2018 **Eric Wu**, ORFE

Undergraduate research advised at Princeton University

- 2018 **Mayee Chen**, ORFE
- 2018 **Charlie Hou**, ORFE
- 2018 **Walter Li**, ORFE
- 2018 **Ben Schiffer**, ORFE

Selected Invited Talks

Finding cliques with few probes

- Probability Seminar, University of Oxford October 29, 2018

High-dimensional random geometric graphs

- Oxford - Princeton Workshop, Princeton, NJ November 16 - 17, 2018
- Probability Seminar, University of Bristol November 2, 2018

- Applied Probability & Risk Seminar, Columbia University October 4, 2018
- Special Session at AMS Eastern Sectional Meeting, Newark, DE September 30, 2018
- Critical and Collective Effects in Graphs and Networks, Eindhoven, NL June 22, 2018
- Research on Algorithms and Incentives in Networks (RAIN) Seminar, Stanford May 23, 2018
- Workshop on Combinatorial Statistics, CRM, Montreal, Canada May 3, 2018
- Computational Statistics and Machine Learning Seminar, Univ. of Oxford March 23, 2018
- Probability Seminar, University of British Columbia January 12, 2017
- Probability Seminar, University of Wisconsin, Madison January 15, 2015
- Theory Lunch, Microsoft Research, Redmond August 27, 2014

How fragile are information cascades?

- Statistical Physics Holiday Seminar, Eötvös University (ELTE), Budapest December 29, 2017
- Probability Seminar, University of Pennsylvania November 14, 2017
- Theory Lunch, Microsoft Research, Redmond April 19, 2017

Statistical Inference in Networks and Genomics

- ORFE Colloquium, Princeton University February 6, 2017
- Mathematics Colloquium, University of Maryland January 24, 2017
- Mathematics Colloquium, University of British Columbia January 13, 2017
- Mathematics Colloquium, University of Wisconsin, Madison January 9, 2017
- Mathematics Colloquium, McGill University December 7, 2016
- Mathematics Colloquium, Carnegie Mellon University December 5, 2016

Finding and hiding the seed

- Dynamic Networks Workshop, Isaac Newton Institute, Cambridge, UK December 16, 2016
- Probability Seminar, Princeton University November 30, 2016

Controlled diffusion on graphs

- Probability Seminar, University of Washington November 21, 2016

Sequence assembly from corrupted shotgun reads

- MSR Theory Day, Microsoft Research, Redmond March 10, 2016

Braess's paradox for the spectral gap in random graphs and delocalization of eigenvectors

- Probability Seminar, University of Colorado, Boulder April 20, 2017
- Probability Seminar, University of Minnesota February 12, 2016
- Theory Lunch, UC Berkeley January 27, 2016
- Random Matrix Seminar, Princeton University November 23, 2015
- Theory Lunch, Microsoft Research, Redmond July 29, 2015

From trees to seeds: on the inference of the seed from large random trees

- Probability Seminar, Duke University October 13, 2016
- BIRS Retreat for Young Researchers in Stochastics, Banff September 25, 2016
- Theory Seminar, University of Washington October 13, 2015
- Probability Seminar, University of Bristol March 27, 2015
- Probability Seminar, UC San Diego January 22, 2015
- SILO Seminar, University of Wisconsin, Madison January 14, 2015

- Probability Seminar, Stanford University January 12, 2015
- Probability Seminar, BUTE, Budapest January 6, 2015
- Probability Seminar, UC Berkeley October 22, 2014
- Multidimensional sticky Brownian motions as limits of exclusion processes**
- Monash Workshop on Self-interacting Processes September 7, 2016
- Probability Seminar, University of Wisconsin, Madison November 14, 2013
- Coexistence in preferential attachment networks**
- Risk Management Seminar, UC Berkeley April 15, 2014
- Theory Lunch, Microsoft Research, Redmond June 5, 2013
- Probability Seminar, UCLA May 15, 2013
- Probability Seminar, UC Berkeley March 13, 2013
- Election manipulation: the average-case**
- EconCS Seminar, UC Berkeley April 9, 2013
- Probability Seminar, BUTE, Budapest January 4, 2012
- Combinatorial Stochastic Processes Seminar, UC Berkeley October 14, 2011
- Modeling Flocks and Prices: Jumping Particles with an Attractive Interaction**
- Mathematical Physics & Probability Seminar, UC Davis November 14, 2012
- Statistical Physics Seminar, Eötvös University (ELTE), Budapest April 15, 2009

Organization

- 2017 — present **Princeton Probability Seminar**, Princeton, NJ.
Co-organizing with Misha Shkolnikov, Allan Sly, and Ramon van Handel.
- Mar 2019 **Columbia - Princeton Probability Day 2019**, Princeton, NJ.
I am co-organizing this one-day mini-conference with colleagues at Columbia and Princeton.
- Nov 2016 **Northwest Probability Seminar 2016**, Redmond, WA.
I co-organized this one-day mini-conference with Alexander Holroyd and Yuval Peres.

Editorial Work and Reviewing

I have served on the **Program Committee** of the following conferences/workshops:

- SIAM Workshop on Network Science 2018 (NS18)

I have served as a **Reviewer** for the following journals:

- Annals of Applied Probability
- Annals of Statistics
- Bernoulli Journal
- Electronic Communications in Probability
- Electronic Journal of Probability
- Journal of Applied Probability
- Journal of Machine Learning Research
- Random Structures & Algorithms
- Theoretical Population Biology
- Theory of Computing
- Transactions on Economics and Computation

I have served as a **Reviewer** for the following conferences:

- COLT 2016, 2018; ISIT 2017; ITCS 2019; NIPS 2016, 2017; RANDOM 2017, 2018; SODA 2017, 2018; STOC 2016

Leadership and Service

At Princeton University

2018 — present **Faculty Adviser and Fellow**, *Whitman College*, Princeton University.

I serve as a faculty adviser for incoming freshman students.

I have served as a **Reader** of the PhD Thesis for:

- Peiqi Wang, ORFE, 2018

I have served on the **Final Public Oral (FPO) Exam Committee** for:

- Xiuneng Zhu, ORFE, 2018

I have served on the **General Exam Committee** for:

- Suqi Liu, ORFE, 2018
- Guillaume Martinet, ORFE, 2018

I have served on the **Preliminary Exam Committee** for:

- Jad Rahme, PACM, 2018

At Microsoft Research

March 2016 **Berkeley Statistics Annual Research Symposium (BSTARS)**, UC Berkeley.

I represented Microsoft Research at the annual Industry Alliance event of the Berkeley Statistics Department, where I also gave a short talk illustrating research efforts at Microsoft.

At UC Berkeley

2014 — 2015 **Head of Student Hospitality Committee**, Department of Statistics, UC Berkeley.

I coordinated the lunches between the departmental seminar speaker and graduate students.

2013 — 2014 **Graduate Admissions Committee**, Department of Statistics, UC Berkeley.

I reviewed 100+ applications to the Statistics PhD program.

2012 — 2013 **Co-President, Statistics Graduate Student Association (SGSA)**, UC Berkeley.

I co-led a team of a dozen student officers who worked on improving graduate student life in the department. We designed and conducted a survey to assess student opinions. We worked closely with faculty who founded the Industry Alliance Program, which in turn greatly benefited graduate students. For instance, based on our suggestions, from the following year onwards, Graduate Student Instructors received an increased stipend, equal to that of Graduate Student Researchers. We also revamped communications between students and the department, e.g., by resurrecting the student newsletter.

2010 — 2014 **Student Seminar Committee**, Department of Statistics, UC Berkeley.

I was involved with organizing the bi-weekly statistics student seminars.

Other

Computer skills C/C++, Maple, Mathematica, Matlab, Python, \LaTeX

Language skills Hungarian (native), English (fluent), French (advanced), Spanish, Konkani (basic)

Hobbies Football, running, swimming, debate, reading, traveling